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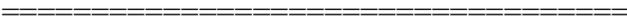
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JOHN IS GROWING AS A CHRISTIAN

One of the men in my little cell group is John, who is a big guy, about 6’4”, and is mentally challenged. John is middle-aged and has only been a Christian for about four years. He has made great strides in his walk with Christ. He lost his part-time job awhile back (setting up tables for banquets in one of the hotels) and is now doing lawn care. A huge event in his life was when he became an usher in our church, and he is very proud of doing that, and we are proud of him. John loves worship music, and he provides the music via cell phone for our weekly meetings. Sometimes he tells us things about his life. He told us about a time when he was at home listening to praise music....he closed his eyes and raised his hands above his head and suddenly felt someone take hold of his hand!

John called me on Monday with a lot of excitement and told me that something wonderful had happened. It is difficult to understand him because of a speech impediment, but he said that Pastor Kirk’s sermon on Sunday about addictions had made him start thinking about his habit of drinking beer. He said that on Sunday night God started talking to him about this.....that God showed him two pictures of his future life. In the first picture, if he continued drinking beer he would become an alcoholic and his life would be ruined. In the second picture, if he would give up his drinking God would give him a good life. He said, “God told me He loved me no matter what I did and He would not make me do anything, that it was my decision.” He said, “I have decided to stop drinking beer.”

I asked John if I could share his story with you, and he said it would make him happy for me to do that.



WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE BIBLE?

Last month I summarized a biography of Charles Finney’s life and how God used him 200 years ago to impact the United States just as it was being formed into a nation. The crucially important moment in Mr. Finney’s life was when he decided that the Bible was the Word of God. Everything that happened in his life flowed from that point.

Billy Graham’s life and ministry followed a similar pattern. Billy told about the time when he was just beginning as a preacher when his faith was shaken by the defection of a close Christian friend and by a lot of “scientific” teaching that was challenging the Bible. This skeptical teaching was even gaining a foothold in the seminaries. Billy became very troubled, and he told how he went into the woods with his Bible. He laid his Bible on a stump and started praying. After awhile he said: “Lord, there are some things in the Bible that I don’t understand, but tonight I am choosing to believe that this Bible is the Word of God, it is your Word, and I am going to believe it and follow it and preach it for the rest of my life.” Billy said that everything that happened in his life and ministry was founded on that decision.

Note that Charles Finney and Billy Graham made a decision to believe in the Bible and in the God of the Bible. The Bible teaches that faith comes in two ways, by hearing - “*Faith comes by hearing the word of God*” (Romans 10), but also because God has given us free will we must choose, we must decide to believe in the Bible, and we must choose to believe in and submit to the God of the Bible. *Choose you this day whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!* (Joshua 24:15)

I have shared before about my struggle to become a believer, a Christian. I have a large hat size, 7-1/2 Long Oval, obviously because I have a very large brain. My big brain kept trying to figure everything out so that I wouldn’t do something dumb. Especially I kept trying to figure out the Bible. It was such a conundrum. Were we supposed to take it literally or figuratively? I was totally stymied.

And of course we can't figure it out, we can't figure God out. God has given us our mind, our ability to think, and Jesus said we are to use our mind and our imagination in the service of God. He said, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.* But we can't reason our way to God. We must come to Him on the humble path of faith. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your understanding.* (Proverbs 3:5) It's not a matter of intellectual comprehension, it's a matter of trust and surrender. Jesus said, *Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God....* (John 7:17) It's a matter of the will, the will, the will. Will you believe? Will you repent? Will you trust Him? Will you follow Him as your Lord and Master? Will you believe His love letter, the Bible? My experience was that once I made that surrender and chose to do His will, the Bible suddenly transformed and God started "speaking" to me through its words and stories and strange images.

What does the Bible say about itself?

No prophecy in Scripture came from the prophet's own understanding. No, they were moved by the Holy Spirit and they spoke from God. (2 Peter 2:20-21)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be equipped for every good work.

(2 Tim. 3:16)

If we will study and meditate on those two Scriptures, and if we will surrender to the Author of the Bible, our confusion will be gone.

Dear friend, what do you believe about the Bible?

THE GREAT DEBATE

I've been going into prisons in Colorado for about 25 years (not as an inmate but to teach my seminars). At one time I even visited the prisons out on the eastern plains east of Denver, but that is an 8-hour drive and I gave that up. I learned that the fruitfulness of my inner-healing ministry was largely dependent on the chaplain at each facility. At one prison I would see men healed emotionally and physically, I saw God do some remarkable healings, while at another there would be resistance and even outright hostility. It all depended on what their chaplain had been teaching them week after week.

The place where I saw the best results year after year was one of the prisons here on the western slope. The chaplains (two different ones over the years) at that facility were open to my ministry, and we developed a good relationship. Last month I thought about going into that facility one more time. It requires walking two long blocks from the parking area to the chapel, and we considered whether we could do that. (We = my right foot, my left foot, and my right hip.) We decided if we made a few rest stops we could do it, so I called the chaplain to set up a week-end for my seminar.

Much to my surprise, my friend had resigned and moved to another ministry, and a new man, Chaplain "Bill," spoke to me. I introduced myself and told him about my seminars on inner healing and deliverance, and asked him if he is open to my having a seminar with his flock. He told me frankly that he is a cessationist, and we decided to visit and talk further. We set up a meeting at a coffee shop for the next week, and I drove to that city, and we had a very open and friendly discussion where we got to know each other and discussed each other's theology.

Let me say that I greatly admire the men and women who become chaplains in prisons and jails. They have a really tough job. They are dealing with a transient population and with people whose lives are really messed up and who are broken mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Also, some of the inmates in the general prison population are openly hostile to the chaplains and to those who participate in worship services. Sometimes even certain members of the prison staff are also hostile. And the bureaucracy of the prison system is stifling. The chaplains are not paid by the state, they have to raise their support from churches, friends and family outside the system.

Bill is an admirable young man, very intelligent, about 40, with a family. He loves the Lord and loves the men he is serving. He also loves the Bible, but in my opinion he is part of a theological movement, "cessationism," that is terribly confused and contradicts some basic teachings of the Bible. Of course, he feels the same about me and my theology. He believes that my theological position, which can loosely be called "charismatic," is emotional, irrational, and based more on experience than biblical truths. Isn't it interesting that God has us all in His family? (Charismatic derives from charisms, or

gifts. We believe that the Holy Spirit is alive and well on the earth and that He gives His love-gifts to whosoever is open to receive them by faith for the purpose of bringing healing to the broken-hearted. See Jesus' mandate in Luke 4:18, and see Isaiah's famous Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 53:4-5. These gifts have certainly not passed away, for *The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.* (Ro. 11:29)

Labels are dangerous because they become stereotypes and aren't fair to the people labeled. Each of us is unique in our relation with God, and our beliefs vary widely depending on all sorts of influences. So I'm probably not being fair in my description of the doctrine of cessationism, but you may know someone who believes some of their teachings and I think we should understand it. (You can Google it if you are interested.) Cessationism is based on the word cease and means to stop. So what stopped? They believe that communication with God stopped when the canon of the Bible was finished and now God only speaks to people through the words of the Bible. No words, no impressions, no dreams, no visions, no prophesies, no words of knowledge.....because any of those things would be adding to the Bible! Remarkable. The God who created man for relationship with Himself has suddenly become mute. The very One who is the living Word of God no longer speaks. But Jesus said, *My sheep hear my voice.* And Isaiah said, *Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way; walk in it."* And a multitude of other verses where God promised to be with us, to guide us, to comfort us and where He tells us not to stop up our ears when He speaks to us; and the time on the Mt. of Transfiguration when God told His disciples to *"Listen to Him!"* And by the way, that means that my friend, John, in the article above, was deceived when he thought God was talking to him through touch, a dream or vision, prophetic pictures of his future, etc.

They believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12 stopped, ceased, once Jesus left earth because they were only given to validate that He was the Son of God. No more: (1) word of wisdom (2) word of knowledge (3) faith (4) healings (5) miracles (6) prophecy (7) discerning of spirits (8) tongues (9) interpretation of tongues.

(In my experience these gifts are still given to unbelievers to validate that Jesus is the Son of God, and they are given to believers to bless, heal, guide, comfort, etc.) Although the Bible says through St.Paul, *"Do not forbid speaking in tongues"* (1 Cor. 14:39), they forbid speaking in tongues because "Now we have the complete canon of the Bible so that verse is no longer a part of the real Bible."

When I quoted Jesus in Mark 16 where the risen Christ said that *"Those who believe will cast out demons, preach the gospel, lay hands on the sick and they will be healed,"* Bill explained to me that those Scriptures are not part of the real Bible. (Those verses in Mark 16 are called into question in the footnotes of many translations of the Bible.) I disagree and left him my teaching on this subject. (If you would like to read this teaching, it appeared in my March, 2018, message.

(Go to my Website, glennbrownministries.com, and you will find my monthly newsletters/messages which extend back for a number of years.)

When I quoted some teaching in the Book of Acts, Bill told me that they believe that Acts only contains history and is not to be used for doctrine. Amazing! Are you seeing a pattern here? They find some reason to remove from the Bible any Scriptures that do not agree with their doctrine! But 2 Corinthians 3:16 says that *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."* Of course, for them "all Scripture" does not include any Scripture that they delete because it doesn't agree with their doctrinal position. REMINDER: At the end of the Bible, Rev. 22:18-19, there is a warning about not adding to or taking away from the "words in this book."

Years ago I saw James Robinson give an illustration. He held up a sheet of paper with writing on it. He said, "This sheet of paper represents my doctrine, the doctrine I have heard preached and taught in my church all my life." Then he rolled the sheet into a tube and looked down through it at the Bible. "We have this doctrine in our minds, and it acts like a filter. When we read anything in the Bible that contradicts our doctrine, it is filtered out so that we simply can't see it or hear it." So if the Bible says that God wants to use us to heal the sick, or cast out demons, or raise the dead.....it doesn't reach our minds and hearts. It can't mean what it says because we know what it really means. Very dangerous!

I have probably misrepresented to some extent what Bill said and what he believes, and I hope he will forgive me for that. But I regard this theology as anti-biblical and deadening. People need to be grounded in the Word of God so that they won't be deceived by "Christian" preaching and teaching. Because people are not grounded they can be caught up in unbiblical beliefs and even bizarre cults. The New Testament has many warnings by Jesus, Peter, Paul, John and Jude about "false apostles, false apostles, false pastors and teachers, and false brethren." All of us should listen to "Christian" preaching with much more care. And I certainly don't assume that my doctrinal understanding is totally correct. I'm sure there are things I believe that are off the mark, and I have surely preached and taught some of those things. God forgive me! God is not a legalist, and He is not looking for mistakes in our doctrine in order to condemn us. Oh, no! But He has given us His

Bible in order to teach us, rebuke us when we are willfully disobedient, correct us when we are honestly mistaken, and train us in righteous living all through our lives. His Bible contains “great and precious promises” that are intended to bless us and enable us to bless others.

God be with you and me and help us to “rightly divide the word of truth.” By the way, much to my sadness it appears that my season of prison ministry is in the past.

ONE OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A TEMPLE

David, the shepherd boy who became King of Israel, was one of the greatest men in history. More importantly, he was even called “A man after God’s own heart.” Wow! What an amazing thing for God to call a man.

David is one of the central figures in the Bible, and his life, along with the lives many others, were used to reveal the invisible God to us. It is not that their lives were examples of perfection, they were far from perfect. But even in their failures – or especially in their failures – God’s wisdom, grace and mercy were shown. David was a type of the Christ to come.

Think about some of the high points of David’s life, and note the foreshadowing of the life of Jesus:

- His humble birth in Bethlehem which would also be the birthplace of the Messiah.
- The way he was chosen by God through the prophet Samuel to be the future king of Israel.
- His courageous fight with the giant Goliath.
- His life as a warrior.
- His forming the 30 “Mighty Men” to do exploits for God and King.
- His flight from King Saul, and his faithfulness to King Saul.
- His worship of God, his constant seeking of God, and his authorship of many of the Psalms.
- How Jerusalem was conquered and became “The city of David.”
- God’s covenant with David
- His fall into the sins of adultery and murder.
- His public repentance and plea for mercy in Psalms 32 and 51.

David was not a perfect man, and the Bible is like no other holy book in that it reports honestly and clearly the sins and shortcomings of its heroes. Although God’s discipline because of David’s sins resulted in terrible consequences for him and his family, David repented and never gave up or became embittered toward God.

David continued to honor God, and he prepared the way for his son, Solomon, to build a great temple for God after his death. 1 Chronicles, chapters 28 and 29, tell this story. I want to focus on this final chapter in David’s story.

Following are the abbreviated highlights from these two chapters. I don’t begin to understand all the typology in this beautiful section, but I do know that David is a type of Christ, and I have inserted a few suggested ideas about how Jesus spiritually fulfilled the work that David did physically and materially:

(A.) 1 Chron. 28:1-10. *David summoned all the officials of Israel to assemble at Jerusalem..... David said to them, “I had it in my heart to build a house for God, but God said to me, ‘You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood. Solomon your son is the one who will build my house and my courts.’ And you, my son Solomon, serve God with wholehearted devotion. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.*

(God gave to his Son, the Lord Jesus, the job of building a temple not made with hands.)

(B.) 1 Chron. 28:11-21. *Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the temple, its building, storerooms, inner rooms and place of atonement. He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts and all the temple of the Lord.....*

(God gave to his Son the detailed plans for the temple. The Son created a living temple by calling and equipping some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service. Christ provided the gold (divinity) silver and precious stones to be fitted into the edifice.)

(C.) 1 Chron. 29:1- 9. *This palatial structure is not for man but for the Lord God. With all my resources, I give my personal treasure of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, onyx, turquoise, marble for the temple of my God. Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord? Then the leaders, officers, commanders and officials gave five thousand talents of gold and ten thousand talents of silver; etc. They gave freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord.*

(In His zeal for the house of the Lord, Jesus gave everything, all his personal treasures, even his life's blood. He now offers us the opportunity to give freely to this great work. He never coerces us.)

(D.) 1 Chron. 29:10-20. *But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. O Lord, all this abundance*

comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. O Lord, keep our hearts loyal to you forever.

(This is a deep and lovely confession of reality. Meditate on it and praise the Lord.)

(E.) 1 Chron. 29:21-25. *Then they acknowledged Solomon son of David as King, anointing him to be ruler. The Lord highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal splendor.*

(Let us acknowledge Jesus, Son of God, as our King and ruler. In that coming Day God will exalt Him in the sight of all the world.)

(F.) 1 Chron. 29:26-30. *David son of Jesse was king over all Israel. He ruled over Israel forty years – seven in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. He died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honor. His son Solomon succeeded him as king.*

(No matter what kind of start we had in life, no matter how many times we failed and fell, let us resolve that with God's help we will finish well.)

DIG IN AND KEEP WORKING!

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Cor. 15:58)

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be my disciples. (John 15:58)

I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (Ro. 12:1)

God Bless

Glenn

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I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.

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