

FAITHFUL BECAUSE I AM FORGIVEN

What is the greatest gift that God has ever offered to mankind? You might be thinking that Jesus is the greatest gift offered to mankind. Jesus is how the gift was able to be offered. The greatest gift God has ever offered is the gift of forgiveness. The greatest gift is God inviting you into a relationship with Him, and that relationship with God is made possible through Jesus Christ.

In the book of Hebrews, we read, “*And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words*” (Heb. 13.22). We do not know who wrote the book of Hebrews. His name is never mentioned. But in this verse, he gives to us his intention behind the book. The writer describes this book as the word of exhortation.

The Greek word for exhortation is “parakaletō.” “Kaletō” means “to call.” “Para” means “by the side.” The word means to call to the side for help. It could be translated as exhortation. It could be translated as encouragement. Thus the book of Hebrews is a word of encouragement and exhortation from God.

When you dig into the background of the book of Hebrews, you discover that those to whom this book was addressed were struggling with whether to go back to Judaism or to stay with Christianity, and they were being pressed into reverting back to Judaism. The book of Hebrews was written to encourage these Jewish Christians to remain true to Jesus.

In Hebrews 2.17, we read about Jesus who was made the “*propitiation for the sins of the people.*” The word “propitiation” means “appeasement.” It was necessary for Jesus to become human, then go back to God and sit at His right hand so that it would be possible for you and I to be at one with God again, and that was done by taking away the sins of the people.

Here is a book that encourages me to remain faithful as a Christian, and I am encouraged to remain faithful because Jesus left heaven and became human. He became like me. He understands me. He was tempted just like me. He suffered just like me. In His suffering, He became a sacrifice. He shed His blood, and that enables me to be at one with God again.

The secret to the forgiveness of sins is Jesus. I need to constantly keep that in mind, because that is what helps me to remain faithful.

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“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”
-Mark 16.15

May 1, 2022

MEETING TIMES:

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS : 9:00 AM
SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP: 9:50 AM
SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP: 6:00 PM
WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS 7:30 PM

HOW THE CHURCH GROWS

Books have been published and articles written to teach how to cause growth in the church. Congregations which seem to be stagnant, or worse, declining, panic wondering what they can do. However, we cannot forget that church growth is largely due to the fact that God gives the increase.

There is no doubt that Christians have a grave responsibility to the growth of the church. Paul writes that growth is achieved when every member is working (Eph. 4.16). Since the church is made up of individuals, it only makes sense that church growth cannot happen unless there is individual growth. Therefore we must be diligent to add to our faith (2 Pet. 1.5-8).

Indeed, Paul planted and Apollos watered (1 Cor. 3.6). Yet the progress that was made could not be credited to these alone as the Corinthian brethren tried to do (1 Cor. 1.11-13). The work was performed by Paul and Apollos, but it was God who caused the results (1 Cor. 3.7).

The church grows when we continue to do what God has always expected us to do, (ie. Encourage brethren, reach out to the lost, be faithful in service). Then leave the results to God. Growth is the natural result of working and letting God do the rest. CLP

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WHY WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE

GALATIANS 1:11,12

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Bible is an essential part of our lives.
 - a) Direction: It gives our lives purpose. (Jer. 10.23)
 - b) Destination: It points us to our eternal home. (Heb. 10.36)
2. The words of the apostles were uttered as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 1.11,12; Acts 10.33; 13.44)
3. How can we know for certain that the Bible is the word of God?

I. PRESERVATION

- A. There is a characterization.
 1. **1 PETER 1.23:** *“having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible”* (cf. 1 Cor. 15.50-52)
 2. **1 PETER 1.23:** *“the word of God which lives”* Literally, the word of God is and always will be active.
 3. **1 PETER 1.23:** *“the word of God which ... abides forever.”* It remains with us forever.
- B. There is a comparison.
 1. **1 PETER 1.24:** *“All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.”* (cf. Matt. 6.30; Ecc. 3.19)
 2. **1 PETER 1.25:** *“But the word of the LORD endures forever.”* Emphatic. It will remain intact for all time.

II. POWER

- A. There is an explanation.
 1. **HEBREWS 4.12:** *“For the word of God is living.”* Not dormant, but constantly working on our hearts.
 2. **HEBREWS 4.12:** *“For the word of God is...powerful”* Literally, it is effective. (1 Thess. 2.13)
 3. **HEBREWS 4.12:** *“sharper than any two-edged sword.”* The Bible can cut down into our very core. (cf. Acts 2.37)
 4. **HEBREWS 4.12:** *“a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* (cf. 1 Tim. 1.15,16)
- B. There is an example.
 1. In context, the children of Israel heard the gospel, but it was ineffective. Why? (Heb. 4.2,3)
 2. They did not hear the gospel with a heart that accepted and obeyed. (Heb. 3.18,19)
 3. If we want the Bible to transform our lives, we must accept and obey its teachings. (1 Cor. 10.11)

CONCLUSION: As the word of God, the Bible is the message needed by all (Amos 8.11,12)

A FAMINE IN THE LAND

Does it seem like the world is getting worse and worse? I watch the news. I hear conversations among people of the world. I read blogs and the comments that follow. And the thought that keeps popping into my mind is that this is quite a evil world that we are currently living in.

Then I think back to the days of Noah and I see how terrible the world was back then. It was a time when *“the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Gen. 6.5). We can also see the terrible condition of Sodom and Gomorrah. So wicked were the people of those cities that when two angels came to the city in the appearance of men, *“the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house”* (Gen. 19.4). Their intention? *“Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally”* (Gen. 19.5). All the men of the city came to Lot’s house to sexually abuse the angels staying with him.

As immoral as things seem now, it seems as if this world goes through cycles of immorality which ebb and flow though the generations. We see the same thing throughout Israel’s history. How many times did children of Israel cycle through sin, punishment, and repentance?

In the book of Amos, the prophet warns the people who were not interested in hearing the word of God. They told the prophet to *“Flee to the land of Judah...never again prophecy in Bethel”* (Amos 7.12,13). Since Israel was not interested in the word of God, they were told that He would *“send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD”* (Amos 8.11). The condition of Israel had sunk low because they no longer would listen to the word of God.

There is one clear cause and effect that remains true throughout the ebb and flow of history. The direction of humanity’s moral condition either as an individual, a nation, or the world, is directly related to his listening to the word of God. The world’s condition improves when the word of God is heard and accepted. But the world’s moral condition freefalls when there is a lack of God’s word heard, read, and shared.

Today, there is a famine in the land. The Bible is not being heard, accepted, and obeyed. It becomes imperative that we are diligent to make the will of God known by sharing this good news message by our words and by our example. CLP