

A Quarterly Journal

(A presentation by email)

“LIGHT FOR OUR AGE”

Bob Oliver, editor

boboliver32446@gmail.com

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*“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”
Psalm 119:105*

Feature One: Editorial

It's Not A Salvation Issue!

“But, everybody likes it.” “It will attract more young people.” “God doesn't really care.” “We like the new way better than the old.” “It's not a salvation issue.” “It's just a tradition that we can change.” These are

statements that have been heard frequently over the past few years as reasons for changing the worship to God in our assemblies. But we must raise the question, are these changes salvation issues or not?

Romans 15:4 reads as follows: “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” This passage is telling us that while we do not follow the Old Testament as a rule of law, yet it is there to instruct us on how God reacts to mankind. We can learn how to please God and what displeases God by the way He reacted to the Jewish nation.

With this in mind I would like to examine the question, “Does God really care about how we worship him?” First look at a recording in the Bible from the early pages of Genesis. In chapter 4:3-7 it reads:

“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.”

We know that God had instructed them as to how to worship, that is, sacrifice to Him because of the passage in Hebrews 11:4 which tells us, “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain....” Abel offered his sacrifice by faith. In Romans 10:17 we read that “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Therefore, we know that God told them what to do. It is also important to recognize that Cain’s

sacrifice was an excellent sacrifice.

The Hebrew writer uses the term “more excellent” in describing Abel’s sacrifice. That is a term of comparison. This insinuates that Cain’s sacrifice was excellent, but Abel’s was more excellent in that he did what God had instructed. Therefore, we can have an excellent worship service and displease God.

Moving through time we find an incident of incorrect worship in Leviticus 10. Nadab and Abihu were sons of Aaron the High Priest. They were nephews of Moses. This account tells us they offered “strange fire” in their worship. Notice what happened in this chapter, verses 1-2:

“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.”

Especially notice the language where we are told that they did that, “which he commanded them not”. The act definitely took place during worship. While our commands for worship are different from theirs, it is the same God we worship. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary wrote the following concerning what happened.

“...instead of taking the fire which was put into their censers from the brazen altar, they seem to have been content with common fire and thus perpetrated an act which, considering the descent of the miraculous fire they had so recently witnessed and the solemn obligation under which they were laid to make use of that which was specially appropriated to the service of the altars, they betrayed a carelessness, an irreverence, a want of faith, most surprising and lamentable. A precedent of such evil tendency was dangerous, and it was imperatively necessary, therefore, as well for the priests

themselves as for the sacred things, that a marked expression of the divine displeasure should be given for doing that which "God commanded them not."

Nadab and Abihu showed no concern for what God had commanded in this setting. God was so angered at their actions that He did not allow their father, Aaron, or Moses, or their brothers to publically mourn their death. If they did, they would also die.

The main point I want to make in this story is that they did something in their worship that displeased God. But let us look further in God's word for one further example. In I Samuel 13:10-14 we find the following"

And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.

Notice once again this took place during their worship. Saul did what he was not allowed to do. He tried to excuse himself but was told he had

done foolishly. For doing this Saul lost his kingdom.

I want it understood that I enjoy instrumental music. I was in band in school and enjoyed that experience. But our worship is not to bring enjoyment to us. We don't worship to entice more people to attend our worship service. We don't worship to show off our talents. We worship to please God. He is the "audience". It is God that we want to find pleasure in our worship. We want our worship to be "in spirit and in truth". (John 4:24) Further the Bible teaches that God's word is truth. (John 17:17) What we do, if pleasing God is our desire, is to do those things for which we find authority in His word. We all agree that we have authority to sing praises to God. That is not true for the use of instrumental music. Is it a salvation issue? To say it is, is to place your soul at risk. Remember how God treated those that worshipped incorrectly. There is no authorization for instruments of music to be used in worship. Think on these things.

Feature Two: *an article by R. C. Oliver from one of his radio sermons*

If You Do Not Believe The Bible

To those of you that do not believe the Bible, I beg you to consider the following evidence. The scope of this evidence may be briefly stated in two words: "Fulfilled Prophecy".

My philosophy regarding fulfilled prophecy does not harmonize with that of many preachers, for I do not intend to go to the Old Testament and

there find a prophecy and then come to the New Testament, locate the record of its fulfillment, and expect you to believe the Bible to be divine on the basis of such foolish reasoning. I well realize that if you do not believe the Bible to be the word of God, such reasoning would not convince you. There is just as much sense in saying that because you find an unsolved problem in the fore part of an arithmetic book and the answer to that problem is in the back of the book, that the arithmetic book is inspired; as it would be to argue that because you find a prophecy in the Old Testament and the record of its fulfillment is in the new, that the Bible is inspired. It takes more evidence than that to prove the Bible a divine book!

If a series of authors during a period covering hundreds of years write predictions covering the fate of cities, kingdoms, and races of people, and those predictions are exactly and literally fulfilled, it is but justly due them that they be permitted to tell how they derived the wonderful information and from what source it came. I contend that the Bible writers from Moses to Malachi present to us just such phenomena. They foretell a wonderful variety of events, hundreds, and in some instance thousands of years before the event transpired. Those predictions were fulfilled to the letter, the event taking place just where, and as, the Bible writers predicted. Here are five prophets concurring in the prediction that the Philistines should perish, their country become desolate and their cities ruins.

Ezekiel 25:15-16 Thus saith the Lord God; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred; 16 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast.

Zephaniah 2:4-6 For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up. 5 Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the Lord is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. 6 And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.

Amos 1:6-8 Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom: 7 But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof: 8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron:

Jeremiah 47:5 Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself?

Zechariah 9:5 Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.

Today that country is in the desolate condition foretold. This is attested by all travellers, without regard to creed or opinion, infidels and Christians giving the same account. M. C. F. Volney, an avowed infidel, in his description in "Travels Through Syria and Egypt in 1783-1785 is a most complete counterpart of the prophecy.

Here are two more scriptures that prophesied concerning Babylon.

Isaiah 13:17-22 ESV Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them, who have no regard for silver and do not delight in gold. 18 Their bows will slaughter the young men; they will have no mercy on the fruit of the womb; their eyes will not pity children. 19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them. 20 It will never be inhabited or lived in for all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there; no shepherds will make their flocks lie down there. 21 But wild animals will lie down there, and their houses will be full of howling creatures; there ostriches will dwell, and there wild goats will dance. 22 Hyenas will cry in its towers, and jackals in the pleasant palaces; its time is close at hand and its days will not be prolonged.

Isaiah 14:22-23 I will rise up against them, declares the Lord of hosts, and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, descendants and posterity, declares the Lord. 23 And I will make it a possession of the hedgehog, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, declares the Lord of hosts.

Consider the Jewish nation in prophecy. The first prediction I call your attention to is the one given by Moses, and found in your Bible in Deuteronomy 28:49-68: ESV

49 The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, 50 a hard- faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young. 51 It shall eat the offspring of your cattle and the fruit of your ground, until you are destroyed; it also shall not leave you grain, wine, or oil, the increase of your herds or the young of your flock, until they have caused you to perish. 52 They shall besiege you in all your towns, until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout all your land. And they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land, which the Lord your God has given you. 53 And you shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the Lord your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you. 54 The man who

is the most tender and refined among you will begrudge food to his brother, to the wife he embraces, and to the last of the children whom he has left, 55 so that he will not give to any of them any of the flesh of his children whom he is eating, because he has nothing else left, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in all your towns. 56 The most tender and refined woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she is so delicate and tender, will begrudge to the husband she embraces, to her son and to her daughter, 57 her afterbirth that comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears, because lacking everything she will eat them secretly, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your towns. 58 If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the Lord your God, 59 then the Lord will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting. 60 And he will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. 61 Every sickness also and every affliction that is not recorded in the book of this law, the Lord will bring upon you, until you are destroyed. 62 Whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God. 63 And as the Lord took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the Lord will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. 64 And the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. 65 And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the Lord will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. 66 Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. 67 In the morning you shall say, If only it were evening! and at evening you shall say, If only it were morning! because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see. 68 And the Lord will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey that I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.

Here we learn in detail what the Jews were to expect if they should depart from the commandments of the Lord, and Moses goes on to say in Deuteronomy 31:29 that they will do evil and depart from the commandments of the Lord.

Here then, in the prophecy referred to is a plain prediction that a foreign nation should come against the Jews, besiege their cities, conquer them, disperse them, and sell some into bondage leaving but a remnant. A perusal of Josephus' *Jewish Wars* will show that this was fulfilled when the Romans, under Titus, invaded their land and destroyed Jerusalem. In this prediction before us there are several distinct statements, and a few to which I wish to call your attention.

It is stated, "a nation was to come against them from afar". The Romans fulfilled this in the destruction of Jerusalem. The Jews were to suffer terribly by famine, so much so that parents should eat their own children. Josephus testifies to this when he tells of a young lady of an eminent and wealthy family who "slew her son, and then roasted him, and ate the one-half of him, and kept the other half concealed. Upon this, the Seditious came in presently and smelling the horrid sent of this food, they threatened her that they would cut her throat immediately if she did not show them what food she had gotten ready." She replied that she had saved a very fine portion of it for them, "This is my own son and what hath been done is my own doing. Come, eat this food, for I have eaten of it myself. Do not you pretend to be either more tender than a woman, or more compassionate than a mother; but if you be so scrupulous, and abominate this, my sacrifice, as I have eaten the one-half, let the rest be reserved for me also. After which, those men went out trembling, being never so much affrighted at any thing

as they were at this, and with some difficulty, they left the rest of that meat to the mother.” (Josephus’ Wars, Book 6, Chapter 3, Section 4).

Other distinct statements to which I wish to call your attention are as follows: They were to be sore distressed. They were to be left few in number. They were to be plucked off their own land and scattered among the nations. Among the nations where they were driven they were to have no ease, but affliction and sorrow. It is needless for me to say such has been their fate!

Though the vicissitudes through which they were called to pass were to be sore and trying, yet they were not to be destroyed. As proof of this consider Jeremiah 30:11 “For I am with you, says the Lord, to save you. Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, Yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished.” The Jews are not to be destroyed or their identity lost! If the Jews had been exterminated, or their identity lost, it would nullify the prophecies and nullify the scriptures, but as long as they continue, they stand forth as a living and shining monument of the divinity of the book we call the Bible!

Therefore, as long as the Jews survive I will believe the Bible to be of divine origin. Do you want to shake my faith? Then let me stand by the side of the deathbed of the last surviving Hebrew. Let me watch him as he exchanges worlds, watch the mother earth as it is placed about his final resting place, and then will I be inclined to believe the prophet was deceived –the Lord deceived. But not until then will I be willing to say the Bible is just a book written by ordinary men, and there is no God.

Feature Three: Sandy's Women's Corner

ENCOURAGING WORDS

Are you an encourager? Do you look for opportunities to encourage those with whom you come in contact?

I suppose that most of us have far more opportunities to encourage than we use to encourage. For some reason, it seems to be difficult for us to say things that will make someone feel better.

I am so fortunate that I have people in my life that do encourage me. I get lots of encouragement from my husband. He sometimes encourages me not to do something, but most of the time he encourages me to do things that make me happy.

I have encouragement from my ladies' class. They encourage me by attending class and listening even when I chase a few rabbits. They are so kind they even chase rabbits with me.

In the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 3, verse 28, God spoke to Moses with some specific instructions about encouragement. God told Moses, "But command Joshua, and encourage him and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you will see" (NKJV).

God's instructions to Moses were very clear. The people of God were ready to enter the Promised Land. Moses had sinned by striking the rock to bring forth water for the people instead of speaking to it as God commanded. God had made it clear that Moses would not enter Canaan, and now the time had come for the people to cross over into the land promised.

Moses begged to go. He hoped God would change His mind. But the Lord would not listen to Moses. He said, “Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter.”

Moses not only had to watch the people cross into that beautiful land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but he had to encourage and strengthen another man who would lead them.

At the end of Deuteronomy, Moses laid his hands on Joshua so that he received the wisdom to lead the people. He did what God told him to do. He encouraged Joshua and strengthened him.

It is one thing to encourage as we go from day to day. We can offer little words of appreciation, kind words of affection, and words of comfort. But as our days draw to a close, can we encourage those who will take our place?

There is a sweet, beautiful lady in our congregation who has done this to me. She encouraged me when I was asked to speak in a lectureship for the first time. She encouraged me when I started an evening ladies’ class. She gave me a hug just last week and encouraged me by thanking me for some little something I had participated in several weeks ago. She is my encourager!

A precious lady in our congregation passed from this life just last night. She was an encourager. I remember how she and her husband came to our home several years ago to encourage my husband to accept the responsibility of being an elder. Her husband had been an elder, and she knew what this would mean in our lives. What a blessing that visit was to us.

There is a great lesson in this Deuteronomy passage. God knew how much Joshua would need the blessings of Moses. I can only imagine how

Joshua must have felt when Moses showed his support as Joshua looked toward the land of Canaan.

God knows how much we all need words of encouragement from our brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul told the Philippians, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:3-6).

Paul was an encourager. Even though he preached forcefully and sometimes with rebukes, he encouraged those who were obedient and faithful.

I am trying to be more encouraging to others, especially to those younger women who are trying to serve the Lord. I remember how hard it is. I remember how much I wanted the approval of those whom I looked to as Christian examples.

So, look around you. Find one or several who need encouragement. Encourage them and strengthen them. They will be blessed, and so will you.

Feature Four: Our Communication:

Taken from:

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/effective_communication_skills.htm

Listening is one of the most important aspects of effective communication.

Successful listening means not just understanding the words or the information being communicated, but also understanding how the speaker feels about what they're communicating.

Effective listening can:

- Make the speaker feel heard and understood, which can help build a stronger, deeper connection between you.
- Create an environment where everyone feels safe to express ideas, opinions, and feelings, or plan and problem solve in creative ways.
- Save time by helping clarify information, avoid conflicts and misunderstandings.

Relieve negative emotions. When emotions are running high, if the speaker feels that he or she has been truly heard, it can help to calm them down, relieve negative feelings, and allow for real understanding or problem solving to begin.

Feature Five: Bible Question

“Can women be preachers? I know a lot of denominations are using women preachers today. What does the Bible say?”

The Bible does address this question. The easiest passages to understand are 1 Timothy 2:11-14 which is addressed to women and it reads:

“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.”

The next passage is addressed to preachers, also written by the apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy 4:2 and reads as follows:

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

A woman cannot do both. She cannot be in subjection to men and also reprove and rebuke them. Paul explains the reason for her to be in subjection

to men is that Adam was created first, and Eve was deceived while Adam was not.

Add to this what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:3,

“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”

While it is true that women are not able to be in a position to be over men, they are not “secondary” in the eyes of God. They have a different role than do men, but their reward is the same as the reward for men. Heaven is promised to faithful women as well as faithful men. Sometimes we may not understand why God commands what he does, but we don’t need to understand it to obey it. Often children do not understand why their parents make them follow different rules. Still, children are to obey their parents.

Humor:

Six-year-old Angie and her four-year-old brother Joel were sitting together during church services. Joel giggled, sang, and talked out loud. Finally, his big sister had enough. 'You're not supposed to talk out loud in church.' 'Why? Who's going to stop me?' Joel asked. Angie pointed to the back of the church and said, 'See those two men standing by the door? They're hushers.'

In Closing:

This year is going by so fast. I look forward to seeing some of you at CTS (Freed-Hardeman’s Christian Training Series). I have begun working some with Brother Brad Price. If you would like to read any back issues they are

on his blog at abiblecommentary.com/lightforourage

Bob Oliver