

The Old Paths

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“Every Word ...”

Jarrold Jacobs

When reading the Bible, we see emphasis placed upon the fact that the entirety of the Bible is truth. David praised the word of God when he said, “*The sum of thy word is truth ...*” (Ps. 119:160, ASV). Some record it, “Your word is true from beginning to end.” The point being that every word within the pages of the Bible is inspired. It is “God-breathed”, and must be respected as such (II Tim. 3:16-17). In fact, not only do we read Scripture that emphasizes the value of the words used; but we also read Scripture which shows us that the very LETTERS used to form the words are inspired of God.

I know this because when I read Galatians 3, I see where the apostle was inspired of God to argue for Christ being the promised “seed of Abraham” based upon one letter, the letter “s”! He told the Galatians, “*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ*” (Gal. 3:16).

On four specific occasions, the Bible commands us to respect each and every word God has inspired men to write. For example, Deuteronomy 8:3 says, “*And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the*

LORD doth man live.” Jesus later quoted this verse when He talked with Satan (Matt. 4:4; Lk. 4:4). Solomon declared, “*Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him*” (Prov. 30:5). The next verse states, “*Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar*” (Prov. 30:6). Therefore, within the Bible we see emphasis upon God’s word not only from the standpoint of not adding to or taking from the teaching; but also it is emphasized that we must respect every word which is contained within the Bible!

Why make this observation? It is because I know folks who say they respect the Bible, but it is evident that they do not appreciate every word they read within the Bible! Sometimes, this comes from reading too fast, and sometimes this is the result of being unobservant, but either way, the end result is that we miss out on vital truth and deep insight into the Bible when we read without an appreciation for “*every word*” that proceeds from the mouth of God. I am doing my best to follow my own “advice,” and brethren, I am learning to appreciate God’s word more and more every day!

One brother in Christ has helped me to stop and truly think about the words in the Bible. He has even encouraged me to read aloud to myself as a way to help comprehend what I am reading. Reading aloud to yourself allows not only the eyes to see, but the ears to hear the words which are in the Bible.

Friend, it works! Another brother in Christ is careful in his sermons to emphasize certain words so that we can get the meaning. I remember listening to one of his sermons on tape where he read from Matthew 15:25, where the Syro-Phoenician woman cried to Christ saying, “*Lord help me.*” Then, by slowing down, he took the time to ask, “How did she say that? Well, how would you say that?” He then emphasized each word, (“**L**ord, help me”; “**L**ord, **h**elp me”; “**L**ord, help **m**e”) and showed what happens when we emphasize different words. Try it, and see!

The point is that every word written in the Bible is important and has meaning. Yes, we need to respect the context, observing whether things were spoken under the Old or New Covenants, “to whom” things were spoken, and “why” they were spoken. Yet the way we will know the answer to these questions is by taking note of the very words being used! They are important. God said so.

David wrote that the “*blessed man*” is the one who “*meditates*” in God’s word “*day and night*” (Ps. 1:2). The word “*meditate*” carries with it the idea of one who thinks, ponders, or carefully considers something. This person does not merely give it a passing glance, but stops and truly considers what is being said within a certain context. We need more people God can call “*blessed*”! Friends, when the apostle makes an argument based upon one letter in a word (Gal. 3:16), we can be assured that the words are important! Let us resolve to slow down and think carefully about the very words which make up the sentences in the verses of the Bible. It will do us good spiritually, and lead us in the way we ought to go (Ps. 119:105).

“*Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.*” (Jer. 6:16)

“Oh Boy! It’s Allowed”

Bill Hall

How many times have new converts received sound instructions concerning the life of a Christian, only to have the instructions nullified by the example of older members? A brother in Canada recently told me of his first trip south after his conversion. Struggling to overcome his tobacco habit — because he had been taught that he ought to do so — he watched with delight as the men of the “down south” congregation went out between Bible study and worship to enjoy their cigarettes. “O boy!” was his immediate reaction; “It’s allowed!”

The same thing happens in other areas of teaching. “Attend every service,” new converts are told, and sound reasons are given to back such instructions. But Brother Smith only attends the 11:00 service, and he is accepted as a faithful member. “One service a week must be sufficient,” they say to themselves. “O boy! It’s allowed.”

“Study your Bible daily, and prepare beforehand for every Bible class,” they are wisely told. But they see little evidence of Bible study on the part of others, and some of the comments in Bible classes definitely betray a lack of preparation. “Ignorance of God’s word must not be too bad,” they conclude. “O boy! It’s allowed!”

“Modesty of dress is essential for Christians,” they hear repeatedly. But then they hear of mixed swimming among the members and see Sister Jones wearing the tightest pants in town. “O boy!” they think; “It’s allowed!”

Older Christians ought to be

constantly aware that they are being watched; watched by newer converts who are looking to them for examples. Part of the teaching those new converts are receiving is coming from the pulpit; the other part is coming from the lives of other Christians around them. What are they seeing? What are they learning? How sobering to think that some new convert might have become discouraged and led astray by something he saw in my life! Let each live in every aspect of his life so as to be able to say, “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*” (I Cor. 11:1).

Newer converts, though, must learn that God’s word is the standard of authority, not the conduct of other Christians. Loyalty in a kingdom is determined by loyalty to the king rather than to the subjects of the king. It is to Him that that one pledges his allegiance when he becomes a Christian, and he must be faithful to Him whatever others around him may do or fail to do.

One’s “O boy! It’s allowed!” then must be limited to those things which God allows in His word. But even then he would anticipate a certain reserve in one’s expression, for the true Christian’s greatest delight is not in some activity that just happens to be “allowed,” but in serving the Lord. “*For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is Life and peace*” (Rom. 8:6).

The Family Of Christ

In Mark 3:31-35, we read where Jesus’ family wished to speak with Him. When the multitude made those wishes known (v. 32), Jesus responded by saying, “*Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother*” (Mk. 3:33-35).

Jesus was not denying that Mary was His physical mother, nor that He had brothers and sisters (Matt. 13:55-56). He was simply making the point that those who do His will also constitute His family. For the moment, He was involved in teaching and preaching, and did not wish to stop. His physical family took a “back-seat” to the spreading of the gospel and trying to save the lost. He taught this in Matthew 10:35-37 and demonstrated it on this occasion!

The question we have to answer is: “Would Christ consider us a part of His family?” There is an answer to this question, and the answer is found in the text! Those who do the will of God are considered a part of Christ’s family! So, are you obedient to the Lord? If not, repent today and render obedience to the Lord so that you can be in His family (Heb. 5:9, 11:6). — JJ

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