

March 16/08 Gen.3:1-5; Lk.4:1-4; 7:1-10 Daring To Take God At His Word

A busy mother looked out the window of her home and saw her son playing church. He was preaching a sermon to Toby the cat, who was quietly taking it all in. Some time later, the mother heard meowing and hissing outside. She rushed to the door and saw her son trying to put Toby into a pail of water. "What are you doing to Toby?" she sternly asked her son. He replied, "I'm baptizing him." His mother retorted, "You know he hates water. Stop that right now." The little boy said, "He should have thought of that before he joined my church." That boy took what he was doing, preaching and baptizing, very seriously, didn't he?

God wants us to take His Word seriously, to read it, speak it and act on it. He wants us to learn to take Him at His Word unquestioningly, and believe that He will do what He said He would do. As the hymn puts it so well, "Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just take Him at His Word. Just to rest upon His promise. Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord." Are we daring to take God at His Word?

I/ THE FIRST LIE: HAVE YOU HEARD IT?

The fall of humanity began in the garden of Eden by listening to a lie. The devil came to Eve and began to question God's Word, saying, "Did God really say you shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" Gen. 3:1-5 Note the implications behind the question.

A. It questions God's character and goodness to His children. It implies that God cannot possibly be a good God, or He would never have imposed a limitation on His children.

B. It casts doubt on the integrity of God's Word. "Did God really say?" The implication is that surely God would never have said that, and even if He did, He couldn't possibly have meant it. Therefore you don't need take His Word seriously.

Jesus Christ experienced the same devilish attack. After His baptism, he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He was tested by the devil for forty days. The first temptation begins with the words, "IF you are the Son of God." Lk. 4:1-4 That little word "if" is designed to make Christ doubt His identity, that He came from God as fully man and fully God at the same time. The devil knows that Christ is going to be preaching the Word of God which includes statements about His own identity, e.g. "I am the Light of the world." "I am the Bread of life." "I am the Good Shepherd." The use of "if" is aimed at making the Lord doubt all of these things before His ministry even begins.

Perhaps you too have heard the same lies whispered in your mind, that God doesn't really care for you, wouldn't answer your prayers, and can't be trusted to keep His Word.

II/ WE CAN TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD

Is. 40:8 says, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever." So what God has said will stand forever. The devil's first temptation played on the hunger of Christ who had not eaten for forty days. "If you are the Son of God, then turn these stones to bread." The Lord defeated this temptation with the Word of God. "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by

every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” We are reminded that the Scriptures are food for life. They are also, as the apostle Paul reminded Timothy, “God breathed.” 2 Tim. 3:16 To be God breathed means the Scriptures have come straight from the heart of God to our hearts. It is a Word that we can trust and stake our lives upon.

III/ A CULTURE THAT NO LONGER TAKES THE WORD OF GOD SERIOUSLY

Here are some examples of how our culture has abandoned the Word of God.

A. The doctrine of hell, judgement and sin. Many people believe this life is all there is, and many preachers no longer believe in hell. The concept of sin has been reduced to the belief that, “If you think something is wrong for you, then it’s wrong for you, but not necessarily for somebody else.” Years ago, Dr. Karl Menninger wrote a book with a very appropriate title, “What Ever Became of Sin?”

B. Evolution. The creation account of Scripture has been pushed out of the schools. However, as some one has said so well, “If we cannot believe the first five words of the Bible, then how can we believe the rest of it?” In case you have forgotten, the first five words are, “In the beginning, God **CREATED.**”

C. The virgin birth and deity of Christ. Many clergy openly question the doctrines of the virgin birth of Christ and His deity. The recent Dan Brown best seller *The Davinci Code* recycled and referred to ancient heresies which repudiated these fundamental Christian doctrines. Indeed, the devil’s use of the word “if” was a temptation designed to cause Christ to doubt His own deity.

D. The doctrine of the resurrection. Easter Sunday is coming up. It is a time when we boldly proclaim the resurrection of our Lord. However, the sad fact is that many clergy do not accept the doctrine of the literal resurrection of Christ. They will tell you that it was meant to be understood only as a figurative event. That is very sad, for as the apostle Paul puts it, “If Christ was not raised, then all our preaching was useless and your trust in God is useless.” 1 Cor. 15:14

E. The Lord’s Prayer has been removed from our schools, and will very likely soon be removed from all provincial legislatures. We can never forget that the Lord’s Prayer is more than a prayer. It a prayer that came straight from the heart of Jesus Christ, presenting a pattern of prayer for believers who want to take God at His Word.

The questioning of the Word of God was gradual, but over time the Bible became a book no longer trusted and no longer taken seriously. Here is a little story that shows how easily deception sets in. One day, a man on a bicycle came to the border. The border guards observed he was carrying two bags of sand. That immediately aroused their suspicions, and they detained the man. They inspected the bags of sand, and told him he would have to remain overnight while they ran a chemical test on the sand. The test came back clean, showing the sand was nothing but pure sand. They even dumped the sand into new bags, but found nothing. They let the man go.

This went on every day for two years. The guards checked him out one more time, but found nothing in his bags of sand and kept letting him cross over. Then one day, the man on the bicycle no longer appeared. Ten years later, one of the border guards recognized the man in a town and he asked him, "What were you smuggling for those two years that you were crossing the border? We figured you were up to something. After all this time, it is okay for you to tell us without consequence." The man smiled at the former guard, and said, "I was smuggling bicycles." See how easily things sneak by? And that, my friend, is how easily the devil snuck the Bible out of our culture.

IV/ EVEN CHRISTIANS DON'T ALWAYS TAKE THE WORD OF GOD SERIOUSLY

Here's some examples.

1. Our position in Christ. If we really believed what the Bible says about who we are in Christ, we would not be wasting time in the guilt trip of worm theology which says, "I am a no good wretch of no use to the Lord." We would put our heads back, straighten our shoulders and boldly say, "I am a king's kid. I have been bought with a price. I am washed in the blood of Christ. I have the light of Christ shining in me today. I am one of the redeemed. I am a priest of God Most High." We should be excited about who we are in Christ, not doubtful about it. This is Palm Sunday and the people were very excited about what they had heard about Jesus Christ. We too should be excited about what the Lord has done for us and who we are in Christ.

2. Anxiety and worry. If Christians really took God at His Word, there would be far less worry in their minds. We would instead be filled with bold confidence in God, in His Word and in His ability to do what He said He was going to do. I'm reminded of an incident I overheard in a store called Bargain Harley's in Berwick. A little girl had been given some money by her parents. She had found something to buy which her father felt was of inferior quality. He said, "What happens if it breaks? Then we have to come back here." The little girl confidently replied, "That's okay. You can fix it." Christians should have that same confidence in their heavenly Father. If something goes wrong, we should say, "Father can fix it."

3. CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES If we are excited about God's ability to overcome and the power of His Word, then we should be very bold about taking on our giants, that is challenges and difficulties. After all, the Bible declares, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." 1 Jn. 4:4 That leaves no room for timidity and hesitancy in taking on a challenge. We should have the same confidence David demonstrated when he took on the giant Goliath. His attitude was, "He's so big I can't miss."

4. The sin of prayerlessness in the church. The Lord told us that in prayer, we could ask anything in His name and He would do it. If we really believed the wonderful promises relating to prayer, then why are prayer meetings often sparse in attendance and even nonexistent in some churches? Why is our first reaction often

panic instead of prayer? Now, we may say, “We are praying people.” But when we pray, do we expect the worst or the best? After all, the Lord concluded one of His parables on prayer by asking, “When the Son of Man returns, will He find faith on earth?”

Here’s an illustration. A woman decided to serve her first ever turkey dinner to her family. She prefaced it by saying, “Now, if it isn’t any good, we will just put our hats and coats on and go eat dinner at a restaurant. Nothing more will be said.” Then she went into the kitchen to bring out the turkey. When she returned, what should she find but her husband and son sitting at the dining table with their hats and coats already on! Clearly, they were expecting the worst and not the best. If we are excited about a God who hears and answers prayer, then we should be expecting the best is yet to come, that something wonderful is coming our way today.

5. Witnessing for Christ. If we are excited about the Gospel as the Word of the King of kings, then we should be very bold to witness for the Lord. There would be no room for timidity and fear in witnessing for Christ. Billy Graham writes of a crisis he worked through in his early years. At that time, the Bible was increasingly coming under attack even in many Christian seminaries. He began to doubt the truth of God’s Word. Then he came to the realization as an aspiring evangelist that he was going to have to take the message of the Bible at face value in its entirety or not at all. He resolved to stand upon the Word of God and since that time never looked back in his convictions about the power of the Word of God to change lives. He shares the conviction of the apostle Paul who wrote, “I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes.” Rom. 1:16 So must we.

6. Tithing. Many Christians do not tithe for fear they will not have enough. They do not dare take God at His Word. “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so that there will be enough food in my Temple. “If you do,” says the Lord Almighty, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Let me prove it to you!” Mal. 3:10

V/ DARING TO TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD

The New Testament records an incident involving a Roman centurion which demonstrates what it means to take God at His Word. See Lk. 7:1-10

This centurion or military commander had a servant whom he highly valued. The servant had become sick to the point of death. Note how the centurion responded to the need of the moment.

1. He responded to the Good Report. By that time, reports had been circulating about the power of Jesus Christ to heal and to make a difference. The centurion acted on this word about healing. “He sent some respected Jewish leaders to ask Him to come and heal his slave.” 7:3 Do we act on what God says in His Word about healing? (See James chapter five)

2. He expressed complete confidence in Christ, in His ability to heal and His willingness to heal. As the Lord drew near to the house where the centurion lived,

he sent servants with a message. “Don’t trouble yourself...Just speak the word from where you are and my servant will be healed.” 7:6-7 The centurion explained his confidence by saying that he understood the principle of authority. As a commander of soldiers, he could issue orders at will. In the same way, he acknowledged that Christ had supreme authority over death and sickness in the situation, and a spoken word of authority would suffice to remedy the situation. He was correct. The Lord healed the servant and marveled at the greatness of the man’s faith.

Im the gospel of Mark chapter 11, we are told by Christ that great power, power to remove mountainous obstacles from our pathway, is released when we take God at His Word and speak to the difficulty in faith believing. “I assure you that you can say to this mountain, “May God lift you up and throw you into the sea,” and your command will be obeyed. All that’s required is that you really believe and do not doubt in your heart.” Mk. 11:23 Here’s the bottom line. Are we daring to take God seriously, at His Word? What are you anticipating in your life and in your church? Do you anticipate the worst or do you expect the best, that something wonderful from God is on the way to you right now? Lift your head up, square your shoulders and boldly declare, “Something good from God is coming my way today!” After all, you can trust the Word of the King of kings.

March 16, 2008 A Word From Pastor Alan

Ever watch the infomercials on television? They are very good at making extravagant claims about their products aren’t they? You’ll hear claims like, “You will look years younger, lose all kinds of weight, have all kinds of extra time to spare by using this convenient appliance, etc. Many people who take these claims seriously often end up being disappointed. This is because the source of the claims was not reliable and trustworthy.

There is a refreshing alternative today when it comes to words we can trust. It is called the Bible. Isaiah 40:8 says, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God will stand forever.” Did you take that in? Grass withers, flowers fade, leaves wilt, but the Word of our God will stand forever. It is a book of promises which we can trust and stake our lives upon. Take John 3:16, for example. “For God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” That is a promise we can stake our eternal destiny upon. We have the word of the King kings. God said it. We know that it is true. All that is required is that we respond in faith, saying, “God said it. It is enough for me. In Him will I put my trust.”

There are many other promises in Scripture which can make a tremendous difference in our lives if we only take them seriously. Would you like to know more about how to take God at His Word and see your life transformed? Please go to the sermon on this site.