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HIS WORD IS NEARBY

by Jim Stauffer

Moses, guided by God warned the people about the coming temptations of idolatry when they entered the Land of Canaan which was populated by idolaters. Moses reminded them of the evil God would bring on them for such sin while at the same time presenting them with God's promise to bless them in all their ventures if they remained faithful to His law (**Deut. 27-30**).

Moses then spoke of the simplicity of overcoming the temptations they would face as he said, *For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.* (**Deut. 30:11**) The reason, he said is, *the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart that you may observe it* (**Deut. 30:14**).

It is in the interest of Paul's statement that things written before should serve to instruct us, *so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scripture we might have hope.* (**Rom. 15:4**)

When we persevere in anything we continue steadfastly in spite of distractions around us or actions on the part of others that would cause us to leave behind our intended goal. This really was the warning Moses gave Israel. Do not be distracted or led off the intended path of faithfulness to the God of heaven who delivered you from Egyptian bondage. Do not allow the allure of fleshly pleasure associated with idolatry to cause you to forsake the commands of God and forfeit His promises.

It is appalling to see how far religion has moved from the simple spiritual service of the New Testament

church. Those who preached a gospel that led, not to material or social prosperity, but rather to the salvation of the soul by way of redemption from the bondage of sin (**Mk. 16:15,16; Rom. 1:16; Acts 2:38**). Many in religion today have moved away from*continuing steadfastly in the apostles' teaching....* (**Acts 2:42**). It has deserted the practice of*singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord....* and*I will sing with the spirit and with the understanding....* (**Eph. 5:19; 1 Cor. 14:15**); from....*do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me....*(**1 Cor. 11:25; Acts 20:7**); from, *Upon the first day of the week, let each one of you lay by in store as he may prosper....*(**1 Cor. 16:2**). Many in religion have begun to use the pulpit reserved for the *pillar and support of the truth* (**1Tim. 3:15**), as a place to show support and concern for the social and political issues of the day. Our prayers are for these same issues instead of praying for one another; encouraging fellowship and participation in the gospel as Paul did with the saints at Philippi (**Phil. 1:3-5**).

Religion today is too much about the quality of our lives here on earth rather than attempting to strengthen and encourage us to use our earthly lives in service to our King in order to gain eternal life in heaven at His coming.

All this is being done in the face of the warning of Moses to Israel, that Paul revives as he discusses the failure of the Jews to accept Christ (**Rom. 10:1-10**). He reminds those Jews of his day that Moses' words ring true. The word of faith is near us today. God's will is revealed to us (**1 Cor. 2:10-13**). We can understand it.

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(Eph. 3:1-5). It is a message of spiritual revival (**Rom. 8:3-5; 6:3,4; 2 Cor. 5:17-19**).

When we devote ourselves individually or congregational to social needs of man in preference to his spiritual needs we are guilty as the children of Israel were in neglecting the word of God that is nearby, that is clear and understandable. We are giving ourselves over to the flesh rather than the spirit (**Gal. 5:16**).

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect'" (Matthew 5:43-48 NKJV).

The greater righteousness Jesus enjoins upon kingdom citizens includes loving one's neighbor. There is no doubt about Jesus' qualifications to speak about love. His loves extends to all—rebels, insincere, unthankful—as Paul says in **Romans 5:6**, *"the ungodly."* How can we show our dedication to Christ? By loving Him! But that may be the easier part of the equation. We must also love even our enemies.

The OT said something about love. *"You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18).* Here, the Lord links love with holiness; *"Be holy for I am holy."* "Holiness and love are the two motifs from this chapter applied most clearly to Christians in the New Testament" (*Holiness to the Lord*, Ross, 352). The Jews, rather than stoking the fires of hatred and retaliation, were to love each other (at times a difficult task) and they were to love even their enemies.

Did the scribes in Jesus' day view this command as too difficult? Love for one's neighbor might be possible; but love for one's enemy pushes the point too far. This becomes clear when Jesus broadens the definition of who your neighbor is (**Luke 10:29-37**). So, an escape clause ("hate your enemy") was added by these teachers of the Law. Jesus says love your neighbor, your enemies, those who do good, those who hate you, those who mistreat you, and those who persecute you. It sounds like unlimited love doesn't it? How can it sound otherwise?

Jewish tax collectors, agents for the Roman government, were notorious for exploiting their Jewish

brethren. But even tax collectors loved someone (other tax collectors!). Would Jesus' followers rise above those they despised and show love for each other? Would they love only their own kind? Good wishes and pats on the back for those who love us are easier than showing the same feelings toward our enemies. What about the one who seemingly is unable to be loved? Let us ask Jesus. *"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."* Perfection is the goal for the kingdom citizen. We need to start now. *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect"*

Randy Harshbarger

Idiotic Things People Say, Conclusion

This is the final article in the series of Idiotic Things People Say, not because we don't say enough of them but you and I both get bored with a series after awhile. And besides, there are other things which are important to cover.

The final statement is, "In the future I'm going to ..." We all say this too much, I know I do. There is an old proverb which goes like this: "If you want to hear God laugh, tell Him your plans." Time and again scripture and common sense show us the futility of counting on tomorrow. How many people enjoyed yesterday but are in eternity today? Perhaps someone you know. Innocent people are struggling now so that they will be here tomorrow.

The wise man said in **Proverbs 27:1**, *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."* James, the Lord's own brother who would know as well as anyone said in **James 4:13**, *"Come now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For you are a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. For you ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that."* Wisdom teaches us that all of our plans are subject to change. This is why it is so essential to remember our Creator in the days of our youth. We are never too young to die. Everything screams to do the right thing now. Tell your wife you love her now. Hug your children now. Obey Jesus now. It may be your last chance.

Cleveland Reddinger

Can We Believe The Bible?

Question: What proof do we have that we can trust the Bible for everything it says? The Bible has been handed down so many times. The translation has been changed and everybody knows when you're passing on information the meaning never comes back the way it originated. One word changed can change the whole

meaning of the passage. The Bible was written so long ago how do we know its meaning is still the same and how do we know it's not just another man-made project.

Answer: The proof that you ask about is found in many places.

First, there is archaeology. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence in many places and from across many centuries about many different aspects of the Bible. For example, at one time skeptics doubted whether the Hittites, which are mentioned only briefly and with little detail in the Genesis account, actually ever existed at all. Eventually archaeological discovery in Asia Minor uncovered an entire civilization, with their distinctive culture, language and history. The simple biblical references were found to be representative of a people who settled and traded throughout the entire ancient Near East in the time of Abraham and the other patriarchs.

Many biblical cities have been uncovered and excavated to reveal distinctive events such as destruction layers which coincide with the biblical story of the Exodus from Egypt and capture of many of the cities of ancient Canaan in the books of Joshua and Judges. Many other such things are well attested in both the literature of other peoples and from excavation activities. For example, during the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC, the book of Jeremiah (**with 2 Chronicles and 2 Kings**) represents the fall of the surrounding cities while Jerusalem lay under siege. In the excavation of the city of Lachish, the so-called "Lachish letters" were found, which detail the gradual capture of the towns precisely as Jeremiah and the books of history describe. Furthermore, it mentions some who were "weakening the hands of the people" in the midst of the siege, which is precisely the charge leveled against the prophet Jeremiah in the book by his name. There are many other things, far too numerous to mention here, which establish the general tenor of the biblical writings as recording genuine history.

Further, as to the fact that the Bible has been handed down to us in the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament through many hands and many centuries, let it be noted that the Bible is the best attested ancient book in the entire world. There are literally thousands of copies of both the OT and the NT in their original languages which have come down to us - some of them extremely ancient. For example, many copies of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Hebrew manuscripts of OT books) go back to the first century before the time of Jesus, others perhaps even a century earlier than that. If we may trust that we have the works of Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, and the host of other ancient writers whose materials are not nearly so well attested, why would we not also be able to believe that we have the precise words of Christ and his apostles, as well as those of Moses and the Old Testament prophets?

As to whether the words were changed in the process of time and transmission to our day, you must remember that the transmitters (scribes) of ancient times were extraordinarily careful, believing that a curse from heaven was upon the one who would change even a single word of Holy Scripture (**see Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Matt. 5:18; Rev. 22:18, 19**). But since mistakes did occasionally occur because of oversights and writing errors, it was the hundreds of other copies of the scripture that acted as a countermeasure to assure the mistakes could be corrected. This process of establishing the original text has come to be called "the science of textual criticism."

The translation process itself is really the most convincing part. Think of all the translations there are out there - literally hundreds of different ones in the English language alone. Take a few translations and compare them side by side. You know what happens? You come up with very little difference between them. Most only differ in the different ways of saying the exact same things!

The ultimate answer is YES, we can definitely trust the Bible.

by Dan King Taken from The Beacon Electronic Edition 8/30/16

The Dog In School

A dog had followed his owner to school. His owner was a fourth grader at a public elementary school. However, when the bell rang, the dog sidled inside the building and made it all the way to the child's classroom before a teacher noticed and shoo'ed him outside, closing the door behind him. The dog sat down, whimpered and stared at the closed doors. Then God appeared beside the dog, patted his head, and said, "Don't feel bad fella'....they won't let ME in either."

Taken from Lincoln Bible Reader

PROOF

The renowned artist Paul Gustave Dore (1821-1883) lost his passport while traveling in Europe. When he came to a border crossing, he explained his predicament to one of the guards. Giving his name to the official, Dore hoped he would be recognized and allowed to pass. The guard, however, said that many people attempted to cross the border by claiming to be persons they were not. Dore insisted that he was the man he claimed to be. "All right," said the official, "we'll give you a test, and if you pass it we'll allow you to go through." Handing him a pencil and a sheet of paper, he told the artist to sketch several peasants standing nearby. Dore did it so quickly and skillfully that the guard was convinced he was indeed who he claimed to be. His work confirmed his word!

Our Daily Bread, January 6, 1993.

Eph. 2:19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

1 Pet. 2:9 But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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JAN PATRICK, STEPHEN KIMKER, AND SARA DENT AND J.T. PECK.

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RELIGIOUS CONFUSION - JIM STAUFFER

WEDNESDAY BIBLE CLASS:
ECCLESIASTES - BYRON TAYLOR

SUNDAY SERMON: OBEDIENCE DEMANDS SUBMISSION



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10