

Facts to Know or Truths to be Lived?

God did not give the Bible to His children just so that they could amass an array of facts. The Bible was given so that their lives might be constantly changed and that they might increasingly be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. In other words, as our title indicates, the word of God is not just a set of facts to be learned; it presents truths that are to be incorporated into the lives of God's children. We are self-deceived if we think that because we know much factual information from the Bible, we are spiritual-minded even if we are not living godly lives. The Scriptures plainly indicate that God is not as concerned with how much we know as He is with how we live according to the knowledge we have.

In fact, knowledge increases responsibility. The more we know the more we have a sacred obligation to apply that knowledge in our daily living to the glory of God. That knowledge increases responsibility is plainly taught in Luke 12:47, 48, "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." When God's children know something good and fail to put that into practice they sin against God. This is clearly taught in James 4:17, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

A Sad Case

I once knew a young man who was the son of a Primitive Baptist minister. He came to live in Memphis to get a job. He roomed with another young man who was raised in a different Christian denomination. Both of these young men attended the church where I was a member. The young man who was not raised in a Primitive Baptist home became very interested in the doctrine we preach and it seemed as if he would soon want to join our church. However, after a while he quit coming. We didn't know why. After awhile one of our brethren ran into him and asked him why he didn't come anymore. The reason was very sad. The son of the Primitive Baptist minister knew the Bible very well. He was very adept at defending the doctrines of grace. In fact, he enjoyed debating his roommate and winning all the Scriptural arguments about the doctrine of salvation. However, he had a very sinful lifestyle that included drunkenness. He knew many facts about the Bible and prided himself on his knowledge and on his ability to win arguments concerning the Scriptures. However, his abominable lifestyle nauseated his friend to the point that he refused listen to what he had to say.

Factual knowledge about the Bible is not enough. This is just the starting point. It is certainly important to learn what the Scriptures say and to know what they mean, but if we stop here, we have not gone far enough. After learning what the Bible teaches, we must prayerfully try to incorporate what we have learned into our daily lives.

The Very Purpose of Scripture

All Bible believers love the classic passage that has to do with the divine inspiration of Scripture. We delight in reading in 2 Tim. 3: 16 that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God...” We will go into spiritual combat with that verse against those who deny the inspiration of the word of God. It is good that we do so. The doctrine of inspiration is vital to the profession of Christianity. If we fail here we have no foundation on which to stand. We fervently sing, “How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent word...?” We read in Psalm 11:3, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” Yes, the doctrine of the infallible inspiration of Scripture is absolutely essential.

But, in loving these verses that speak of the inspiration of Scripture, we sometimes fail to consider what this same passage teaches us about the reason the Scriptures were given. Reading the last part of the verse we have previously cited and the verse following it we learn that the Scriptures are “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.” The word “profitable” has the sense of being useful. The Scriptures are useful. They are effective in the daily lives of the children of God. They are designed to teach God’s standards (doctrine), to bring us to conviction (reproof) when we fail, to set us on the pathway of righteous living (correction), and to provide us with the proper training (instruction in righteousness) so that we may live consistent, godly lives. The end of all this is that the child of God might be “thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” “Thoroughly furnished” means that the Christian is completely equipped to perform the good works that God mandates. God has not left us lacking. This truth is also taught in 2 Peter 1:3, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue...”

Is the Bible, then, given us just so we can know enough facts to win a game of Bible trivia or to win a debate with someone on doctrine? No! The Bible is given us so that we may glorify God in our lives. The truths of Scripture must not be only in our heads. They must also be in our hearts (so that we may truly worship) and in our feet (so that we live consistently with our profession).

It is very true that to be faithful to God we must often debate and defend the truth of Scripture. We read in 1 Pet. 3: 15 that we must be “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear...” The word translated “answer” means that we must be ready to give a “verbal defense” of the gospel. We must know the word of God before we can do this. However, if our lives are not consistent with what we profess, our verbal defense will not be credible. The first part of 1 Pet. 3: 15 tell us that before we are able to give this verbal defense we must “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” As we sanctify our Master in our hearts so that we can be prepared to defend His glorious doctrine our prayer might well be the same as that of David recorded in Psalm 19:14, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”

More of the Same

There are many other passages of Scripture that teach the same principles as those set forth in 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17 about the purpose of the word of God. The word of God must **do** something in our lives if it is properly assimilated. God, through the apostle Paul, gave Timothy a sacred commandment of things to be taught. What was the purpose of this commandment? He tells us in 1 Timothy 1:5, “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned...” The word translated “end” here means “aim or purpose.” The very purpose of the commandment was to produce Christian charity or love in those to whom it was preached.

Paul was made an apostle and commissioned to preach the everlasting gospel. What was the purpose of this preaching? Was it just intellectual stimulation? No! Paul tells the brethren at Rome the purpose of his being commissioned an apostle. He wrote in Romans 1:5, “By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for **obedience to the faith** among all nations, for his name...” He was to call God’s children to obedience to the faith which was once delivered to the saints. The gospel was designed to make a great difference in their lives. This is in the first chapter of the long and profound epistle to the Romans. To underscore the importance of this principle he repeated it in the last chapter, where he wrote, speaking of the gospel, in Romans 16:26, “But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the **obedience of faith**...”

Hearing and Doing

Being sinful creatures we are so prone to self-deception. We are apt to think that if we have attended the worship services and attentively listened to the sermon, then that is all that is required of us. After all, we have done better than most. At least we have gone to church. We have sat there for an hour and listened to the sermon. Surely that is all the Lord requires of us. This is nothing else than self-deception. As far as God is concerned, listening to the sermon is just the first step in our obedience. After we have heard the word of God, we must consistently and prayerfully endeavor to integrate that word into our daily lives.

There is a very graphic word picture that our Lord has given us in the Sermon on the Mount that illustrates this point. The Lord Jesus taught of two men who were building houses. One man built his house on a foundation of rock, the other on sand. Troubles came to each of these men. There was rain, floods and wind. The man who had built on the firm foundation survived. The man who built on the foundation of sand suffered a great disaster. The Lord referred to the man who had built his house on the rock as a “wise man.” He called the one who had built his house on sand a “foolish man.” What was the difference in these men? The Lord said the wise man “**heareth** these saying of mine, and **doeth** them.” He said the foolish man “**heareth** these sayings of mine and **doeth them not**.” Both of these men “went to church.” Both of them listened to the sermon. They had that much in common. But here is where they parted ways. One of

them put into practice what he had heard and the other thought that he had fulfilled his obligation to God by merely knowing what was right, whether or not he practiced it.

James also speaks of this. In the book of James, Chapter 1, verses 22-27, he makes it plain that to know without doing means that an individual is self-deceived and that his religion is vain. He plainly tells us that we **absolutely must** be doers of the word as well as hearers. He says in James 1:22, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

In Chapter 2 of his epistle, James shows that the only way we can know if we have really been given the gift of faith is whether or not the fruit of this faith is evident in our lives. Faith without the works it inevitably produces is not genuine faith. Faith without works produces an empty profession. James asks the rhetorical question in James 2:20, “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” He answers his own question in James 2:26, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” It is one thing to say that we believe in God and in His only begotten Son. To demonstrate that we actually believe this, according to the Biblical description of true faith, is something else.

There are many who profess that they know God. They know much about the Bible. They talk a good game but their lives belie what they say. The inspired word of God says of such in Titus 1:16, “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

Salvation by Grace

There is nothing more comforting to a poor, old sinner like I am than the glorious truth that salvation is entirely by the grace of God. If a person has any insight into his sinful nature at all, he will readily acknowledge that the prophet had it just right when he wrote in Isaiah 64:6, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and **all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags**; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” The truly awakened sinner will be in full agreement with Isaac Watts when he wrote, “Should sudden vengeance seize my breath, I must pronounce Thee just in death; and if my soul were sent to hell, Thy righteous law approves it well.” Yes, salvation must be entirely by grace. As one Spirit-taught sinner has said, “I did all the sinning and God did all the saving!”

What kind of effect does this salvation have on an individual? Does he repeat what is written in Romans 6:1, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” If he is truly born from above he answers the same way Paul did in Romans 6:2, “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” When a person really realizes what God has done for him in delivering him from the wrath to come, he is filled with gratitude and wants to demonstrate this thankfulness in his daily life.

The one who understands salvation by grace knows that the doctrine of eternal election is true. He knows that his hope is based on the fact that God the Father chose him in Christ Jesus before the world began. Nothing can erase his name from the Lamb's Book of Life. Is this truth designed to make him careless in his daily living? "No," a thousand times, "no!" He must heed what Paul said in Colossians 3:12, "Put on therefore, **as the elect of God**, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering..."

What about the doctrine of redemption? The truth of this glorious teaching is that Jesus Christ bore all the sins of all the elect family of God on the Cross of Calvary. He paid the price for those sins and satisfied the justice of God. No one can lay anything to the charge of God's elect. Their justification is complete. The ransom has been paid. The warfare has been accomplished. Does this doctrine, when it is truly ingrained in the heart, lead one to live a careless or slothful life? Again, the answer is a resounding "no!" The individual who realizes the value of the great price of the precious blood of Jesus that paid the price for his sins, identifies with what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Ear, Thumb, Toe

The Bible is such a wonderful book! Being inspired by God, it is chock full of wonderful teaching techniques. It is filled with memorable word pictures. We find one which is pertinent to our subject in Leviticus 14: 14-17. There the writer is considering the trespass offering. We read of this in Leviticus 14:14, "And the priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the **right ear** of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his **right hand**, and upon the great toe of his **right foot**..."

The teaching here seems to be obvious. The sinner has his ear cleansed so that he may hear God's word in an understanding and spiritual way. But hearing is not enough. Next, the thumb of his right hand is cleansed. In Scripture, the hand often designates that member of the body by which we work. We can see this in Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." The awakened child of God has not only been cleansed by the blood of Christ in order that he may hear God's word, he has also been cleansed that he may do good works to the glory of God. The final place to which the blood was applied, was to the great toe of the right foot. The foot is, of course the member of the body that enables us to walk. In Scripture the walk usually signifies our course of habitual conduct, or our lifestyle. We can see this in Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" We can also see it in 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

It is true as our Lord said in John 15: 5, "...without me ye can do nothing." It is also true as Paul said in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth

me.” That same truth is taught in our word picture from Leviticus. Not only was the blood applied to the ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe, the oil was also applied to these three places. The oil here, as in many other places in the Bible represents the Holy Spirit. Cleansed by the blood of Christ; empowered by the Holy Spirit! Truly our bountiful God has given us all we need to live for Him.

What a beautiful word picture! It is so plain here that the Bible is not just a set of facts to be learned. Learning is just the first step. The learning should lead to godly works and to a godly walk!

Encouragement

God’s blood-bought children know that they are sinners. They want to please God. However, they find that though the spirit is willing, the flesh is, indeed, weak. They identify with Robert Robinson when he wrote, “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love. Here’s my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above.” How can they perform those things that please God? Can they really grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The answer is a very encouraging, “Yes!” God has not left His children helpless. He has given them means, by which they can be overcomers. The primary means is the word of God. If the Bible is daily read and meditated on, dramatic results will be evident in the life of the child of God. It is not just enough to spend a couple of hurried minutes in the word, however. It must be read, studied, meditated on, and prayed over. It is sometimes necessary to consult with seasoned Christians about how to consistently incorporate the word of God into one’s life in specific situations. Speaking of the way the word should be embedded in the life of the Christian, Paul said in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” To dwell means to live. When we live in a place we stay there much of the time. We reside there. We do not just pay an occasional visit. Unless we are traveling, we are in our home a part of each twenty-four hour period. The definition given by the *On Line Bible* for the word “dwell” is “metaph. to dwell in one and influence him (for good). . .”

God’s people often need to be revived. Their spirits sink. They tend to become weary in well doing. What can revive one when he gets in a lowly condition? The wonderful answer is that the word of God can! David was a wonderful child of God. He had ups and downs in his life. The Psalms have been called a biography of his soul. It is amazing how joyful he could be at some times, and how mournful he was at others. He got down, but he never stayed down. God always eventually revived him. What means were used to revive David? He tells us in Psalm 119:50, “This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.” The Hebrew form of the verb translated “quicken” is the piel stem. In this form the verb means, “to quicken, revive, refresh.”

Dear reader, when you are discouraged or if you have stumbled into sin, get your Bible out. Read it. Pray over it. Meditate on it. Eventually God will use it to revive you and you will find that the word of God is your comfort, even as it was David's.

Glorify God

When we realize that the Bible is not just a set of facts to be learned, but that it contains precious truths to be lived, we are in a position to glorify our wonderful Lord. A prayerful study of the Scriptures should lead us to practice good works. Why should we be interested in performing good works? We should want to practice godliness because to do so brings glory to our Heavenly Father. Christ Himself said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." He also said in John 15:8, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

Do we profess an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ? Let us strive to live lives that are consistent with that profession. Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:19, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

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