

## TEACHERS

**“Not many of you should be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (Ja. 3:1).**

- According to the American Bible Society, 57% of the world’s languages do not have a complete copy of the Scriptures.
- Many do not even have a written language!
- Even for those with a written language many still cannot read the Bible for there are 750 million illiterate adults in the world.
- Out of the world's 6,901 different languages, 1,859 (31 %) don't have a Bible translation processes started. 2,195 (26 %) are in the process of having Scripture translated but do not yet have completed Scripture.
- **THIS REALITY GIVES TEACHERS A TREMENDOUS AUTHORITY. MOST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD ONLY KNOW WHAT THEIR TEACHERS TELL THEM! BECAUSE TEACHERS HAVE SUCH GREAT INFLUENCE GOD WILL JUDGE THEM MORE STRICTLY!**
- Just as the bits in the mouth of a horse turn the whole animal, and just as a small rudder turns a great ship, and just as a small fire can burn down a great forest, so also one teacher can influence many people (Ja. 3:1-6). Bad teachers are motivated by “envy and selfish ambition” which creates disorder and every evil practice (Ja. 3:13-16).
- Good teachers, by contrast, have heavenly wisdom. **“The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, fully of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness” (Ja. 3:17-18).**
- Good teachers will be rewarded! Bad teachers will be punished!

## EXPLAINING THE BIBLE

When the people of God came out of Babylonian captivity Ezra read the book of the Law to them from daybreak until noon, and the people listened attentively (Neh. 8:3). Then the Levites also read from the book of the law **“making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what is being read” (Neh. 8:8).** We can never be wrong reading the Scriptures, but we can be wrong when we try to explain what the Scriptures mean.

While the Scripture are inspired, our explanations of the Scriptures are not! Peter warns of abusing the Scriptures with these words: **“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Pet. 3:14-16).**

Yes! Bad teachers face their “own destruction”. In Matthew 23 Jesus pronounced seven woes upon the corrupt “teachers of the law and Pharisees”. Please consider:

- “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. (Matt. 23:13-14)
- “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.” (Matt. 23:15)
- “Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.’ (Matt. 23:16)
- “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.” (Matt. 23:23-24)
- “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.” (Matt. 23:25-26)
- “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.” (Matt. 23:27-28)
- “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!” (Matt. 23:29-32)
- Jesus said: “YOU SNAKES! YOU BROOD OF VIPERS! HOW CAN YOU ESCAPE BEING CONDEMNED TO HELL” (Matt. 23:33)
- “Not many of you should be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly”
- Our worship of God is in vain when we replace the teaching of God with our own ideas. We must obey God, rather than the rules and regulations of men (Matt. 15:9).

#### THE JEWS WERE DIVIDED BY THEIR TEACHERS

The Law did not divide the Jews, their teachers did! The teachers of the Law did not agree on how the Law should be interpreted. For example the Law states that a man can divorce his wife if he finds “**something indecent**” about her (Deut. 24:1). Some teachers taught that “something indecent” was adultery, while other teachers insisted it was anything the husband didn’t like. The Jews were therefore divided on the subject of marriage and divorce. Jesus was drawn into this debate when some Pharisees tested him with this question: “**Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason**” (Matt. 19:3). No matter how Jesus answered this question He would alienate somebody.

The subject of marriage and divorce is still a subject of controversy among teachers of the Bible! Sadly, the people of God are still divided over this subject! Strong teachers among the Jews who disagreed with one another developed loyal students and divided the people of God into various sects. The Bible mentions Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and Zealots, but there were also other Jewish sects as well. Their differences were often serious. For example: **“The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all” (Acts 23:8).**

Too often divisions in the church are the result of people following human teachers rather than following Christ. In Corinth, for example, Paul wrote: **“What I mean is this: One of you says, ‘I follow Paul’; another ‘I follow Apollos’; another ‘I follow Cephas’; still another, ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? . . .” (1 Cor. 1:12-13)** In reality the divisive teachers at Corinth were not Paul or Apollos. The divisive teachers were in fact **“false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).**

The situation at Corinth was so serious that Paul feared **“quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder”** would destroy the church (2 Cor. 11:20). The situation was so volatile that Paul did not name the actual divisive teachers but merely used himself and Apollos as examples. He did this to teach them to follow Christ and not men. Paul clarifies this by saying: “Now brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, ‘Do not go beyond what is written.’ Then you will not take pride in one man over against another” (1 Cor. 4:6).

Following men rather than Christ is a serious problem. Paul warned the elders at Ephesus about such divisions by saying: **“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:28-31).**

As we have said, the Jews were not divided by the Law, but by the teachers of the Law! In the same way Christians are not divided by the Scriptures, but by teachers of the Scriptures! Jude reminds us that those who divide the Body of Christ do not have the Spirit (Jude 19). Causing division is contrary to the command of Christ: **“I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.” (Rom. 16:17-18)**

#### THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

**“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4:3)**

Please note that we are not commanded to “make” the unity of the Spirit, but we are to “keep” it! God “makes” the unity, but we must “keep” that unity!

For example, Philemon was a fellow Christian and dear friend of Paul who lived in Colosse. He had a slave named Onesimus who apparently robbed his master and ran away to Rome. Paul was a prisoner in Rome at the time and led Onesimus to Christ. Even though Philemon and Onesimus were many miles apart, and were also separated by their social standing, when Onesimus became a Christian he was united with Philemon and also with all other Christians. Paul did not make that unity, the Holy Spirit did! **“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor. 12:13).** There is only “One Body”, not many!(Eph. 4:4)

Paul’s letter to Philemon is a wonderful example of “keeping the unity of the Spirit”. It was a delicate situation that required wisdom that was **“first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, fully of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere”**(James 3:17). Paul wrote: **“Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. It is as none other than Paul—an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—that I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would not seem forced but would be voluntary. Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever—no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord. So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask. And one thing more: Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers. (Philemon verses 8-22)**

## UNITY IN CHRIST

We live in a divided world! We are divided economically, racially, socially, and religiously. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: **“he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.” (Eph. 1:9-10)** Unity in Christ is not a peripheral matter, but is central to the eternal purpose of God!

In Christ all of our differences are discarded and we become one! **“You are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then are you Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:26-29).** Eliminating all division under the headship of Christ is God’s eternal

purpose! Those led by the Spirit of God do not divide the Body of Christ. As Jude said: **“These are men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit” (Jude 19).**

On the night before Calvary Jesus prayed his high priestly prayer which is recorded in John chapter 17. That prayer is divided into three parts. In the first part Jesus prayed for himself. In the second part Jesus prayed His disciples. Finally, Jesus prayed for all believers. The one request Jesus had for all believers is that we would be “one” even as “He and the Father were one”.

Please note: **“My prayer is not for them alone”** (that is, not just for His disciples) **“I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be one is us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20-21).**

Note also that the unity of believers is associated with world evangelism! Jesus wanted us to be “one” so that the “world may believe”! A divided church hinders world evangelism!

### TRAINING FAITHFUL TEACHERS

**“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2).**

Someone said it is better to get 100 people working than it is to try and do the work of 100 people. This is true! While Paul was at Ephesus in only two years **“all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10).** Paul obviously did not personally speak to all of these people, but the people he trained did!

To illustrate the power of training faithful teachers consider that if you only trained one person per year, but each person you trained also trained one person per year, the entire world could be evangelized in only 33 years. It is easy to prove this. In 10 years you go 2-4-8-16-32-64-128-256-512-1024. In 10 years you would have 1,024 trained teachers. For the sake of making it easy, let us assume we have 24 backsliders. In the next ten years you would go from 1,000 trained teachers to 1,000,000 trained teachers. In the next 10 years you would go from 1,000,000 to 1,000,000,000. On year 31 - 2,000,000,000. On year 32 - 4,000,000,000. On year 33 - 8,000,000,000 which is the approximate population of our present world!

Note that Timothy was to train “reliable” men. Every evangelist can tell the difference between “reliable” people and “unreliable” people. It is hard to start a fire with wet wood and it is hard for the church to grow if you waste your time trying to train unreliable people. You start a fire with small pieces of dry wood but when the fire grows hot the wet wood also dries out. While every one could hear Timothy teach, he was to concentrate his training on people who were reliable. When enough reliable people are trained it is easier for everyone to be reliable!

The word translated as “men” in this verse is “anthropois”. It refers to both men and women! It is the basis of our word “anthropology”. An anthropologist studies “mankind” which includes both men and women. The point is that reliable women can be soul winners just like men. Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned 6 times in the Bible (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; and 2 Tim.

4:19). Three times he is mentioned first, and three time she is mentioned first. Perhaps this indicates that she was doing as much teaching as her husband!

Timothy was to teach what he had heard Paul teach in public. Paul was an inspired man. He had the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). The things which Paul wrote were the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). Timothy was to teach the same things that Paul taught in the presence of many witnesses. Peter said it like this: **“If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God” (1 Pet. 4:11)**. You cannot go wrong teaching the things of God using the very words of God! **“All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17)**.

### THE WORD OF GOD IS ALIVE

**“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” (Heb. 4:12-13)**

The word of God is like a living seed. It not only produces life but adapts to different situations. A flower, for example, will adapt and invariably face the sun. A tree can adapt and force its way through concrete to survive. Christian life comes from a living Seed - **“You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and eternal word of God” (1 Pet. 1:23)**. This “imperishable seed” can adapt to your own needs and “spread rapidly and be honored” (2 Thess. 3:1).

Suppose, for example, you are teaching 1 Thessalonians to a family. 1 Thess. 5:22 states **“avoid every kind of evil”**. A five year old child will see one kind of “evil” while his 15 year old brother may see another. The 40 year old mother will be facing different kinds of “evil” than her 45 year old husband. The 65 year old grand parents will have different temptations than they did 50 years before. If someone in the family is a preacher they too will have a unique perspective. Since the word of God is alive it can adapt to meet the needs of everyone!

### TEACHERS MUST STILL BE CAREFUL

Paul wrote: **“I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Rom. 1:16)**.

The Greek word translated in this verse as “power” is “dunamis” from which we get our word “dynamite”. In March 1913, a horrible disaster occurred when 340 tons of dynamite being transferred from a barge to the British steamer Alum Chine suddenly exploded killing 50 company workers and injuring 75 others. The shock of the first blast was felt as far away as the Philadelphia Naval Yard and in cities in three other states. A second explosion destroyed two other ships. The foreman in charge of the loading was arrested and charged with negligence.

It is also a crime in the eyes of God to be careless with His inspired word. Many have given their fortunes and others have died so that you can have the Word of God in your own language. God is not pleased when you neglect His Word or treat it with disrespect. Special punishment is reserved for those to add to or take away from God’s Holy Word. John wrote: **“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that**

**person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.” (Rev. 22:18-19)**

The devil, as you know, quotes Scripture, but he distorts it by adding or subtracting from what God has said. God told Adam that if he ate the forbidden fruit he would surely die. The devil added one word and said “You will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). The devil quoted the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm to Jesus, but he left out some important words. The devil said: “He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone” (Matt. 4:6). The devil, however, left out the words “to guard you in all your ways” (Ps. 91:11). Yes! The angels of God will guard your ways but only when you are doing what God wants you to do!

So every teacher needs to be careful how they handle the word of God. Paul warned the Corinthians of those who corrupted the word of God (2 Cor. 2:17). Paul renounced such corruption and promised to handle the word of God correctly. Please consider: **“Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”** (2 Cor. 4:1-6)

Jesus commanded: **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me”** (Lk. 9:23). Some teachers, however, are enemies of the cross! They preach a gospel the promises no suffering. Paul warned about such teachers: **“For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things”** (Phil. 3:19).

John warned: **“I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them. Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work.”** (2 John 7-11)

#### PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR

**“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.**

Ballard Flint was a Cherokee Indian born in Indian Territory in the United States on September 4, 1895. Indian Territory became the 46<sup>th</sup> state on Nov. 16, 1907 and is now called Oklahoma. Ballard

lived in the small town of Fairland, Oklahoma which has a population of about 1,000. Ballard was an alcoholic who could not keep a job. His small shack had no furniture and he used orange crates for chairs and tables. His relatives frequently found him lying in his own vomit.

Bob Lyttle was a student at the Ozark Bible College and went to Fairland, Oklahoma to preach in 1952. Bob didn't know much about the Bible and was just getting started. He did not graduate until three years later in 1955. By the grace of God Bob led Ballard to Christ and baptized him in the creek behind his tiny shack. You do not need to be a Bible scholar in order to win people to Christ. Any Christian can do it! Ballard Flint could neither read or write, but the first week after receiving Christ as Savior he helped lead over 30 people to Christ.

Some people made fun of Ballard. Once, when in the barber shop getting a hair cut, someone said: "Now that you are a Bible scholar, tell us where Jesus was born?" Ballard replied: "I don't know where Jesus was born but I know where he is living. He is living in my heart!"

The small church where Bob was preaching began to grow, and Bob was quick to give God the glory through the soul winning efforts of Ballard Flint. When Ballard had his voice box removed because of cancer he had someone teach him how to "draw" the plan of salvation. Even without being able to speak he continued to win people to Christ! His love for lost souls conquered his fear!

When Ballard died he had the biggest funeral ever conducted in the whole county. Bob wrote a beautiful tribute to him which was published in the Christian Standard. It was called "The Ballad of Ballard Flint".

Ballard died Sept. 6, 1974 and Bob died Jan. 24, 2022. I'm sure both men made many mistakes, but winning people to Christ is never a mistake. The Psalmist said: **"Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him"** (Ps. 126:5-6).

When Ballard and Bob were welcomed into Glory they were bringing many lost souls with them! Remember! **"There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents"**! (Lk. 15:10)

WE TOO CAN HAVE SUCH JOY WHEN LOVE CONQUERS OUR FEAR!

