

THE SIMPLE GOSPEL**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

No book written by man has so many simple words as the New Testament. There is an air of simplicity about the biographies of Jesus which, like the breezes from the Galilean hills, blows upon our sophisticated minds. The gospel has not been recorded in philosophical phraseology, scientific terms, complicated sentences, or the dialects of angels; but it has been expressed in the simplest terms so that children can understand.

Man has muddied the streams of divine thought by theological and ecclesiastical terms and phrases until it is much more difficult to understand the doctrines of men than the simple teachings of the New Testament. The gospel of Jesus contains the truths of God's will so plain and clear that the untrained minds of innocent children can catch and follow them.

Teachers often confuse by their explanation, when, if they would just let the New Testament speak, the simplicity of thought would be gained. While on earth, Jesus replaced the traditions of men with respect to the law by his simple teachings. The instructions given to Christians as to how to live the Christian life can be understood. No one has a just complaint to make against the requirements of the New Testament toward a simple life.

The Gospel Was Understood When It Was First Heard

The proof of the simplicity of the gospel is seen in the record of the conversions. When the multitude came together on the day of Pentecost and heard the miraculous manifestations of the apostles speaking in tongues, they were astonished and accused the apostles of being drunken. Peter stood up with the eleven and gave a simple explanation of what had occurred.

He calmly pointed to the prophecy of Joel and recited that prophecy to the people. He then called attention to what they had observed. In a simple way, he pointed out the facts and showed that what they were observing was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. With that out of the way, he then proceeded to unfold to them the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, and by the quotation from David showed that should have expected just what had transpired. Since the prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus, he must be what he claimed to be—the Son of God, the promised Messiah. Step by step, argument and conclusion closely following each other, Peter convinced many that Jesus was the Saviour of the world.

These astonished and confused Jews soon became believers in the Christ. About 3,000 heard this profound, yet simple, sermon that Peter preached, and were convinced. This was the first time that a gospel sermon had been preached in its fullness. Of course, Peter spoke as the Spirit gave him utterance; hence, he spoke in such simple terms as the people could hear and understand the first gospel sermon that they had ever heard. Surely Peter must have spoken simply for so many of the common people to understand and accept what he presented.

Those who did not accept the gospel on Pentecost refused it not because they did not understand it, but because they refused to believe it. Their unconverted state was a result, not of a misunderstanding, neither of their inability to understand, but a failure on their part to believe what they did understand. Prejudice and other things may have had a bearing upon them, but the chief thing was that they refused to believe what they heard.

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

CHRIST OUR ADVOCATE

Text: _____

I. Jesus is Our _____ Advocate

Notes:

II. Jesus is Our _____ Advocate

Notes:

III. Jesus is Our _____ Advocate

Notes:

WALK IN WISDOM

Text: _____

I. The _____ of Wisdom

Notes:

II. The _____ to Wisdom

Notes:

III. The _____ of Wisdom

Notes:

The Ethiopian eunuch had been to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8). He was returning and riding in his chariot. He had presumably worshipped according to the law of Moses at Jerusalem. He had never heard of the Christ or, if he had heard of him, it was an unfavorable report. Philip joined the chariot and, as he rode along, preached to him Jesus (Acts 8:35).

This was the first gospel sermon the eunuch ever heard, and probably the first time he had ever heard of the Christ. But Philip preached the simple gospel in simple terms so that the eunuch understood him. He believed the gospel and was baptized and went on his way rejoicing in the new-found salvation.

Many others like the eunuch heard and understood the terms of salvation, and obeyed the gospel the same hour of the night. In fact, the people in the long list of conversions recorded the Acts of the Apostles obeyed the gospel the first time they heard it. There was no delay, but prompt obedience to all the commands of the gospel marked their belief in the simple gospel.

Its Simplicity Brings Heavier Condemnation

Since the gospel is simple enough for all to understand the terms of salvation and the requirements of Christian living, all are condemned who do not accept the terms of salvation and live as the simple gospel of Christ requires them to live. The condemnation of the ignorant and illiterate would not be just if the gospel was not presented in such a simple way that they could understand it.

Every Spirit-guided speaker and writer in New Testament times expected the hearer to understand, and passed condemnation on him if he did not believe. In giving the commission, Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," but he also added, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). The condemnation of the disbeliever is just because he can understand the simple requirements of the gospel.

The gospel was given to be understood. It was preached in simple language and the Holy Spirit has recorded it in simple terms. Hence, our condemnation is just if we do not believe it.

The Christian life is a simple life and all of its requirements are simple. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek in lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

-H. Leo Boles

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE

It was the prayer of Jesus (John 17). It was the plea of Paul (Ephesians 4). However, it remains perhaps the single most elusive goal of all Christians. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Psalm 133:1). Or at least from the experiences of Christians for the last two thousand years, how good and pleasant it would be *if* brethren would dwell together in unity. It seems that unity among God’s people is something that everyone claims to want, but relatively few are actively working to bring it about. Some of the most active advocates of “unity” are not working to bring true unity, but rather union among differing sects. When we talk about true unity it must be unity based upon the Biblical standard of unity: “one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, on baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4-6). Unless there is a common belief pertaining to these Divinely inspired points of unity, unity does not and cannot exist no matter how much it is claimed. It is in the phrase that comprises our title that we find two points of specific interest as to the acquiring and necessity of true Biblical unity.

First, Paul references “the unity of the Spirit.” So many place emphasis upon the bond of peace, but few recognize the full import of the unity of the Spirit. Vincent says this is a unity “wrought by the Spirit” or made possible by the Spirit. But in what way does the Spirit make unity possible? In John 14, Jesus promises the apostles that upon His departure the Father would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, with a particular purpose: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (vs. 26). What purpose was this? He would unify the apostles by His revelation of truth. And because the apostles all had the same gospel revealed to them, they would then teach and practice that same gospel and unity would be enjoyed. The reality is that the Spirit, in a general way, has made unity possible among us today similarly. While a difference exists in how that truth was and is revealed (directly to the apostles, but indirectly to us through the scriptures), unity is still based solely upon one’s allegiance to truth.

The Bible is the Spirit inspired, God-breathed, Divinely revealed word of God. Peter indicates that in their writing “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). Paul taught that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). David claimed that “the Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2). There can be no clearer case made for a Biblical truth than the case for the Bible’s inspiration. And these scriptures inspired by the Spirit have a particular purpose: “...and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16b-17). They are written and recorded for our learning and living. All men are amenable to the laws of God, and when all men will submit to those laws, we will be as the first century Christians who “all that believed were together, and had all things common” (Acts 2:43). That is a picture perfect example of a people who were truly committed to the unity of the Spirit. They knew it was contingent upon them all believing the same things and having all things common. How is such unity going to be achieved? It will not be according to man’s devices because they will do nothing but tear and divide. There must be a common standard to which we all hold ourselves accountable, and that one standard must be the Spirit inspired word.

Then, Paul makes mention to the “bond of peace.” Peace is the bond that exists among God’s unified people. Strong’s defines this peace as “quietness” and “rest.” Have you ever known such to exist among God’s people, much less in the world as a whole? It simply has not been the case, virtually since the earliest days of the church. Each of us can point to turmoil and strife which seem to be common, but how often does peace reign among those calling themselves Christians? Why is such a bond of peace lacking? Because the unity of the Spirit is lacking. Where there is no unity, there can be no peace. Where there is no peace, it is because there is no unity. Neither scenario pleases God, thus we fail when peace fails. Unity and peace among God’s people must be our foremost concern because all other responsibilities we have are contingent upon them. God cannot be pleased without unity and peace. He cannot be worshipped correctly without unity and peace. The world cannot be reached without unity and peace. They must consume our aspirations as Christians. If they don’t, do we care?

Are we endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? If so, why are our efforts failing? If not, why are we so unconcerned with God’s greatest command?