

A Quarterly Journal

(A presentation by email)

Bob Oliver, editor

(You may now contact me at either address.)

boliver@mccallie.org

boboliver32446@gmail.com

April, 2010

Volume 2 Issue #2

Light

FOR OUR AGE

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

Psalm 119:105

Feature One: Editorial

GOD’S GRACE TO A LOST WORLD

Over the years there has been much discussion on the subject of the “grace of God” and how it affects man. A simple, but apt description of the word “grace” is “unmerited favor”. I believe this is a definition with which we can work. That still does not answer the question as to how it applies to man. First, I would like to explore the following passage:

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: [2] By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. [3] And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; [4] And patience, experience; and experience, hope: [5] And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. [6] For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. [7] For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. [8] But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. [9] Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. [10] For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. [11] And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. [12] Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: [13] (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. [14] Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. [15] But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the

grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. [16] And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. [17] For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) [18] Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. [19] For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. [20] Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: [21] That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

In examining this text I believe the following to be the thesis. Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve's transgression. We know that sin is "a transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). God had instructed Adam and Eve not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Yet they did eat of that fruit. They therefore transgressed the law God had given them and they sinned. What was the penalty? Genesis 2:17 tells us that on the day that they ate the fruit they would die. We know this was not a physical death in that Adam lived to be 930 years of age. (Genesis 5:5). Was the Bible wrong? Absolutely not! The word "death" actually implies a separation. On the day they ate of the fruit they were dead spiritually. They were separated from God.

But even though they sinned, God still loved them. He made a temporary way for man to be united with him. Genesis chapter four gives us the first glimpse that constituted that method. We know that Abel offered a sacrifice that God accepted but his brother Cain's sacrifice was not

acceptable. We see this in Hebrews 11:4

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

If we look at the grammatical concept of in the text we see that Cain's sacrifice was excellent, yet Abel's was "more" excellent. What was the difference? We see that in the word "faith". How do we get faith? When we examination of Romans 10:17 the answer is clear. "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" God had instructed Cain and Abel as to what He desired for the sacrifice. While Cain evidently offered a great sacrifice, it was not what God commanded, while Abel's obeyed God's instructions. In that way Abel's sacrifice was "more" excellent than Cain's.

God has always told men exactly what he wants them to do to please him. It is when men do things differently that they find themselves unacceptable to God.

We also see that God's grace has been extended to all men. In verse 6 of our text we see that Christ died for the "ungodly". Also verse 8 tells us that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Therefore, it is through his blood that we can find salvation. (Verse 9).

Beginning with verse 14 and continuing through 19 we see that through one man, Adam, sin reigned in the world; but with the sacrifice of Christ, salvation was brought to all. We see this in 2 Peter 3:9:

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

God does not want to lose any of his creation. So if we believe what he tells

us, we can find salvation. It is free. It is a gift of God. Unfortunately, not all will accept the free gift. Also, unfortunately, not everyone understands what it means to believe. Obviously, faith is more than stating we believe in Jesus. Consider James 2:19, which says:

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

What then does it mean to “believe” God? Would it not be that we trust him by doing what he says? There are those that teach that we are not saved by “works”. That is true in one aspect, but incorrect in another. In Ephesians 2:8-9 we do read:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Notice that we cannot be saved by any act that originates from ourselves. We can do nothing that would allow us to “boast” that we gained our own salvation. This is not speaking of God’s works, however.

In John 6:29-30 we see this is true.

Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? [29] Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

If God commands us to do something, it is a work of God. Can we refuse God? Even in our society we understand that something can be a free gift, yet there are commands we must perform to obtain that gift. Suppose a business offers a free gift of a small microwave oven to everyone that comes to their place of business and presents a coupon they placed in the paper. Do you see that the gift is free even though the business owners laid down some

requirements? To obtain the free gift one would of necessity take the time and make the effort to go to that place of business. They must also have with them a coupon that had been placed in the paper. If these conditions are met, they will receive a free microwave oven.

God has laid down some “works” that are His that we must meet. We must work the work of faith (John 6:29-30). We must do the work of repentance. (2 Peter 3:9) Further we must confess that Jesus is Lord as we read in Luke 12:8:

Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: [9] But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

Jesus also commanded that we be baptized. This is His command and also a command of his apostles. Consider what our savior said in Mark 16:15-16:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. [16] He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Some have taught that this text does not require baptism in that the latter part of verse 16 does not include baptism. Look at the grammar for a moment. Allow me to use the same grammar construct for a different idea. I believe that will clarify things somewhat.

He that eateth and digesteth his food shall live; but he that digesteth not his food shall die.

Would I need to say “he that *eateth not* and *digesteth not* his food shall die”? Of course not! If someone did not eat there would be no food to digest. In the same sense, if a person does not believe they will not be baptized for the

remission of their sins (Acts 2:38).

In conclusion, we are saved by God's grace through our faith and trust in Him. This faith causes us to do what God commands. Those that comply with God's commands will have their sins forgiven and be his children. Those that do not will "die in their sins". God doesn't want any to die in their sins as we have seen. But God also has given us a free choice. We can be obedient to His words, or we can reject them. I pray that we will all be obedient to his teachings.

Feature 2: An article by R. C. Oliver

This is the second of a series that I will share with you this year. Following in this series of articles from "Light" by my father, R. C. Oliver, will be: Why I believe in Jesus Christ, and Why I believe in the Church.

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE BIBLE

(In the last issue) I presented two fundamental reasons why I believe in God. As introduced in that article, these reasons are: Nature and the Bible.

My reasons for believing in God because of nature are the four well-known traditional arguments: The Cosmological, The Teleological, The Anthropological, and the Ontological. These reasons I discussed briefly, though I trust clearly, in the last issue of Light.

My reason for believing in God because of the Bible is simply this: The Bible affirms that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."—Genesis 1:1. I believe that God is, simply because the Bible says so! However, to the man who does not believe the Bible, this is no good reason at all. Therefore, before one can convincingly use this argument, he must first demonstrate the integrity, reliability, and validity of the Bible, which

demonstration is the burden of this article. Also, when I shall have stated my reasons for believing the Bible to be the word of God, I shall have presented, at the same time, a supplement to, and continuation of, *Why I Believe in God*.

In that we have already studied God as He has revealed himself through nature, I think it very appropriate that we make our transition from the argument of nature, to the argument of the Bible, by first studying the analogies that exist between these two: nature and the Bible. My first reason, then, for believing the Bible to be the word of God is the several Biblical analogies which so beautifully correspond to those of nature, two of which we shall now study.

Like nature, the Bible is both simple and complex. In nature, the air that we breathe and the water that we drink are utilized by, and are as essential to, the well-being of an infant as they are to the adult. And though they are so simple that the child can, and does, use them, yet they are so complex that they have challenged our scientists through the centuries. In like manner, there are things contained in the Bible that even the little child can understand and use, yet the same book contains other matters which are so complex that some of our greatest scholars have never been able to fathom their depths!

Another example of this simplicity and abstruseness may be seen in the formation of the earth. The soil of the earth, which is the most important for man's practical use, has been placed upon the earth's surface, where it is accessible to all, and its uses are capable of being understood and applied by the meanest capacity. Yet he who has the capacity to proceed into the otherwise locked chambers of the earth's bosom will find there, as it were, first the coarser metals, then the more precious, and finally the jewels and

the precious stones most rare. In like manner, the Bible has, as it were, upon its surface, such as can be understood and used by all, and yet he who has the capacity to proceed further into its otherwise locked chambers, will find there those jewels of truth most rare. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!"

The Bible is a unit; for though it was written over a period of about sixteen hundred years, by about forty different men who were related to all walks of life, who lived in different countries and ages, and who spoke different languages, yet when it was brought together and compiled into one volume, it constituted one consistent whole! The Bible is a unit, and weak indeed is the mind of that man who will argue otherwise. But should some one of my readers wish to so argue, if he will kindly write to me, stating his objections, I shall be happy to consider them in future issues of Light. *[Editor's note: While my father has passed from this realm, I would be more than happy to stand in for him on this last statement.]*

Though I am aware that the Bible is not a text book on science, yet when it treats upon a scientific subject, it is always scientifically correct. This, therefore, is my second reason for believing the Bible to be from God.

Some examples of this scientific accuracy are: In the realm of the astronomical the Bible declared with unerring accuracy that the stars are innumerable (Genesis 22:17 cf. Hebrews 11:12), yet for a long time this was contested by our scientists. How did Moses and Paul know this? Again, Job says. - "He . . . hangeth the earth upon nothing."

Job 26:7. How did Job know that? Still further, Isaiah declared: "He sitteth upon the circle of the earth." Isaiah 40:22. How did Isaiah know that? Another example in the realm of the psychological is that the Bible locates the intellect in the head (I Corinthians 12.12-27 cf. Colossians 1:18), but the

ancients located it in the blood, the abdomen, the chest and the stomach. How did Paul know to write this? Then, in the realm of the biological the Bible locates the life in the blood. -Deuteronomy 12:23. This, however, our scientists did not know for hundreds of years after Moses wrote. How did Moses know? Surely, these men could not have written with such unerring accuracy without the divine aid of an all-wise God. To believe otherwise is to create a far greater difficulty than to simply believe that God wrote the Bible. I, therefore, believe the Bible came from God.

My third and final reason for believing the Bible is contained in its marvelous prophecies. Though the Bible is filled with such prophecies, yet, in order to be brief, I am going to confine myself to one prophecy, because of the living proof we have with us to this day. This prophecy, or rather, this series of prophecies concern the Jews. God prophesied that a nation would come against them from afar -Deuteronomy 28.49. This was fulfilled by the Roman Army. God said that during the terrible famine the parents would eat their own children -Leviticus 26-29. Josephus affirms that they did -*Wars of the Jews*, book 6, chapter 3, section 4. God said he would scatter the Jews among all the nations -Deuteronomy 28.64. Need we argue this point? Though scattered, yet the Jews were not to be destroyed --Jeremiah 30:11. The Jews remain with us today. The destroyed have outlived their destroyers! Indeed, the Jews are a *living* monument of the integrity, reliability and validity of God's prophetic word, and for these prophecies I firmly believe the Bible to be the word of God.

I therefore believe the Bible to be the word of God because of its analogy to nature, its scientific accuracy, and its infallible prophecies, not one of which has been embellished in this brief article, but all of which have been introduced, with the hope that they may inspire my reader to search for

himself that abundant storehouse of Christian evidences, the result of which, it is hoped, will be an unfaltering faith in both the existence of that Being from whom all blessing flow, and the inspiration of that book through which He has revealed Himself to man. -Amen.

Feature 3: Our Communication ---

If you look around in many church assemblies you might see people sleeping, or with their heads down in apparent disinterest. While they have obeyed the command to assemble (Hebrews 10:25), their hearts may be far from God (Matthew 15:8). It is true that some might have been up all night and like Euticus of old, fell asleep, or perhaps they might have been taking a medicine that made them groggy. Still, people will read this non-verbal language as being far from God in their heart. We need to remember that we do teach by what we do. Make sure our non-verbal language is in agreement with what we are saying and doing.

Feature 4: Bible Questions

If you have a Bible question send it to me by email and I will enjoy studying it with our readers. If it is a question to which you would like an immediate answer, indicate that and I will try to return it to you personally. Remember, if you would like to communicate with me, use my school email address in that this is the one I most often use. (boliver@mccallie.org)

In the editorial I referred to Matthew 16:15-16. The latter portion of verse 16 refers to those baptized picking up serpents and drinking deadly poison and not being harmed. Does this text still apply today?

What matters is that it did apply when it was written. We know that the age of miracles has passed (1 Corinthians 12-14). During the New Testament era those that obeyed Matthew 16 had the ability to pick up serpents and drink deadly poison. While the age of the miracles has passed, the baptism that Jesus taught did not. Therefore, baptism is still required for salvation.

Humor:

Little ten-year old Johnny was sitting quietly by his mother during their church service. One of the men was gravely leading the congregation in prayer. A short time into the prayer a loud shrill whistle was heard throughout the assembly. Johnny's mother looked beside her in horror as she realized that shrill whistle came from her son. She grabbed him by the arm and quietly, and forcefully, led him out of the room. When they were alone she demanded to know why he had done that. With an innocent face Johnny replied, "During the prayer I asked God to teach me to whistle, and he did."

In Closing:

It has been a joy to once again come into your home by this medium. Always feel free to send names to me of those that might enjoy this quarterly

journal. Also, I value your questions. May God bless you until we can meet again by this medium.

In the Master's service,

Bob Oliver