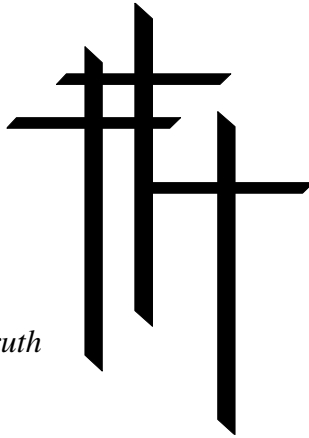


Timely Messenger

*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*



Volume 67 No. 3

March 2007

THE “FOUR GOSPELS” OR PAUL’S GOSPEL?

By John D. LaVier

In talking with one of the Christian leaders in this city, he pressed the idea that so many have; namely, that we who seek to rightly divide the Word of Truth, reject completely the so-called four gospels as not being for us as members of the Body of Christ. Certainly all of God’s word is FOR us (1 Cor. 10: 11), but it is most assuredly not all TO us (Rom. 3:19), nor even about us. While it is true that much of the teaching found in the historic records can and should be obeyed by members of the

body of Christ today, still there are many other things that can not, for they are contrary to the “grace” teaching found in the epistles. To bring over the religious program and kingdom teaching found in the historic records, and endeavor to practice it in this dispensation, would frustrate the grace of God. During this age of grace all religion has been abolished, and the kingdom program has been suspended.

We quote herewith a passage from “Authority,” written by William R.

Newell, noted Bible teacher:

“Many people when reading the Bible do not know but what any man who may be talking is talking to them. They make no discrimination. Instead of learning what God wants them to learn for discipline and instruction, they put themselves right under the words of the person they may be reading. There are those for instance, that take the Lord Jesus in the four Gospels for their authority, and they really think there is no authority but Him, forgetting that He had spoken in another way since then ... I want to say that our Lord Jesus didn’t come to us. You will never learn the truth unless you believe what Christ said. Jesus Christ said He was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel ... If He says that He was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, then He was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of

Israel!

The Lord Jesus' authority, in the days of His flesh, did not extend to the Gentiles. He came to this world as the Messiah of Israel. Therefore if you go back and put yourself under the Sermon on the Mount, you are going to have trouble."

The above is strong language, but Mr. Newell goes on to say,

"Wouldn't it be a good thing for you to know the epistles and love the epistles and be acquainted with the epistles and delight in the epistles and stay in the epistles that are according to faith of God's elect? ... Did you ever hear of a heresy based on the Pauline Epistles? Come on now! You stay in the house God gave YOU."

In Philippians 1:10 (R.V.) we are told to "Distinguish the things that differ," and if we would be, "a workman that needeth

not to be ashamed," we must study all Scripture in the light of the revelation given by the resurrected, ascended, glorified Christ at God's right hand, to and through His servant the Apostle Paul. Everything that we, as members of the church of the mystery, need to know concerning our calling and our hope, as well as our walk and behavior, is to be found in the epistles of Paul, "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:13).

In rightly dividing the Word of Truth we do not discard or lose any portion of the Word. Rather, we regain much that was formerly, to all practical purposes, lost. Many portions of the Word which were formerly unintelligible, confusing, and contradictory, have, when put in their right place, and studied in the light of Paul's final and complete revelation, taken on new meaning and we have been able to understand the message which God wished them to convey to us. The Bible has become clearer and dearer when we have seen what is our hope, calling, position,

and riches as members of Christ's Body. We are one with Him who is the Head.

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

2 Timothy 1:13-14

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also

2 Timothy 2:2

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

In Romans 10:1-4, the Apostle Paul expressed his heart's desire that his people, Israel, might be saved. These people had a zeal for God, but it was not according to knowledge. They were seeking to establish their own righteousness by the works of the law, and in doing so they demonstrated their ignorance of God's righteousness. They failed to see that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

The law was not given to make men righteous. The law required perfect and complete obedience to God's commands (Gal. 3:12); it had no power to give life because it was dependent on the flesh, and the flesh is weak. The law was given "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ... by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:19-20).

While the Mosaic Law certainly provided a standard of God's righteousness, it was not the means

by which sinful men could become righteous. God has now revealed that righteousness is provided completely apart from the law. God sent His Son into this world to make known His righteousness to man. Certainly Jesus' life was an example of righteousness, but it was the cross that truly demonstrated the righteousness of God. God set forth His Son as a propitiation for our sins through the shedding of His blood. Christ paid in full the penalty for our sins, thus satisfying God's righteous requirements. He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor 5:21). This was the only way God could remain righteous Himself and still be able to justify (declare righteous) sinful men. This leaves no room for boasting on our part. Clearly justification is not by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on Calvary (Rom. 3:28).

Have you submitted to the righteousness of God and trusted in Christ as your Savior, or are you

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hopelessly pursuing a righteousness of your own through the works of the law?

*Being justified freely
by His grace through
the redemption that is
in Christ Jesus.*

(Romans 3:24)

THE MAN OF GOD — PART 5

By Gregg Bing

Continued from last month.

“But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1 Tim. 6:11-12)

Paul identified six things that a “man of God” follows after: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. We looked at the first two, righteousness and godliness, last month. This month we continue with:

Faith

The word “faith” can refer to several different things: 1) the faithfulness of Christ, 2) our faith in

Christ unto salvation, 3) our faith in God for our daily walk, 4) our faithfulness in serving the Lord, and 5) the body of truth we believe (usually referred to as “the faith”). The man of God is one who has already put his faith in Christ unto salvation, thus his (or her) pursuit of faith focuses on faith in God for daily living and faithfulness in serving Him.

To have faith in God means not only believing Him, but trusting, relying, and depending on Him for our every need, no matter what the circumstances. Abraham is an excellent example of a man of faith. Hebrews chapter 11, often referred to as “the faith chapter,” devotes more verses to Abraham’s faith than any other person listed. Consider three separate instances in Abraham’s life. While living in Mesopotamia, Abraham was called by God to leave behind his country, his

family, and his father’s household and go to a land that God would show him. Hebrews 11:8 tells us Abraham, “went out, not knowing where he was going.” Abraham trusted in God’s plan and purpose for his life, without having to see and understand how (or even where) God would work out this purpose.

God later promised Abraham and his wife, Sarah, they would give birth to a son when both of them were past the age of conceiving children. Instead of doubting or scoffing at God’s promise, Paul writes of Abraham:

“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.” (Rom. 4:20-21)

After Isaac, the promised son, was born and had grown into a young man, God instructed Abraham to take him and offer him as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah.

What a tremendous test of Abraham's faith! Yet, we read,

"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called,' concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense." (Heb. 11:17-19)

This is what the man of God pursues: absolute confidence in God's plan and purpose for his life, in God's promises to him, and in God's power to perform them.

The word "faith" also includes the idea of faithfulness or trustworthiness. When we put our complete trust in God for everything in our lives, it follows that we will live a life of faithfulness in serving Him. Once again, Abraham's life gives us a pattern for faithfulness. When God called Abraham to separate him-

self from a country and a family that were steeped in idol worship (Joshua 24:2-3), Abraham obeyed God (Heb. 11:8). When he arrived in Canaan, the land to which God led him, it too was filled with idolaters. Knowing that God's purpose was to keep him separate from such idol worship, Abraham faithfully "dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (Heb. 11:9). By dwelling in tents, Abraham kept himself separate from the people of Canaan. He also "built altars" (Gen. 12:7,8, 13:4,18, 22:9) to worship the one, true God; the God who called him; the God in whom he trusted.

The man of God exhibits this same type of faithfulness in his own life and service for the Lord.

Love

The man of God must first love God, with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength (Deut. 6:5). This is what Jesus identified as the "first and great command-

ment" (Matt. 22:37-38). Though we are not living under law, but under grace, the mandate to love God in this way is still vital in our Christian walk. As we saw earlier in this study, loving God is part of what it means to pursue godliness.

After Jesus identified this "first and great commandment," He went on to note, "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt. 22:39). The man of God is also to love others, both believers and unbelievers. Paul's prayer for us is that we might

"... know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3:19)

As we experience God's love to us through Christ, we are then able to:

"Walk in love, as Christ has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Eph. 5:2).

Our love for others should be patterned after Christ's love for us, an unconditional and sacrificial love; the type of love that originates with God and proves to be "a sweet smelling aroma" to Him.

Patience

To be patient, literally means "to abide or remain under." It speaks of a steadfastness, a constancy, a patient endurance, even under the most difficult and trying circumstances. Paul admonished the Romans to be "patient in tribulation" (Rom. 12:12).

How can we learn to patiently endure whatever comes in life? First, we must acknowledge that God is sovereign; He is in control. We can rest in the reassuring promise of Romans 8:28:

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

We also need to understand that suffering is a

part of life. Some suffering comes simply because we live in a sin-cursed earth. Our bodies are corruptible and mortal; they are subject to illness and death. Other cases of suffering are caused by the acts of sinful men: theft, adultery, rape, murder, etc. From his prison house in Rome, Paul wrote to the Philippians informing them that suffering for the sake of Christ is a privilege granted to believers by God.

"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Phil. 1:29)

Jesus prepared the twelve apostles for the difficulties they would face in their future ministry for Him, telling them:

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the

world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me." (John 15:18-21)

Paul warned Timothy that evil men and seducers would continually grow worse and that: "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

Paul patiently endured through many sufferings, not just for the sake of Christ, but for the sake of the elect, those who would come to trust Christ as Savior through his ministry.

"I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ

Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10).

The man of God pursues this type of patient endurance knowing that he is “strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy” (Col. 1:11).

Meekness or Gentleness

Finally, the man of God is to pursue or follow after “meekness” (KJV) or “gentleness” (NKJV). Both words are helpful in understanding the concept of the original Greek word. Meekness indicates an attitude; it is a condition of the heart. Many people associate the word “meekness” with the idea of weakness, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Meekness has, in fact, been defined as “strength under control.” A person who is meek does not insist upon all his rights and privileges. Trench defines meekness as “that temper of spirit in which we accept God’s dealings with us as good, and therefore without dispute or resisting.”

Gentleness relates more to actions, particularly one’s manner in dealing with others. An attitude of meekness is reflected in gentle behavior toward others, whether God or men—not complaining, disputing, or resisting, but dealing humbly and gently with others, trusting God and leaving things in His hands.

Meekness or gentleness is almost always associated with humility. Moses is described in Numbers 12:3 as “very meek (humble), more than all men who were on the face of the earth.” Whenever the people of Israel murmured against him or blasphemed him, which they did quite often, Moses would humbly fall on his face before the Lord, worshipping Him and praying for the people.

The greatest example of meekness, gentleness and humility is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Though He is the eternal Son of God who existed in the form and glory of God, Paul tells us:

“He did not consider it robbery (something to

grasped or held onto) to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:6-8)

Jesus, “when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23). Paul directs us to “let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

The man of God pursues this attitude of meekness—the mindset of Christ Himself! The man of God is careful to deal gently and humbly with others, especially when sharing the truth of God’s Word with the unsaved (2 Tim. 2:23-25).

Next month we will look at what the man of God fights for.

(Continued Next Month)

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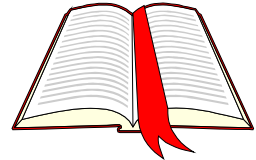
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