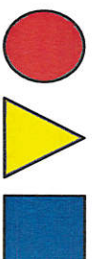


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REVIEW



- Things that are ***different*** are **NOT** the ***same***.
- God promised to **preserve** His **WORDS** – and God **cannot** lie. Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:17-18
- The Bible issue really comes down to a tale of two cities – **Antioch** vs. Alexandria, Egypt.
- The Bible testifies it is preserved as a **copy** – if God was not able to preserve His **actual words in English**, our faith would have to stand in the wisdom of men!

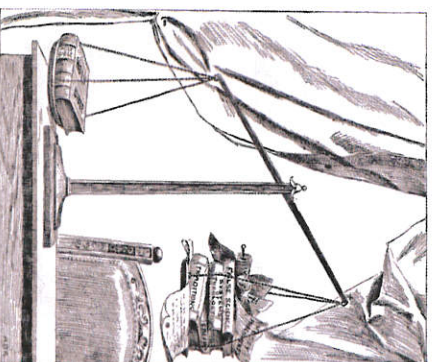
WEEK 13. A Reminder of Ephesus

Consider this – How was it that a fully-purposed church like Ephesus could lose their first love?



The Wisdom of Men

OR



The Power of God

1 Corinthians 2:5 - That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in **the power of God**.

Revelation 2:4 - Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

The facts from Church History

1. They **LEFT** their **FIRST** love – Jesus Christ **is** The _____ of God.

NOTE You cannot separate the two – John 1:1; 1 Jo. 5:7; Rev. 19:13...if you do, you diminish Christ.

WHY?

- Because of the importance of God's Word - Deut. 4:2; 5:32; 28:14; Josh. 1:7; Prov. 30:5-6; Mt. 12:36-37; Rev. 18-19; 1 Ti. 1:3, 10; 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:3-5, 13-14; 2 Ti. 1:13-14; 2:2, 14-18; 3:10, 14-17; 4:1-3, 14-15; 1 Sam. 15:1-23; 2 Sam. 6:1-15; 1 Kings 13:1-26
- Because of David's testimony – a man after God's own heart... only man called
- Because of Psalm 119...largest chapter in Bible...a man's love for God's Word!!!
- Because of Psalm 138:2...
- Because of the events that took place **during** the **EPHESUS Church Period**...

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2. They began to use words, phrases, and concepts _____ found anywhere in the Bible!!

KEY Don't miss this! Make sure that you get this down deeply rooted!!!

We ought to have great carefulness in these matters!

In his second letter to the Corinthian church, Paul made a point to call out their response to his first letter – and specifically their repentance. He said that their repentance led to a greater level of carefulness related to the things of God.

2 Corinthians 7:11 – For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, **what carefulness it wrought in you**, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

As a church and for good reason, we take a strong stand on the preserved Word of God in English – the Authorized Version. This study was intended to strengthen our hands in the truth. The fact of the matter is we need to know why we believe what we believe because many, many people have thrown truth into the street and trampled it under foot.

Isaiah 59:14 – And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: **for truth is fallen in the street**, and equity cannot enter.

So many times, the Bible tells us to take heed and beware! Here are just a few...

Acts 20:28 – **Take heed therefore unto yourselves**, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

1 Corinthians 10:12 – Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

1 Timothy 4:16 – **Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine**; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

2 Peter 3:17 – Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, **beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked**, fall from your own steadfastness.

Are we blameless in these matters?

It is very important that we reflect on our own lives when it comes to this issue. We might be very quick to speak of God's perfect English Bible and how amazing it is that God was able to not only inspire the words, but also preserve them for us in our language. However, at the same time, it is possible for us to be actually speaking words, phrases, and concepts that are ***not found in the very Book that God preserved for us!***

The Bible says that we are to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men. Are you blameless in these matters? Do you speak words, phrases, and concepts that are not found in the Bible?

Acts 24:16 – And herein do I exercise myself, to have **always a conscience void of offence toward God**, and toward men.

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We will all give account to God one day for our words, actions and thoughts. Although the blood of Jesus Christ covers us and we have had His righteousness imputed to us, we will still be judged for what we have said and done after salvation. When we stand before our Lord Jesus Christ, our motives and our faithfulness to take heed to ourselves and to God's Word will be judged.

Romans 14:12 – So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Working this out in our approach to evangelism

There is perhaps no greater place that the church has erred in these matters more than in their approach to evangelism. In these last days, there has been a very dangerous shift in the **words**, **phrases** and **concepts** used to lead people to saving faith in Christ.

One common phrase that is used is, "God has a wonderful plan for your life." It is true that God has an incredible plan for believers **after** they get saved. However, the gospel that Paul preached and called "**my** gospel" in Romans 2:16 was most definitely not this one. People often use this phrase and other "life enhancement" **words**, **phrases** and **concepts** because they do not want to offend those that are lost. They so want people to get saved, that they inadvertently preach a man-centered gospel – and people respond in an experimental fashion for the benefits presented.

The most important reason not to use the "wonderful plan" message is that it is not biblical to do so. Examine the Book of Acts and see if you can find any of the disciples telling sinners either that God loved them or that He had a wonderful plan for their lives. If there is no precedent for this approach in Scripture, the question is not "Why not use it?" but "**Why even consider it in the first place?**" Why would we not carefully follow the pattern given for us in Scripture, by Jesus and by Paul, especially on something as crucial as the salvation of eternal souls?

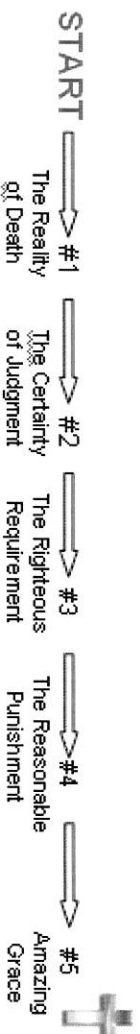
Instead, we see that the disciples confronted their hearers as guilty criminals – enemies of God who desperately needed righteousness – not to be told that they could enhance their lives with God's wonderful plan. Jesus made it very clear that to follow Him meant death and persecution – hardly what most people are thinking when they hear about the "wonderful plan" as most tell it.

The promise of the Gospel has never been one of an enhanced life on earth. During our brief time here, we are called to forsake all that we have, deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23). Jesus said we will be hated for His name's sake, and if we live a godly life, we shall suffer persecution (2 Tim 3:12). Jesus warned those that followed Him that the time would come when people would murder them, and think they were doing God a favor by killing them (John 16:2).

The right side of the cross

An easy way that I have found to test my **evangelism words**, **phrases**, and **concepts**, is to first ask myself if they are in fact found in the Bible. If they are not found in the Bible, then I am attempting to improve on God's perfect Word, and I will be easily duped by the enemy. The second thing I do is to evaluate them to see if they fall on **the left side** (*applicable to lost people*) or **the right side** (*applicable to saved people*) of the cross. See the diagram below.

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After repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, consider all the promises that are given to us on the **right side** of the cross:

- We are adopted into God's family – He becomes our Abba Father. (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5)
- We become sons and daughters of God. (2 Cor 6:28; 1 John 3:1)
- We become the friend of Jesus Christ. (John 15:15)
- We become joint heirs with Jesus Christ. (Rom 8:17; Gal 3:29)
- We become the bride of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-25)
- We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13)
- We gain eternal salvation. (Heb 5:9; 2 Tim 2:10)
- We gain eternal security. (Rom 8:31-39; 1 John 5:12)
- We gain eternal riches. (Eph 1-2)
- God promises to hear our prayers and be with us. (Ps 34:15, 66:18; Prov 15:29; Jn 9:31)
- We most certainly have a **relationship** with God.
- God most certainly has a **plan** for our life – involving suffering, persecution and even death.

Now, consider what the Bible says about those who are lost **before repentance and faith in Jesus Christ on the left side** of the cross:

- They are God's enemy! (Rom 5:10, 11:28; Phl 3:18; Col 1:21)
- The devil is their father! (John 8:44)
- They have broken God's Law! (1 John 3:4; Rom 3; Gal 3)
- They are condemned already as guilty criminals! (John 3:18; Rom 1-5; Gal 3)
- They are idolaters! (Ex 20; Col 3:5)
- They are blasphemers! (Ex 20:7; Deut 5:11; Rom 2:24)
- They are adulterers! (Ex 20; Matt 5:28)
- They are thieves! (Ex 20; Mal 3:8; Acts 5:3)
- They are liars! (Ex 20; Ps 116:11; Acts 5:3; Rev 21:8)
- They are covetous! (Ex 20; Rom 7:7; 2 Cor 10:6; James 4:2)
- They have the wrath of God abiding on them! (John 3:36)
- They deserve hell for their crimes! (Rom 1-3, 6:23; Gal 3:10-29)
- They are unrighteous! (Rom 1-5; 1 Cor 6:9; Jude)
- They are ungodly and unholy! (Rom 1-5; 1 Tim 1:9; 2 Tim 3:2; Jude)
- They are cursed! (Gal 3:10-13; Rev 22:3)
- They are without excuse! (John 1:9; Rom 1:20, 2:1, 2:15)
- They are lost and without hope! (Eph 2:12)

When speaking to someone who is not saved, *none* of the promises found on the **right side** of the cross are applicable to them – and *none* of them should be used as a draw card for salvation. Jesus said that if they do not repent, they will all perish (Lk 13:3,5). He also said that *many* would perish and **few** would find heaven (Mt 7:13-29). Paul said that Judgment Day was the very reason why all men everywhere are commanded to repent (Acts 17:31). **Our focus then for lost people should be on the words, phrases and concepts found on the left side of the cross.**

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If we follow the lead of Paul – the Apostle to the Gentiles – we will be warning people of judgment and wrath to come. Judgment is the key to align our message with God's message. Study his witnessing account with Felix in Acts 24. Felix had the power to free him or kill him and yet Paul stayed true to the biblical gospel. If ever there was a time to talk about God's wonderful plan, or God's desire to have a relationship with him, it would have been then.

Acts 24:14-15 – But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, **believing all things which are written** in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, **that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.**

Acts 24:21 – Except it be for this one voice, **that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead** I am called in question by you this day.

Acts 24:24 – And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and **heard him concerning the faith in Christ.** And as **he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled,** and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

Consider these other verses penned by the Apostle Paul...

Hebrews 9:27 – And as **it is appointed unto men once to die,** but **after this the judgment:**

Romans 2:16 – In **the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ** according to **my gospel.**

Acts 17:30-31 – And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but **now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day,** in the which **he will judge the world in righteousness by that man** whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 – And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which **delivered us from the wrath to come.**

We often forget that the Old Testament God of holiness and wrath is the same God of the New Testament. The Book of Acts records that God killed a husband and wife simply because they told one lie (Acts 5). Jesus warned the people that they should fear Him who has the power to cast into hell. Read the dreadful judgments of the New Testament's Book of Revelation. That will put the "fear of God" in you, which incidentally is "the beginning of wisdom."

Proverbs 9:10 – The **fear of the LORD** is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Luke 12:5 – But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: **Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell;** yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

Jude 23 – And **others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire;** hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Don't be concerned that, by referring to the Judgment, you are causing sinners to fear. They have sinned against God and His wrath abides on them. In fact, the Bible calls them "children of wrath." Also, don't worry about condemning people. The Bible says that they are "condemned already."

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Shouldn't they then fear Him and believe?

John 3:36 – He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but **the wrath of God abideth on him**.

Ephesians 2:3 – Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and **were by nature the children of wrath**, even as others.

John 3:18 – He that believeth on him is not condemned: **but he that believeth not is condemned already**, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

If we don't preach that God will judge the world in righteousness, we shouldn't be surprised that people are passive about responding to the Savior. If we tell them that they need only ask Jesus into their heart to begin a relationship with Him, then neither should we be surprised when the church fills up with false converts who respond but don't even have enough fear of God to obey.

Judgment Day is the climax of the ages. It is a day that the whole of creation eagerly awaits, an event for which the very ground cries out. It has done so from the blood of Abel and will continue to the end of this age (Rev 20:11-15). God loves **JUSTICE** – and He will have it.

Psalms 96:11-13 – Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice Before the LORD: for he cometh, **for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness**, and the people with his truth.

Therefore, we must remember that it isn't enough to preach the Moral Law (also called the 10 commandments). It must be preached in conjunction with **future punishment**. It has been well said that Law without consequence is nothing but good advice. We must instead preach that those who commit adultery, those who lie and steal, etc., will be punished on the Day of Wrath. **It is the preaching of future punishment that produces fear**, and it is through the fear of the Lord that men depart from sin.

Proverbs 16:6 – By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and **by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil**.

Now what do we do

No doubt, as we were working through this study this morning, your own **words, phrases** and **concepts** were brought to light that are _____ found in the Bible.

The question is now **what will you do**.

My point in focusing our attention on our approach to evangelism – and specifically on Judgment Day – was to demonstrate that we, like the church at Ephesus, have fallen prey to the enemy's attack. While we were sleeping, the enemy took the **words, phrases** and **concepts** of men and swapped them out of the church's vocabulary.

If we truly grasp the gravity of the situation, we will repent and do the first works. We will get a firm grasp on the blessed Book of God and never let it go again. We will take the time to purge our mind and thoughts to leave room only for the pure words of God. We want the faith of those

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that we lead to the cross to be rooted and grounded in the power of God, and not in the wisdom of men. In addition, as we invest the Word into the hearts of believers, we want to hold fast to the form of sound words that we have been taught lest at any time we should let them slip. We ought not to let any of God's words fall to the ground in these last days.

To whom much is given, much is required

We have been entrusted with much in this church. It is now **our turn** in church history to preach the Gospel to every creature in our generation and to pass God's Word and the true biblical Gospel on to the next generation who will faithfully serve our great God and Savior.

Luke 12:48 – 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.

Mark 16:15 – And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

“May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His suffering!” -- Moravian missionary boys that sold themselves into life-long slavery to reach the slaves for Christ

“Most Christian ministries would like to send their recruits to Bible college for five years. I would like to send our recruits to hell for five minutes. That would do more than anything else to prepare them for a lifetime of compassionate ministry.” -- William Booth

