

Equipping The Saints

“...For the equipping of the saints for the work of service...” ~ Ephesians 4:12

April 10, 2016

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Defective Christians

(By Andrew Dow)

When we pay a discounted price for a product out of the clearance bin, we might anticipate imperfections. However, if we go out to purchase the latest smart phone or a brand new car, we expect a pristine product in return. When we make a purchase we want to know that we are getting our money's worth! The larger the purchase, the more closely we scrutinize the product.

As Christians, the Bible reminds us that we were bought by God (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). Peter shows us our price tag: **“You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ”** (1 Peter 1:18-19).

God didn't buy us with the leftover change in His pocket. Even something as valuable as gold or silver was not enough for our souls. God paid the hefty price of blood—innocent blood. Christ's unbearable death was the price for YOUR soul!

Did God get his “*money's worth*” out of you? Are you the product He expected when He gave up His Son (John 3:16)? Have you left behind your worldly lifestyle (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)? Have you given yourself entirely to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2)? Or, are you defective? Don't misunderstand, we are imperfect people and we will make mistakes (cf. Romans 3:23). However, Christians, you are the property of God—live like it!

Is The New Testament a Product of the Church?

(By Eric Lyons)

Sometimes Christians forget that when the church of Christ was first established on Pentecost, it did not possess the New Testament as we have it today. The church's "*Bible*" was the Old Testament. It had been completed about 425 B.C., and was the Bible Jesus and others often quoted in their teachings. The church's new teachings were based on the authority Christ gave the apostles (John 14:26; 16:13). Inspired men soon put in writing new divine regulations (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:35) that were collected and read regularly in the assemblies not long after they were written. The New Testament canon gradually took shape so that within roughly 150 years of Pentecost, the New Testament books already had been collected. [NOTE: Near the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr wrote that on Sundays in the Christian worship "*memoirs of the apostles*" were read together with "*writings of the prophets*" (The First Apology, 67).]

Sometimes people claim that "*the New Testament is simply a product of church.*" Such a statement usually is made in order to imply that the Bible is merely a product of the early church councils that met to discuss which books should be included in the New Testament canon. Critics thus belittle the idea that the New Testament we have today actually originated with God.

How does one respond to the question, "*Is the New Testament a product of the church?*" First, a book's authenticity depended upon its **authority** (i.e., did it come from God?), and when it was accepted as canonical, it was accepted because of its inherent authority. The 27 books of the New Testament made their way into the Bible much like the books of the Old Testament. Books were included because: (a) they were known to

have come from God—i.e., they contained the commandments of God; (b) they were written by an apostle or prophet of God—like Peter or Paul who could perform miracles to confirm what they were teaching; (c) they could be proven to be genuine—such as the book of Luke, written by Luke; and (d) they were used by Christians.

Second, church councils could not **make** the books of the Bible authoritative. The books either were inherently authoritative or they were not. Consider the 13-month-old boy who calls his father “*daddy*” for the first time. Is that the very moment when the man actually becomes his father, or was this man his daddy long before the child started calling him such? The fact is, this man was the father when the child was conceived; he was his father when the baby was born; and he was already the father when the child first called him daddy. Just because he never had called the man his daddy until he was 13 months old does not mean he was not already his father. Similarly, just because hundreds of years ago certain groups of men held meetings to decide which books they thought belonged in the Bible, does not mean that they produced the Bible. These men no more gave us the 27 books of the New Testament than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity via His work of creation; similarly, He gave us the New Testament canon by inspiring the individual books that compose it. Newton did not create gravity, but he did recognize it. Likewise, early church councils did not produce the New Testament; rather, they simply recognized which books God had inspired. Thus, *God wrote the books of the Bible; men simply put them together.*

[Originally published by Apologetics Press at <https://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=13&article=828>]

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”

~ Isaiah 55:10-11

Notes:

AM Lesson:

What's Greater Than That?!

PM Lesson:

Jesus: Fact or Fairytale

"Go therefore and make disciples..." (Matthew 28:19-20)