

Bible Simplicity

Dee Bowman

The gospel of Jesus Christ is to be preached to every person (Mark 16:15-16). For that reason, it must be simple enough for every person to understand. The idea that the gospel is mystical, difficult to understand is just not so. The word of God is simple enough for one to “know the truth” and by it be free from sin (John 8:32). A person can “be not unwise, but understand what is the will of the Lord” (Ephesians 5:17). In fact, Paul said what he had written in a few words can be understood by each reader (Ephesians 3:1-3). And was it not Jesus Himself who prayed “sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth”? It would be sad indeed for Jesus to say, “he that rejecteth me and receiveth not my word hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48) if man couldn’t understand that word in the first place. Simple, right?

What the Bible says about faith can be understood. The Bible affirms that faith is the result of hearing the word of God preached (Rom. 10:17), not some irresistible force that comes from some sudden “inner feeling” or by putting your hand on the television and “accepting Christ as your personal Savior.” In fact, one could not even know if there is a Savior if the word of God had not first testified to it. John closed his gospel by saying, “Many other signs truly did Jesus in the midst of his disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ and that believing, ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31). Faith, the faculty for seeing the unseen, comes from testimony and evidence and in no other way.

As such, it is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). And let me add one other thing: you will search in vain to find one passage of scripture in all the Bible that affirms that a man is saved at the point of faith alone (James 2:24). Bible faith always obeys. That’s simple enough, isn’t it?

What the Bible says about the church can be understood. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, “...upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” In Acts 2:47, we are told “...and the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved.” The first passage affirms that the Lord intended to build His church, the second necessarily implies that He did so. Now when it had been accomplished, whose church was it? What name should it wear? Is it not Christ’s church? The term Church of Christ is not just a name to distinguish one denomination from another. It denotes possession. It states to whom the church belongs. The term Church of Christ is intended to describe the saved belonging to Christ, the ekklesia, (“called out”) which belongs to Christ.

Further, we are told in the book of Ephesians that the church is the body of Christ. If the church is the body in Ephesians 1:22-23, is it not the body in Ephesians 4? And if there

is only one body in Ephesians 4, does that not mean there is only one church? Remember, too, that you are not in the church to be saved; you're in the church because you are saved. The church is the saved. Isn't that simple?

What the Bible says about baptism can be understood. I've always been amazed that men have had so much trouble over whether or not baptism is essential for salvation. Can we just not understand what the Bible says about baptism? For instance, in Acts 2:38, Peter told the people on Pentecost, "repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins..." How hard is that? Can't we understand that? If I said, "the student that works hard and passes all his courses will be graduated" does that mean all one has to do is work hard to graduate? You mean he doesn't have to pass all his courses? And when Saul was told in Acts 22:16, "arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins," why is that so hard to understand? Does baptism wash away sins or not? Nobody says it does it without faith, but how come we have so much trouble seeing that salvation can't come by faith only either? And when Romans 6 says that we "...are buried with him by baptism," how is it some can argue that sprinkling is baptism? Is that that hard? How can a burial be accomplished by sprinkling?

And please be advised, these are not statements that set forth "Church of Christ doctrine," they are just actual statements about baptism from the Bible. And if they don't mean anything, how can we be sure if the statements about faith or repentance, or remission of sins mean anything? I aver that these statements can be understood by any person who is honestly searching for what the Bible says about baptism. Isn't that simple?

What the Bible says about falling from grace can be understood. Most of the denominational world subscribes to the Calvinistic doctrine that says that once a man has been saved he cannot so sin so as to fall from grace. Where is that in the Bible? Where does the Bible say once saved, always saved? Do you mean to tell me that there is no sin, no illicit manner of life, no blasphemy that will cause a man to lose his soul once he has been saved? The word of God says that the grace of God can be received in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1); that grace can be turned into lasciviousness (Jude 4); that it can be frustrated and made void (Galatians 2:21); and that you can fall from it (Galatians 5:4). And what could Peter have meant when he said, "IF ye do these things ye shall never fall"? What is the IF if it's not IF? What does IF mean if it's not IF? That's certainly simple enough, isn't it?

Admittedly, the Bible is difficult in some places. Some passages take time and serious investigation to understand. But not so those things so necessary to salvation. Even the simplest person can understand and act upon the commands having to do with being saved.