

NOT MANY TEACHERS

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

“If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God” (1 Pet. 4:11)

Just as the bits in a horse’s mouth can turn the whole animal, and just as a small rudder can direct a large ship, so also one teacher can influence a great many people (Ja. 3:3, 4). The Holy Spirit has gifted some to be teachers, but not everybody. Those who “presume” to teach need to understand that God will hold them to a higher standard. Every child of God is precious and when the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch. God is not happy when any teacher misleads His children!

When the people of God came out of Babylonian captivity the Book of the Law was read to them from daybreak until noon. Further, the teachers gave the meaning of the Law and made it clear (Neh. 8:1 - 8). Anybody could read the Law, but not every one could correctly explain what it meant. Paul told Timothy to give attention to “the public reading of Scripture” (1 Tim. 4:13). It is always safe to read the Scriptures, but we must always use caution when we explain what the Scriptures mean. At the risk of being redundant, it is always safe to listen to or read the Scriptures! Not only is it safe, it is essential! Remember! Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God! (Matt. 4:4)

While you may not understand everything in the Bible, it is always safe to read the Bible and to share it with others. You can have boldness and confidence when you speak the very words of God.

THE WORLD CANNOT BE MOVED

“The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, *wherewith* he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.” (Psalm 93:1 (KJV))

“Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever” (Ps. 104:5 KJV)

“Fear before him all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it cannot be moved” (1 Chron. 16:30 KJV).

Based upon it’s understanding of the Scriptures that the earth could not be moved, the mediaeval Church taught that the earth was stationary and that the sun and planets revolved around it. This teaching dated back at least to Claudius Ptolemy in the second century. 500 years ago this view seemed to be in harmony with both science and the Bible. Not so today. Today most everyone who is educated believes that the earth revolves around the sun. The Bible has not changed but our interpretation of it has. When Copernicus proposed that the earth revolved around the sun he was

denounced by virtually all who believed the Bible. Protestant opposition was led by such brilliant scholars as Luther, Calvin, and Melanchthon. When Galileo concluded that the earth revolved around the sun the Inquisition found him "vehemently suspect of heresy". He was sentenced to house arrest in 1633 and remained under arrest until his death in 1642.

As we have said, Bible believers today read the same Scriptures that Luther, Calvin, and Melanchthon read but interpret them differently!

Reading the Scriptures is always safe, but explaining what they mean requires caution! It is always safe, however, to speak the very words of God.

HERMENEUTICS

Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. The name is derived from the Greek "Hermes" who was believed to be the messenger of the gods. His magic wand had the power to close the eyes of mortals, to cause dreams, and to wake the slumbering. The word is now applied to the way we read and understand the Bible. The subject is indeed relevant, for our "hermeneutic" can determine both our life style and our eternal destiny.

The importance of hermeneutics is illustrated by the story of Randy and Vicki Weaver as reported in the August 28th, 1995 NEWSWEEK. They were married in 1971 and were in the process of experiencing the "American Dream." They lived in the nicest house on the block, and owned a Mustang, Corvette, and Triumph. They became ashamed, however, of their hedonistic lifestyle, and moved to the wilds of northern Idaho. The reason for this abrupt change was their "hermeneutic." They called themselves "legalists", because they believed the Bible was the literal Word of God. Based upon their understanding of Scripture, they concluded that the forces of the Soviet Union, the U.S. Government, and Jewish bankers, were ready to strike against the American people. A passage from Ezekiel influenced them: "Son of man, (Christian Americans), set thy face against Gog, (the grand conspiracy) . . . And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God." Based on his interpretation of the Scriptures Randy collected an arsenal of weapons and slept with a loaded pistol under his pillow. The approach of federal troops to his home at Ruby Ridge resulted in an 11 day siege and the death of Randy's wife, Vicki, their son, Samuel, and Deputy Marshal William Degan.

This deadly confrontation resulted in a shakeup in the F.B.I., and a \$3.1 million settlement to Randall Weaver, and their three surviving children. The people of God have always had their own "hermeneutic." Quite frequently, however, it has been wrong.

James was therefore right that not many should presume to be teachers! It is always safe, however, to speak the very words of God.

HERMENEUTICS AND JESUS

When Jesus was placed on trial, Pilate, the irreligious Roman ruler, was about to let Him go. He brought Jesus out to the people and declared, "I find no fault in him!" The Jews, however, had been studying the Bible. They answered: "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die . . ." (John 10:7.) Please fine tune your focus on this remarkable situation. Jesus was "God manifest in the flesh." It was His Holy Spirit that inspired the writing of the Bible. The Jewish people had been given the Bible. To them pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Rom. 9:4.) They not only studied the Bible, they committed large portions to memory. They wrote it on the door posts of their homes, and bound it around their foreheads. They counted the "jots" and "tittles," of the Law and claimed to reverence God in everything they did. Yet, they interpreted the Bible in such a way, that they crucified the Author of the Bible.

Jesus warned His disciples that the time would come when those who put them to death would think they were doing service to God (Jn. 16:2). He was right!

James was also right when he urged caution in explaining what the Scriptures mean. It is always safe, however, to speak the very words of God.

THE PRAYER OF JESUS FOR UNITY

On the night before Calvary Jesus prayed His famous High Priestly prayer (Jn. 17:1 - 26). First He prayed for himself, then for His disciples, and finally for all believers. The focus of His prayer for all believers was unity. He wanted us to be "one" even as He and the Father were "one".

Please consider His words: **"My prayer is not for them alone. 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 in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn. 17:20, 21).**

Note that the unity of believers is associated with world evangelism. We are to be "one" that the "world might believe".

Unfortunately, we are not one. Statisticians have discovered between 33,000, and 41,000 "Christian" denominations. Behind every new denomination is a teacher. The warning James gives about many presuming to be teachers is therefore relevant to both Christian unity and world evangelism..

Please consider again Paul's warning to the elders at Ephesus: **"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” (Acts 20:28 - 30).

Note that these divisive teachers didn't care about the flock but were trying to draw away disciples after themselves. John the Baptist was the greatest prophet ever born of a woman and he didn't dare to exalt himself or start his own denomination. His sole purpose was to exalt Jesus. John was happy to “decrease” as long as Jesus “increased” (Jn. 3:30). Sadly, denominations are founded by those who care more about themselves than they do the flock.

While on the surface it seems unlikely, Paul explained that heresies can be of benefit to the Body of Christ. He wrote: **“For there must be also heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” (1 Cor. 11:19).** Just as the human body excretes poison to survive, so also does the Body of Christ. The approved cling to Jesus and thus become manifest. The heretics cling to someone else and are thus excreted from the Body like poison.

Heretics invariably teach their own words and not the very words of God.

JESUS IS THE FOUNDATION FOR UNITY

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11).

The church at Corinth was divided over human leaders like Paul, Apollos, and Cephas. This was wrong! Paul wrote: **“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:13).** It is therefore with reference to unity among believers that Paul wrote: **“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11).**

When the church began at Pentecost there were devout Jews there from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5). They were not only initially divided by their ethnic differences, but also by their loyalty to various sects such as Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, etc. When the Holy Spirit came these divided people experienced the very unity for which Christ prayed. They became “one” to the extent that not one of them said that any of his possessions was his own. They shared everything and there were no needy people among them (Acts 4:32 - 35).

They were not united by the Bible, however, but by Jesus! As you know, not one word of the Christian Scriptures was written at this time. It would be over 10 years before the first book of the Christian Scriptures would be written and the last book would not be written for over 60 years. Even though they did not have the complete Bible, however, they would still be “one” because their unity was in Christ. The complete list of 27 canonical books would not be officially recognized until the fourth century. Fortunately, the foundation for their unity was not the Bible, but Jesus!

Gutenberg invented the moveable type printing press in 1439 and still millions of believers today do not have a Bible and millions of others do not even have a written language. The Bible is

inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, but it is not the foundation for our unity (2 Tim. 3:16). As we have already said, we need to read and study the whole Bible for man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). The fact that we may not have the whole Bible, however, does not prevent us from being united in Christ.

We repeat. It is always safe to listen to or read the Scriptures! It is when we start explaining it to others that we need caution.

Please consider these inspired words of Paul: **“I urge you, brothers, 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).**

Beware of those teachers who are not serving the Lord Jesus but their own appetites!

JESUS AND THE COMMON PEOPLE

“And the common people heard him gladly” (Matt. 12:37).

After praying all night Jesus chose 12 men to be His apostles (Lk. 6:12 - 16). There was not a highly educated man among them. The elite Jews considered these peasants as “unlearned and ignorant” (Acts 4:13). Remember, however, that the kingdom of heaven was built upon a foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ Himself as the Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). The choice of such unlettered men was not an accident. Jesus prayed all night long before choosing them. The secret to their success was supernatural! When these men spoke they were using words taught to them by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13). When on trial for their lives God intervened and gave them the words He wanted them to speak (Matt. 10:20).

Uninspired common people could preach Jesus but were incapable of splitting theological hairs or debating the technical meaning of Hebrew words. They simply preached Jesus and followed His leading to the best of their ability. The word "theology," literally means the "Word of God." The theology of the common people was Jesus. Beware that your minds are not corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3).

The religious leaders and scholars were proud of their knowledge but blinded to the simplicity taught by Christ. In fact, the publicans and harlots saw the truth before the scholars did! (Matt. 21:31). In order to be saved we must be converted and become as little children (Matt. 18:3). God does not need human wisdom to succeed and Jesus was thankful that God has hidden His truth from the wise and prudent and revealed it unto babes (Matt. 11:25).

Paul, who later became an apostle, was the exception. He did have a good education. He

made it clear, however, that “not many wise by human standards” were called as disciples (1 Cor. 1:26). Neither did the preaching of Paul include human wisdom. He confined his message to Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2).

Common people do not divide the Body of Christ or start new denominations. Divisions are invariably caused by those elite who consider themselves superior and presume to be teachers. Paul exposed their hypocrisy by writing: **“Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you . . .”** (Romans 2:17-26 KJV)

James was right that proud men like this should not presume to be teachers. It is better to bury our pride and scholarship, and like a little child allow God to express His own thoughts in His own words.

HAMAN AND MORDECAI

A dear friend confessed in tears that he had just studied the book of Esther and concluded that he was Haman! This brother was an excellent student of the Scriptures and could easily prove people wrong who disagreed with him. His doctrinal purity created a certain measure of pride that convinced him he would be saved and others lost. That’s when he studied again the book of Esther and became convicted by the similarities he had with Haman.

Haman the Agagite, hated Mordecai the Jew. Some of this bitterness may date back to a battle King Saul had with the Amalekites. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, and so was Mordecai. Further, Haman the “Agagite” was a descendant of King Agag who was defeated and executed by the Jews (1 Sam. 15:8).

More recently, however, King Xerxes had promoted Haman to a seat of honor higher than the other nobles. One of the benefits of this new position was that the King ordered everyone to bow down and pay honor to Haman. Mordecai, however, refused to do it! **“When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged”** (Esther 3:5).

That’s when wicked Haman plotted his revenge. He not only wanted Mordecai to die, but also all the Jews in all of the 127 provinces from India to Cush. To make this certain Haman put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury. Then the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman. Then Haman wrote a death warrant for all Jews and sealed it with the king’s

ring. This official decree ordered the annihilation of all the Jews, young and old, women and little children, on the 13th day of the 12th month, which was the month of Adar. (Esther 3:13). The plight of the Jews was now made certain in the eyes of Haman for “no document written in the king’s name and sealed with his ring can be revoked” (Esther 8:8).

To make a long story short, Haman was wrong! When the king asked him what should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor, Haman assumed that the king was going to honor him. (Esther 6:6). He was not only wrong, he was dead wrong! In some miraculous way the love of the king for his Jewish wife triumphed over the law that demanded her death. Consequently, Mordecai was honored and Haman was hanged on his own gallows (Esther 7:10).

This story reminds us that pride goes before a fall. Jesus taught the same thing and used a parable to teach that it is better to pray for mercy as a sinner, than to be proud of our own righteousness (Lk. 18:9 - 14). In reality, all of our righteousness is like filthy rags (Is.64:6).

We are all sinners saved by grace. We have nothing to brag about but Jesus. Remember! Just after warning about not many being teachers, James also warns that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (Ja. 4:6).

THE OLD COVENANT AND THE NEW COVENANT

“He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets” (Deut. 4:13).

Anything that is written down has to be interpreted. Thus, the meaning of every one of the Ten Commandments was the subject of debate. Perhaps the most controversial commandment was to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Devout Jews have debated what can be done on the Sabbath for over 3,000 years and still do not agree.

Thou shalt not kill doesn’t seem to be controversial, but it is! If an axe head slips off and kills your neighbor accidentally, for example, you are not guilty of murder (Deut. 19:4 - 7). How can we know for certain, however, that it was an accident? Finite man cannot discern intentions with accuracy for no man knows the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him (1 Cor. 2:11). In the real world premeditated murder may appear to be accidental, and vice versa.

What about stealing? By law a man could go through his neighbor’s field and eat grain without being guilty of stealing. Jesus and His disciples did so (Matt. 12:1). But controversy is inevitable for the owner of the land will want to know how many people can go through the field how many times? Further, the Law does not specify how wide is the path?

The command to not take the name of the Lord in vain was so controversial that devout Jews wouldn’t even risk trying to pronounce it.

Because these Ten Commandments were constantly being debated Paul compared them to Hagar and Ishmael (Gal. 4:21 - 31). Remember! Ishmael was **“A wild donkey of a man; his hand was against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers” (Gen. 16:12)**. Everywhere Ishmael went there was controversy, and everywhere the Law was taught there was also controversy. It is also sobering to remember that the covenant engraved on stone brought death (2 Cor. 3:7). The Jews trusted Moses to be their deliverer when in reality he would be their accuser (Jn. 5:45).

God, of course, had a reason for writing the Ten Commandments. He wrote them that every mouth might be stopped and all the world become guilty (Rom. 3:19). God intended them to be a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24). Unfortunately, many who tried to teach the Law didn’t know what they were talking about (1 Tim. 1:7). Such ignorant men were causing trouble and should not have been teachers.

The New Covenant avoided controversy by being written where no one could read it. Note: this promise of Jeremiah that is repeated in the book of Hebrews: **“For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.” (Hebrews 8:7-13 KJV)**

Nothing could be more clear. The new covenant is not written with pen and ink but with the Spirit of the living God. The new covenant is written, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of the human heart (2 Cor. 3:1 - 3). When a child was born to a Jewish family it had to be taught the Law of God. No one receives the New Covenant, however, unless they are taught first!

Remember that the New Covenant is illustrated by Isaac whose name means laughter! While Ishmael was born in the natural way, the birth of Isaac was supernatural. Those who are “born again” are like Isaac. Our new birth is also supernatural. When you realize this, the frown on your face can be replaced with a smile.

THE NEW COVENANT AND THE NEW BIRTH

Nicodemus was a teacher in Israel yet Jesus was amazed that he didn’t understand the most basic facts of reproduction (Jn. 3:10). Since God created life on day three, every living thing

reproduces after it's own kind (Gen. 1:11). Therefore Jesus reminded Nicodemus: **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn. 3:6)** If Nicodemus wanted spiritual life, it had to come from a spiritual seed. No, he didn't have to enter a second time into his mother's womb, but if he wanted spiritual life it couldn't come from an earthly seed. It had to come from above.

The first specific reference to Jesus in the Bible is in Gen. 3:15 where He is called the Seed of woman. We are born the first time from an earthly seed, but we are born again by receiving Jesus. Peter put it like this: **“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever” (1 Pet. 1:23).**

Every seed has a genetic code that is reproduced in it's offspring. Thus those born of Adam's seed inherit the genetic code of Adam. Consequently, the whole human race bears the “image” of Adam. Just as Adam begat a physical race with a physical seed, Jesus begat a spiritual race with a spiritual seed. That's why Jesus is called the “last Adam”. As we have born the image of the earthly we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:45 - 54). When we are born again we become a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17).

Just as Adam produced a physical family, Jesus produces a spiritual family. When we were born into a physical family we were infants who needed milk. When we are born again into the family of God we are also like infants and need spiritual milk (1 Pet. 2:1 - 3).

In our physical family we are to obey our father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise. The promise was that by obeying our parents we would establish a stable society and live long in the land (Eph. 6:1 - 3). In our spiritual family we are also to obey those who have the rule over us. We are to submit to them for they watch for our souls as they that must give account (Heb. 13:17).

In our physical family we have a wide variety of intelligence, ability, and maturity. Both infants and the elderly need special care. In between are differences as dramatic as those between Esau and Jacob. Though they were twins they were not identical (Gen. 25:24 - 26). Neither are we identical to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Membership in the family is not determined by intelligence or appearance but by our DNA. If two brothers have the DNA of the same father, they are brethren regardless of how different they may be.

The same is true in the family of God. When we are born again we have the same Father that Jesus does. That's why Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brethren (Heb. 2:11). With the new birth, of course, also comes a change of conduct. The new creature does not continue in sin because God's Seed is in us (1 Jn. 3:9).

When Michael the archangel disputed with the devil about the body of Moses he didn't need to make slanderous accusations but simply said “The Lord rebuke you” (Jude 9). We can have this same confidence when we focus on Jesus and use the very words of God to describe His teaching!

Our confidences comes because we know that God is capable of delivering the godly out of temptation and reserving the unjust unto punishment (2 Pet. 2:9).

FINDING AND GIVING

The late Seth Wilson spent his life studying and teaching the Bible. He once remarked: “Everybody has a right to ‘find’ a meaning in Scripture, but nobody has a right to ‘give’ it meaning”. At first this may seem outrageous. How can the authority of the Bible be left to individuals? How can there be unity in the Body if everyone does not subscribe to the same doctrinal statement? After reflecting on it, however, it offers valuable insight into the many divisions we face in the Christian world.

In 1870 the Roman Catholic church sought to curb division by officially declaring the infallibility of the Pope. When the Pope spoke “ex cathedra” every Catholic was required to turn off his or her brain and believe it. Those whom the Pope deemed heretics were tortured into the proper confession or killed. Thousands died who dared to disagree with the Pope.

Martin Luther rejected the authority of the Pope. He survived however, because of his powerful German friends and also because the Papal army was a war with the Muslims. Under other circumstances Luther would have been killed as a heretic. Luther’s famous slogan was “sola escriptura” (only the Scriptures). He wanted his life to be governed by the Bible and not by the Pope. When his followers dared to disagree with his interpretation of the Bible, however, he wrote the Augsburg Confession of Faith. Now all Lutherans were required not only to believe the Bible, but also Luther’s “interpretation” of the Bible.

This desire to control men’s thinking opened the flood gates to an avalanche of denominational division. Yes, there were some divisions during the life time of the apostles. Yes, there was a major split between East and West in 1054. The divisions associated with the Reformation, however, are unprecedented. As we mentioned earlier, statisticians now count between 33,000 and 41,000 Christian denominations. Most of these denominations believe they are obeying the Bible yet many, like the Lutherans, also have their own particular creed or confession of faith. There is obviously something wrong with what we believe if it cannot be expressed by using the very words of God.

LET US FOCUS ON THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST

As we seek to understand these malignant divisions in the Body of Christ, let us narrow our focus to those who are “born again”. You cannot be “born again” with a false understanding of Jesus. We must believe in our heart and confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. It is God Himself who examines our faith before adding us to His Family. Nobody, as you know, can fool God!

With this in mind let us present to the children of God the Biblical command to “abstain from

all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22). What does this mean? Some would consider the context and apply this teaching to prophetic utterances. The possible interpretations of this command, however, are endless. Can you not see how a five year old child would think differently about evil than his fifteen year old brother? Can you not see how an alcoholic would think differently about this verse than the man addicted to pornography? But who is authorized to give the final word and ultimate meaning of this command? Fortunately, the Word of God is alive and active and sharper than a two edged sword. It divides our soul from our spirit and discerns the thoughts and intents of our hearts (Heb. 4:12). Why not just stick with what the Scripture says and let the Holy Spirit convict the children of God to avoid whatever evil seems appropriate?

Let every child of God “find” a meaning in these words but refrain from “giving” it meaning for others.!

A dear friend and Bible College professor wrote a book on spiritual gifts and concluded that the words “that which is perfect” in 1 Cor. 13:10 referred to the completed canon of Scriptures. As a scholar who taught Greek it was difficult for any common person to disagree. Some time later, however, he changed his mind on the meaning of those words. He felt so badly about his interpretation that was already in print that he imposed on the publisher to insert a page of corrections in every book they sold.

Obviously we need to use caution when daring to “interpret” the Word of God! We can be bold and confident, however, when we express the thoughts of God with His own words.

GOD’S SHEEP RECOGNIZE HIS VOICE

As we have already pointed out, the Bible is supernatural. It is different from human books. It is alive and active. When we allow the Word of God to have “free course” in our lives God will be glorified (2 Thess. 3:1).

It is also important to recognize the supernatural aspect of God’s children. The unconverted have a heart that is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). The child of God, however, has a new heart and God’s Spirit will cause him to walk in the right way (Ez. 36:26, 27).

When Moses commanded that the Book of the Law be placed beside the ark of the covenant, he predicted that after his death the people of God would be even more rebellious than they were when he was alive (Deut. 31:26, 27). Paul, by contrast, was confident that God would make His children better every day and carry their Christian values on to completion (Phil. 1:6). Those who are born again are different from those who are not!

Jesus, of course, knew this and taught that His sheep were different from others. Something supernatural would transform them from the works of the flesh to the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus said: **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (Jn. 10:27)**. At the same time Jesus said that while His sheep recognized His voice and followed Him, they would not follow a

stranger (Jn. 10:4, 5).

There are times when a child of God may make a terrible mistake and need to be pulled out of the fire (Jude 23). Under normal circumstances, however, His sheep will grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and be closer to Him with each coming day. How beautiful! When the sheep of God converge on the Shepherd, the closer we get to Jesus the closer we get to one another. Our goal is the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

The fact that the sheep recognize the voice of the Shepherd is another reason to confine ourselves to the very words of God. Jesus is the Shepherd and His sheep will recognize His words.

TEACHERS AND FATHERS

Paul reminded the Corinthians: **“For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15).**

The role of the teacher about which James warned pales into insignificance with the role of a father. A father will take better care of his children without charge than a hireling will do for a large amount of money.

Paul used a similar analogy to the Thessalonians: **“For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.” (1 Thessalonians 2:5-12 KJV)**

While James warned against the wrong use of the tongue, he also knew that a word fitly spoken could be like apples of gold in pictures of silver (Prov. 25:11). James wrote : **“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” (James 3:17-18 KJV)**

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Steve Saint has worked with the Huaorani Tribe in Ecuador for many years. When teaching

them the Word of God he states: “This is what the Man Maker says, what do you say?” Here is the reason why he uses this approach.

The Huaoranis have been a violent tribe. They came to international fame when they murdered eight American missionaries on Jan. 8, 1956. At that time they were called “Aucas” which is a derogatory term meaning “naked” or “savage”. Time magazine described them as the “worst people on earth”. John W. Cowart describes their brutality in vivid detail. He states that murder was the most common cause of death in the tribe and that 74% of their men died through violent tribal warfare. He relates that one Indian speared a “friend’s” wife and mother to death as a joke. The old and infirm were buried alive and little girls were often strangled at birth. Little boys as young as six were taken on killing raids and allowed to finish off victims too wounded to defend themselves.

The good news is that these stone age savages have been converted to Christ. I was privileged to sleep along side them in the jungle without fear. Since Steve grew up spending time with the tribe he understands their thinking. For the last 350 years they have never had a chief, council, or any form of government. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. If you should try to command an unconverted Huaorani to do something he might very well kill you on the spot. That’s why it is wise to tell them what God says to do but let them make up their own mind whether they want to do it or not.

This is not only good advice for witnessing to stone age savages, it is a wise way to witness to everyone. As we have repeated many times, we can always be bold and confident when quoting the very words of God. We cannot be confident, however, when giving our opinion on what God meant! It is still appropriate, however, for us to beseech men to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20).

(The movie End of the Spear was produced in 2005 telling the story of the Huaoranis and their conversion to Christ. An interview I did with Steve Saint can be seen by linking to www.boycemouton.com and searching under Ventures in Faith).

PRAY FOR BOLDNESS

When Peter and John were threatened by the Jewish leaders they returned to their fellow believers and prayed for boldness (Acts 4:29). That same prayer is valid today. We can always be bold and confident quoting the Bible to those who are not saved.

Someone asked a new convert if he was bothered by all the verses of Scripture he didn’t understand. He replied that the thing that really bothered him were the verses of Scripture he did understand. If you read the Word of God every day there will be plenty of verses for you to understand and obey.

One area in which you can be particularly bold involves your own personal testimony. You are the world’s greatest authority on what God has done in your life. Be like the man born blind that Jesus healed in Jerusalem. When the Jews tried to get him tangled up in theology he didn’t know

how to answer. He was confident, however, that once he was blind and now he could see (Jn. 9:25). Then he boldly asked them if they wanted to be His disciples too (Jn. 9:27). The early church overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and that they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Rev. 12:11).

You don't have to be a teacher to win lost souls to Christ, but you do have to explain the Gospel using the very words of God!

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