

“IF I COULD JUST UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE”

by Danny Tunnell

Have you ever read a chapter out of the Bible and after you read it, you have no idea what you just read? We all have.

The Bible is a unique book, given by inspiration of God. (2 Timothy 3:16.) It won't profit us unless we mix our faith with it. (Hebrews 4:2.) Paul prayed, “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.” (Ephesians 1:18.) Another way of saying this is, “the eyes of your heart being illuminated.”

Faith is a choice; you choose to believe. God will not make you believe the Bible or even in Him. Everyone has to choose if they are going to believe the word of God. If they do, it will change their lives for the better. Now they have a standard to live by, and they have life. Jesus said, “The words I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:63.) Faith is essential to understand the Bible, and for salvation. (Ephesians 2:8.)

Some examine the Bible through the lens of science, logic, or human reasoning. It doesn't work! They

criticize the Bible by saying some of it is scientifically impossible. They say, “It is scientifically impossible for a man to live inside a fish for three days. It's scientifically impossible for a virgin to have a child, or for a man to walk on water, or that a man be raised from the dead.” These things don't disprove the Bible. They prove that God is God. He is supernatural and performs miracles.

It is sad that anyone would think he must understand all the Bible perfectly before he can believe it. None of us are that smart! It is sheer arrogance to judge the word of God on the basis of whether you understand all of it. There are going to be some things you won't understand. They don't compute according to science, logic, or human understanding. God is not limited to our knowledge and understanding. God's thoughts and His ways are higher than ours. (Isaiah 55:8,9.) Why would someone think he knows better than God, when we all know so little?

Some say, “We've got all these different versions or translations of the Bible and none of them are

perfect. They all seem to contain errors.” It is true that we do not have a “perfect translation” of scripture. The inerrancy of scripture does not refer to translation, but to the original language, the original documents when men wrote in Hebrew and Greek. What God originally inspired is perfect.

Heaven and earth will pass away but God's word will never pass away. (Matthew 24:35.) The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God abides forever. (Isaiah 40:8.) Angels perform it. (Psalm 103:20.) The word of God never returns void. (Isaiah 55:11.) The word of God is health to our bodies. (Proverbs 4:20-22.) It is sweeter than honey. (Psalm 119:103.) It is sharper than any two-edged sword. (Hebrews 4:12.) Jesus tells us we will be judged by His words. (John 12:48.)

It's okay if you don't completely understand all of the Bible. The real question is, “Do you believe it?”

When you speak God's word filled with faith, it is superior to any other words.

— Miami, OK

“IT'S TOO LATE, I'VE GONE TOO FAR”

by Danny Tunnell

You may have said, “I've done too many bad things in my life. How could I ever get right with God?”

Well, have you ever committed adultery with a married woman, and then had her husband killed in an attempt to cover it up? A guy named David did that, and yet he is remembered as a man after God's own heart. (2 Samuel 11; 1 Samuel 13:14.) Have you ever had Christians killed and thrown in jail? Paul did that and later became a great apostle. (Acts 22:3,4.)

This is some of the best news we'll ever hear! It's not what we've done. It's what we do last! No matter how badly we mess up, that doesn't have to be the end.

John Mark messed up when he realized that Paul's ministry was real work and demanded a lot of sacrifice, so he quit. (Acts 13:13.) That's not the end of the story. Later, Paul would say, “Mark is profitable to me to the ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:11.) Mark

repented and became helpful and useful to Paul.

On any list of evil people King Manasseh would have to be near the top. For decades he engaged in the most sordid activity, including burning babies. But near the end of his life he humbled himself and repented. God had mercy on him and stayed judgment. (2 Chronicles 33:1-13.)

The mercy of God endures forever. (Psalm 136.) The problem is that people won't repent. They listen to the devil more than to God. They tell themselves, “It's too late. I've gone too far.”

It isn't all the mistakes you make in life. It's what you do after that, what you do last, that's going to count the most. It's possible to get off course badly; but that doesn't have to be the end.

The prodigal left home and engaged in riotous living. (Luke 15:11-13.) He broke the rules. While he was away, he did things he wasn't

allowed to do at home. In today's environment, his daddy didn't allow drunken parties, drugs, and pre-marital sex. The prodigal ran out of money. (Luke 15:14.) The way of the transgressor is hard. (Proverbs 13:15.) When he left home, he was haughty, he had money, he had his health, he was young, had his looks, and was ready to party! But all his party friends, as soon as the money was gone, left him. Where were those friends when he was about to starve?

The Bible says, “he came to himself.” He repented and went back home. His father didn't say, “I knew he'd come dragging himself back home; he sure is a sorry excuse for a son!” No! The father welcomed him back! (Luke 15:18-24.)

It's not what you've done. It's “will you repent?” Will you come back? God is always good, and His mercy endures forever! (Psalm 100:5; 103:17; Ephesians 2:4,5.)

— Miami, OK

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

“I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT”

By Joe Slater

Paul wrote the words of the title of this article while in a Roman dungeon awaiting execution. (2 Timothy 4:7.) He knew his earthly life was drawing to a close rapidly. Looking back, he was content and confident.

The New Testament word “fought” gives us our word “agonize.” It can refer to strenuous effort in athletics but appears to refer to combat in this text.

Paul was serious about spiritual warfare! He fought hard because Jesus, His gospel, and lost souls are worth fighting for. He fought hard because the enemy fights hard. Our “*adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith.*” (1 Peter 5:8-9.)

Satan's minions fought Paul tooth and nail. Whether from the Judaizers or pagans, he faced relentless hostility everywhere he went. Not rarely the opposition became violent. With countless scars across his beaten back and the aftereffects of being stoned almost to death, Paul bore in his “*body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*” (Galatians 6:17.)

Timothy, Paul's son in the faith, had seen firsthand what his mentor had endured. He knew precisely what Paul meant as he exhorted the young preacher, “*Fight the good fight of (the) faith.*” (1 Timothy 6:12.) Years later he warned Timothy of “perilous times” on the horizon, emphasizing that “*all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*” (2 Timothy 3:1, 12.)

Although few, if any, modern Americans have had to suffer for the Lord the way Jesus and many early Christians did, we still are obligated to fight the good fight. Satan and his servants aren't resting.

Are you striving or sleeping?

— Justin, TX

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord . . . Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 6:11,12.)

LOVE DOESN'T REJOICE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

By Joe Slater

Why would Paul write those words in 1 Corinthians 13:6? Rejoicing in unrighteousness -- what a horrible thought! Does anyone actually do that? I wish I could answer, “No, of course not!” But that wouldn't be true.

The Sanhedrin rejoiced when Judas agreed to betray Jesus. (Mark 14:11.) What could be more unrighteous?

Jesus told His disciples that when He was killed, they would weep and lament, but the world would rejoice. (John 16:20.) Is anything more unrighteous than murdering God's Son?

Paul warned the Philippians about enemies of the cross “*whose god is their belly and whose glory (same word as rejoicing) is in their shame.*” (Philippians 3:19.) Yes, they were rejoicing in unrighteousness!

Current American culture calls us all sorts of names if we refuse to rejoice in unrighteousness. Rather than being ashamed for murdering innocent, helpless babies, the pro-abortionists say, “Shout Your Abortion!” That is, be proud of it. When we speak the truth about abortion, we are vilified as “the Christian Taliban”!

Secular progressives insist we must congratulate and commend those in same sex marriages. If you dare to affirm Biblical marriage, you are written off as unloving and intolerant.

The same crowd demands not just tolerance but approval of the “transgenderism” myth. When you decline to refer to William as “Wilma,” you are maligned as a mean-spirited extremist and a bigot.

God is love (1 John 4:8), and God is righteous (Daniel 9:14.) Since God is righteous, He cannot rejoice in unrighteousness, but that does not make Him unloving! Neither is it unloving when His people decline to rejoice in unrighteousness.

— Justin, TX

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who practice peace.” (James 3:17,18.)

MATERIALLY OBSESSED

By Dalton Key

I once read of two unusual grave markers, hidden beneath the brush of an old, long-forgotten English cemetery. Over one grave, the marker bears the curious inscription, "She died for want of things." Alongside that stone is another which reads simply, "He died trying to give them to her."

We live in a strange age of short cash, easy credit, and out-of-control covetousness. Confusing wants for needs, too many of us race through life in a mad scramble for more and more of less and less, never fully satisfied, never completely content. Ours has become a world governed by greed.

Jesus warns, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." (Luke 12:15.)

Paul teaches, "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Timothy 6:6-10.)

Life is too short, death and judgment are too certain, and eternity is too endless for us to give undue importance to money and the things money can buy.

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:15-17.)

The world, "lying in wickedness," may be obsessed with material things, but "we are of God." (1 John 5:19.)

It's time we starting acting like it!

EDITORIAL . . .

DISTURBING

By Dalton Key

Something has gone terribly, undeniably wrong. When men in lofty positions of authority speak in lies, deceptions, and pseudo-clever half-truths, exchanging the clear path of truth for their carefully-parsed semantic mazes, something is just not right.

And yes, it disturbs me; as it should disturb all of us.

Doesn't it bother you to hear untruths presented, promoted, and then defended as being true? Doesn't it fuel your righteous indignation to stand by and witness this constant, relentless campaign of misrepresentation?

Please don't misunderstand. I'm not talking politics; I'm discussing religion.

Yes, something is wrong when preachers . . .

. . . in the face of clear Bible passages such as Mark 16:16 insist that baptism has nothing to do with our salvation from sin.

. . . despite Paul's unmistakable language in Ephesians 4:4 promote the premise that one church is just as good as another.

. . . in utter disregard for the words of Jesus in John 8:32, suggest that truth is altogether subjective and varies from person to person and from situation to situation.

This represents only a small sampling; similar examples are nearly too numerous to enumerate.

When supposed proclaimers of truth seem intent on delivering anything and everything *but* truth, something has gone wrong. Our Lord commissioned his disciples to "preach the gospel." (Mark 16:15.) The inspired doctrine of New Testament apostles gave foundation to the early church. (Acts 2:42.) Paul insisted on preaching nothing but "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2.) Paul charged Timothy, his young son in the faith, to "preach the word." (2 Timothy 4:2.) The pure preaching of the pure word of God was always meant to be the norm, not the exception, for those representing the Lord's body. But, alas, such is often not the case.

Jeremiah's words of long ago - "From the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely" - could just as well be written concerning the ills of our day. (Jeremiah 6:13.) Thanks to the falseness of the messages coming from their trusted leaders, the people of Jeremiah's day turned their back on the "old paths" of heaven's instructions and suffered the terrible consequences for their refusal. (Jeremiah 6:16,17.)

No wonder Jeremiah is remembered as "the weeping prophet."

**GOD'S FINAL AND COMPLETE REVELATION**

By Milton Smith

It is most interesting to note the progressive revelation given by Jesus Christ in the gospel account of John. For example, at the first Passover our Lord asserted His divine authority over His "Father's house" while in the temple. It was on this occasion that Jesus drove those greedy money changers from the temple area. But it was at Jesus' second Passover that he demonstrated his power over disease and gave intimation of His coming dominion over the grave. In his amazing miracle involving the loaves and fishes he revealed the undeniable fact that His very hands gave increase to the earth. And it was the dramatic incident of Jesus walking on the churning waters of the Sea of Galilee one stormy night that showed that even nature itself must bow and submit to Him. In the discourse that followed, we find Jesus proclaiming Himself to be the bread of life.

Jesus said that day, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes on me shall never thirst." (John 6:35.) We quickly recall another incident in which Jesus used a very similar metaphor. It was the occasion in which He met the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well and spoke those beautiful words, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, give me drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water." (John 4:10.) Whether it is the "bread of life" or "living water," Jesus is the great provider.

I have long been amazed at the manner in which Jesus progressively taught His followers. Shortly before going to the cross, at the final Passover that He would experience before His death, He said to the apostles, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but

you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth." (John 16:12-13.) How fortunate we are today to have God's complete and final revelation! While the apostles themselves had to receive revelation in a progressive sense - even receiving further revelation following our Lord's ascension - we possess "all things that pertain to life and godliness." (2 Peter 1:3.) How blessed we are that we do not have to "wait" for future revelation today. Read your Bible! What a blessing it is to be able to open this most Holy Book and receive that final, divine light that fully illuminates our pathway to eternal life!

— Tulsa, OK

OBEDIENT CHILDREN

By Milton Smith

In discussing the duties of children to parents, the apostle Paul writes in Colossians 3:20, "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord." The Greek word for "children" in this passage is a very general word for offspring. It is a word for anybody, of any age, who is still under parental guidance. It applies to the teenager as much as to the 5-year-old. The Biblical use of the word tells us that a person stops being a "child" when he establishes his own independence separate and apart from the ruling hand of his parents.

As long as a child is under the care and oversight of the parents, he is to "obey" them "in all things."

Today, the phrase "parental authority" is almost anathematized. In some educational circles parents are being told that children should be given plenty of freedom to develop their own lives by making decisions independent of their parents, especially when they reach teenage years. While we might concede some truth to this, the Bible still plainly teaches that any child who is still under parental

authority is to *obey* his parents. Of course, such obedience is always limited to that which does not violate God's standards. Obviously, Paul knew his readers would understand this. If a parent steps between the child and God, the parent has usurped God's authority and the child must obey God.

Still, the inspired hand of the apostle leaves no room for doubt that children who obey their parents (while still under their oversight) are children who are "well pleasing to the Lord." This is the way God has set it up; it is His "divine standard" for the home.

When I was a young boy in school, I recall certain classmates who were often rebellious against teachers. I figured that they were probably this way with their parents as well. In later years, some of those rebellious children ran afoul of the law. I'm left to wonder how much different their lives might have turned out had they learned at an earlier age to respect authority. God knows what is best, and He has clearly stated that the child who respects and obeys his parents is "well pleasing" to Him.

Inspiration should never be ignored.

— Tulsa, OK

"My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck." (Proverbs 1:8,9.)

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