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Editor's Introduction

This issue's set of articles maintain a focus on the word of God, how God brought the Bible to us, and a warning not to manipulate God's word.

Also in this issue of YPS we are concluding a few sets of articles. Jeremy Singer completes his studies on the book of Acts. This has been exciting and informative. Many thanks to Jeremy; we are looking forward to some more articles from him in the future. We are also concluding two more series, one on the Holy Spirit, and the other on the love of Christ. Our thanks to Malcolm Beattie and Simon Swan for their contributions.

Watch out for the start of a new series in May's magazine which could help you with your career planning as you end the academic year. There will also be a couple of new one-off articles.

Wishing you God's richest blessing as you read His word.

Stephen Baker

HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE:

No 3 - Transmission

BY **TM SE ASIA**

All quotations are taken from the NKJV

3. TRANSMISSION

We have considered the inspiration of scripture – how the Holy Spirit moved men to express with pen and ink the exact words God wanted them to write. Those first sheets of parchment on which they wrote are the **original manuscripts**. They were written in Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament). The doctrine of inspiration pertains to the original manuscripts.

YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED is a supplement of *Precious Seed International* designed for those young in faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live. YPS is published by *Precious Seed International*, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, Sheffield, S21 1HW, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine.

Today, however, we do not possess the original manuscripts. They have all been lost, or decayed with age. What we do have are ancient copies of the scriptures based on the originals, copies of the copies, and so on. Bible translators use these early manuscripts as the basis for modern translations.

To see how the early manuscripts were copied and circulated, we will take an example from Paul's letter to the Colossians.

'Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea', Col. 4. 16.

Paul generally dictated his letters to an amanuensis, in this case probably Tychicus, who was also the courier, 4. 7, 8. At the end of the letter, the apostle would sign his name, perhaps adding a personal greeting to authenticate the correspondence as his own.

When Tychicus carried this letter from Rome to Colossae, he also delivered a second letter – one to the church at Laodicea. Some scholars think this second letter has since been lost; others believe it is the Epistle we now call Ephesians.

The Colossians received the original manuscript of Colossians, and doubtless treasured it. But Paul had instructed them to see that the Laodiceans also got to read it. We are not told what the Colossians did with the original, but let us suppose that they wrote a copy and sent the copy to Laodicea. There would now be two copies of Colossians – the inspired original bearing Paul's signature, and a first-generation copy.

It is possible that in copying Paul's original the scribe made an error. Perhaps he made a spelling mistake, missed a word out, or got two words in the wrong order. We don't know, but it's possible.

If the Laodiceans decided to reproduce **their** copy, say for the believers in Thyatira, they might duplicate any inaccuracies it contained, and perhaps introduce new mistakes of their own. Again, this is conjecture, but we know that

over the years, as multiple copies of Colossians were produced, and copies of copies, small scribal errors began to slip in.

Over time, Christians realized that there were little differences between the various copies of Colossians in circulation, but by then the original manuscript had been lost, and there was no way to check the copies against the original. By the 2nd and 3rd centuries there were hundreds of copies of Colossians in existence, many containing minor variations. Some of these copies have survived to this day, and we can compare the differences.

It is most important to understand that these differences **are all very minor**. Most are variations in spelling or word order. For example, in Colossians chapter 1 verse 1, some early manuscripts read, 'Jesus Christ', and some say, 'Christ Jesus'.

Did Paul write 'Jesus Christ' or 'Christ Jesus'? We don't really know.

Does it matter? Yes and no!

It matters because Paul was always careful with his words. He sometimes wrote 'Jesus Christ' to emphasize His humanity, sometimes 'Christ Jesus' to emphasize His deity.

But in another sense it doesn't matter, since Jesus Christ and Christ Jesus is the same person. The meaning is the same. Even though we are not sure of Paul's exact word order, we are sure what he meant. There are about twenty-two discrepancies between manuscripts of Colossians chapter 1, and they are all small ones like this.

The same principle is true throughout the Bible. Though there are numerous variations in ancient manuscripts, almost all of them are tiny, and do not change the meaning, or affect doctrine.

Furthermore, because there are so many manuscripts available, we can compare them to make an educated guess at what the original said. This process is known as **textual criticism**.

Chapter & Verse

BY TM SE ASIA

All quotations are taken from the NKJV

4. TWISTING GOD'S WORDS

The *Chapter and Verse* series is designed to help believers who are keen to study God's word for themselves, by using the keys to interpretation which the Bible itself supplies. Articles discuss principles to apply, and pitfalls to avoid in the study of the scriptures. They will be of especial interest to those with a desire to teach the word of God.

'Which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures', 2 Pet. 3. 16

Even when Paul was still alive, people twisted his writings to support their false doctrines. Peter warns his readers not to be led astray by such people. One key to not being fooled is what Peter says in verse 17, 'since you know this beforehand'. We need to understand the tactics of those who distort God's word. Like a stage magician who uses sleight of hand, at first these people appear convincing, but once you are 'in on the trick' the magic loses its appeal.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The oldest trick in the book is the deliberate misquote. Satan attempted this against Eve, implying that she was forbidden to eat from **any** tree. Although Eve did not fall for this, she was distracted enough to misremember God's words herself, Gen. 3. 3. When you hear a verse quoted look up the reference to verify the quotation is accurate.

Be alert for teachers who constantly switch between multiple translations. They are scratching around for a form of words which best lends itself to their viewpoint.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

In 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 16, Peter acknowledged

that some things which Paul wrote are **hard** to understand, but he did not say they were **impossible** to understand. False teachers zoom in on the more difficult verses, confident we won't be able to argue with their explanation if we don't already know the meaning. We can defend ourselves in two ways:

First, we must diligently study passages that are easy to understand. Then, if someone uses a difficult-to-understand verse to contradict an easy-to-understand one, we will spot it.

Second, as we mature in Bible study, we can dig deeper into the difficult passages to discover what they actually mean.

Beware when someone implies that a verse does not mean what it very plainly appears to say. Even well-meaning Bible teachers can be biased by their presuppositions. Desiring to make a verse fit with their theology, they propose an explanation which actually contradicts the most obvious meaning of the text.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Direct application

Sometimes a scripture may be directly applicable to us. This is especially so in the Epistles. Although our physical circumstances may be quite different from the original recipients of, say, Galatians or Ephesians, spiritually we occupy the same ground. We should read it and do what it says.

Indirect application (application of principle)

In other cases, a scripture may only be indirectly applicable. For example, in Matthew chapter 5 verses 23 and 24, the Lord Jesus gave instruction regarding temple worship. Since we do not sacrifice animals on an altar, we cannot apply these words directly. The disciples were then under the law. Spiritually, we are not on the same ground as they were. Nevertheless, there is a principle which we can learn regarding the attitude in which God wants us to worship Him today.

Contrasting application

Sometimes, however, we may not be able to apply a scripture directly or indirectly, because later revelation has superseded what was written earlier. Application for us may be by way of contrast. An example is David's prayer in Psalm chapter 51 verse 11, 'do not take Your Holy Spirit from me'. We cannot pray this prayer, because the Lord Jesus and Paul taught that the Spirit will never leave New Testament believers, John 14. 16; Rom. 8. 9. Here, correct application would be to thank God that, despite our frequent failures, He has promised to remain with us.

How do we know when to apply directly, when to apply the principle only, and when to apply the opposite of what is stated? Generally speaking, we

should start from Paul's Epistles and work outwards. When the Gospels or Old Testament agree with Paul, we can apply them directly too. If they don't, rather than trying to squeeze them to fit, we may need to recognize that they were written to people on different spiritual ground to ourselves, and apply accordingly.

False teachers ignore the plain teaching of Paul, and try to get us to apply scripture, especially law, that was never meant for us.



The Love of Christ – No. 2

BY SIMON SWAN NORTHAMPTON

As I explained in the introduction to the first article, it is impossible to discuss a subject as vast as 'The Love of Christ' without writing a series of books, let alone a small article. What it may do, however, is fuel a desire that should be within all believers, to learn more of our Saviour. We shall now continue to look at some more verses which highlight this wonderful truth.

'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead', 2 Cor. 5. 14

In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians Paul is defending himself and his preaching of the gospel. His apostolic authority was being questioned by some, and warnings were given to those who did not accept it. In the early chapters, Paul had to defend his sincerity and his handling of God's word. Yet we know that his motives were genuine, 'for out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you', 2 Cor. 2. 4.

In JOHN HEADING'S¹ commentary on First and Second Corinthians he describes chapter 5 verses 12 to 17 as the 'motivation of the minister in his service'. In verse 12 Paul describes how some were glorying in their outward appearance and not in heart. Their motivation for service was misplaced. On the other hand, Paul's zeal for God was evident, and is apparent in verse 13, as he describes himself as a fanatic. His deep-seated devotion to God was for the good of his fellow believers. He was asking if his critics could provide evidence of such devotion to God.

'The love of Christ constraineth us'

To constrain means to 'hold together'. It is this unity that Christians enjoy, one with another, in the bond of fellowship. Whatever external pressures are influencing our Christian living it is this constraining love, coupled with close communion through prayer, that will keep us firmly on the pathway of selfless service.

The last two lines of the hymn 'O teach me what

it meaneth' come to mind. 'Because thou dost accept me, I love Thee and adore! Because Thy love constraineth, I'll praise Thee evermore!

'And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God', Eph. 3. 19

In this chapter, Paul marvels at the mystery of Christ that was previously hidden. He is humbled by the responsibility placed upon him who was 'less than the least', Eph. 3. 8, to 'preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ', v. 8. As a result of this, he can now do nothing, apart from be in awe and 'bow [his] knees', v. 14. As if these wonders are not enough, the Holy Spirit chooses to reveal to Paul a further insight into the love of Christ.

Paul writes 'to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge'. When first reading this statement it sounds almost contradictory, if not paradoxical! How can we know the love of Christ if it passes knowledge? The word 'passeth' is *huperballō* (from *huper* [more/beyond] and *ballō* [cast]) which means 'to transcend, surpass'.

It goes without saying that, while on earth, we will never understand the complexities of God who expresses His love toward us. It does surpass our knowledge. We can live enjoying the knowledge we glean through our daily reading, but how much more precious to 'know' the love of Christ in our daily living. What this will do is augment our appreciation of Christ. The love of Christ is not unknowable, but surpasses knowledge. What is the result of this effort? 'That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God'.

Summary

Despite there being only three direct references to the saying the 'love of Christ' that relate to the believer, John's Gospel gives us some other references. These statements do not express the love of Christ for the believer but Christ's

love for the Father. The Lord Jesus said, 'the world may know that I love the Father', John 14. 31. This love is reciprocated: 'As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love', 15. 9. The greatest example of the Father's love is seen in the remarkable act of the Son's sacrifice on the cross, 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us', Eph. 2. 4.

I once asked someone how they would differentiate between the love of Christ and the love of God. The off-the-cuff response I received has stuck with me ever since. The love of Christ is the outworking and outpouring of the love of God. The former being a sacrificial love that you and I can never fully understand while on earth, the latter being a sovereign love of a God who has an interest in you and me.

We can rest in the knowledge that love is synonymous with Christ, 'We love him, because he first loved us', 1 John 4. 19.

¹ J HEADING, *First and Second Corinthians*, John Ritchie Ltd, pg. 315.



ADVENTURES IN ACTS:

Acts 28 - The Grandeur that was Rome

BY JEREMY SINGER BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

When I am reading a novel, I sometimes skip to the final chapter and scan it quickly to see how the story ends. Who will Hercule Poirot denounce as the murderer? Does Jane Eyre eventually marry Rochester? Can Alice escape from Wonderland? The last chapter generally brings things to a satisfactory conclusion, when loose threads are tied up and secrets are revealed.

However, the final chapter of Acts does not read like this. It seems more like a volume that expects a sequel – the narrative is left as a cliff-hanger. Paul ends up in Rome, preaching the gospel to all who visit his prison-house, Acts 28. 31. Swish! The curtain falls, but it is an unconventional closing scene. We must understand that the Holy Spirit hasn't finished yet – the story will continue. When Paul reached the end of his race, 2 Tim. 4. 7, he passed the preaching baton on to the next generation as he encouraged Timothy to 'preach the word', v. 2. Today, the responsibility is in our hands. The mission goes on, and we are Christ's witnesses, Acts 1. 8.

In this last chapter Paul encountered three kinds of people: barbarians at Malta, brothers at Italy, and Jews at Rome. Paul distinguishes between these groupings elsewhere, 1 Cor. 10. 32. For the rest of this article, we will consider how Paul behaved when he met these various members of the multi-cultural Roman Empire.

Barbarians at Malta

Paul found the people of Malta to be generous, Acts 28. 2, and hospitable, v. 7, despite communication difficulties.¹ On this isolated island, people had never previously heard the gospel message. The Lord used miracles, vv. 6, 8, 9, to demonstrate the veracity of Paul's message. Modern missionaries in remote locations sometimes report similar phenomena.² The sovereign God can still be seen 'confirming the word with signs following', Mark 16. 20. We note that there were no miracles at Rome, where Paul's audience was familiar with the scriptures and the Messianic hope, Acts 28. 23.

Brothers at Italy

Christianity reached Rome long before Paul did. There were Roman visitors to Jerusalem at Pentecost, 2. 10. Paul wrote to a church at Rome several years before his imprisonment, when he expressed his desire to see the believers, Rom. 1. 11.

As soon as they heard of Paul's imminent arrival, the believers hurried to meet him at Puteoli, Acts 28. 14, and Appii Forum, v. 15. These Christians encouraged Paul. Other New Testament believers were commended because they had consistently 'ministered to the saints', Heb. 6. 10. How often do we bring comfort to the Lord's beleaguered servants?



THE ACTS OF GOD

Jews at Rome

A large Jewish community resided at Rome.³ Paul quickly contacted these Jews and intrigued them with his mention of 'the hope of Israel', v. 20, a coded Messianic allusion. Paul convened a conference, v. 23, in his rental property, v. 30. He employed the same strategy as always, preaching with conviction, reason and biblical authority, v. 23. We would do well to follow this template in our evangelistic activities.

There were two opposing reactions to the message, similarly at Rome among devout Jews as at Athens among pagan Greeks, 17. 32-34. Some appeared to accept Paul's teaching, whereas others refused it, v. 24. Paul sent them away with a direct challenge from Old Testament prophecy, v. 25.

So, the book closes as Paul continued to preach freely. Neither persecution nor apathy prevented the spread of the message. 'Paul – though in chains – and the gospel of God's kingly rule were irrepressibly surging ahead without let or hindrance'.⁴ The adventures of Acts have not finished; we should still be adventuring today.

*'We bear the torch that flaming
Fell from the hands of those
Who gave their lives proclaiming
That Jesus died and rose.
Ours is the same commission
The same glad message ours;
Fired by the same ambition
To Thee we yield our powers'.⁵*

¹ 'To the Greek, the barbarian was a man who said *bar-bar*, that is, a man who spoke an unintelligible foreign language and not the beautiful Greek tongue', WILLIAM BARCLAY, *The Daily Study Bible – Acts*, St Andrew Press, 1976.

² For example, check out the life of an early 20th-century Indian missionary called Sadhu Sundar Singh.

³ There is a summary of historical evidence at <https://bible.org/article/origins-church-rome>.

⁴ DAVID GOODING. *True to the Faith*. Hodder and Stoughton, 1990.

⁵ FRANK HOUGHTON. *Facing a task unfinished*. 1931. See <https://omf.org/blog/2015/12/08/facing-a-task-unfinished-by-frank-houghton-the-story-behind-the-song> for details.



The Holy Spirit, Part 4

BY MALCOLM BEATTIE BELFAST

The Holy Spirit and Christians

In this final study, we will look at the Holy Spirit and individual Christians.

It was through Him that we learned we were sinners and needed to be saved. When the Holy Spirit spoke to us we felt our need as sinners, so we repented and believed.

It was through Him that we were born again. When we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit came to live within us and we were born again, John 3. 7. We then knew our sins were forgiven; we were given new desires to honour God, to be with other Christians, and to read His word.

It is through Him that we are sure about our future. Ephesians chapter 1 verses 13 and 14 teaches, 'in whom [Christ] also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession'. First, notice that we are 'sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise'. The death of Christ is the price God paid to purchase us, and the Holy Spirit in us is the seal that shows that we now belong to God. Second, note that the Holy Spirit is the 'earnest of our inheritance'. He is the deposit that God has left with us, which guarantees that He will one day take us to Himself.

It is through Him that we can live victorious lives. In Romans chapter 8 we learn that by obeying the Holy Spirit within us we can live lives that are pleasing to God, and meet His standards, 'that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit', Rom. 8. 4.

It is through Him that we grow. Through the Holy Spirit, and the Bible, we have all that we need to grow. We begin with milk, 'as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby', 1 Pet. 2. 2. As we read the Bible, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we need to obey what we learn. The more we do this, the more we will grow and become 'spiritual', 1 Cor. 2. 15. Spiritual believers see things how God sees them, and live in the way that God expects

them to live. This happens when we allow the Holy Spirit to change how we think and act.

It is through Him that we are fitted for service. The Holy Spirit dwells in all believers. Our ability to give effective service for God depends on us being 'filled with the Spirit', Eph. 5. 18. Being filled with the Spirit means that His influence in our lives is not limited in any way by our behaviour.

But we can fail to grow. Paul told the Christians at Corinth that, 'I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ', 1 Cor. 3. 1. They had not become 'spiritual'. In many ways, they still acted the same way as the people around them. They were still under the influence of the old sinful nature instead of the Holy Spirit.

And we can upset the Holy Spirit. Did you know we can make the Holy Spirit 'sad'? The Bible word for this is 'grief'. Paul warned the Christians in Ephesus about causing the Holy Spirit distress: 'and grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption', Eph. 4. 30. This will happen if we do not listen to Him, and by continuing to allow things in our life that are sinful.

If we keep doing this and do not repent, the Holy Spirit may stop speaking to us, because we are ignoring Him. Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica about this and warned them to 'quench [extinguish] not the Spirit', 1 Thess. 5. 19.

Conclusion

There is much more that could be added. The most important thing to remember is that if we are to please God in our lives and be useful in His work, then we must listen to and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit as He speaks to us through the Bible.

