

WJAZ 10/31/56

Open House
Bible Love

PRESENT DAY ATTITUDES TOWARD
THE BIBLE

KSF 12/17/61

743-5/61

4869 Jackson 7-27-75

Facts We must Believe
In This Space Age

This morning we want to consider the various attitudes that we find toward the Bible in modern times. We are not concerned this morning about those who do not believe the Bible; at least, not about those who say that the Bible is not the word of God, and are avowed atheists or infidels. This morning we are thinking about those who nominally accept the Bible as the word of God.

The Bible is God's message to man. It is a living wonder. It is an evidence of God's presence in the world. God is with it---in it. Its pages are stained with the blood of martyrs. Empires, kingdoms and states have crumpled around it. It is the deathless book of the ages---as eternal as God Himself. We think it worthwhile to study the attitudes which men have toward such a rare possession. In thinking of Bible study, too much emphasis cannot be placed upon the necessity of a right attitude of mind toward the Bible as we study it. Just as the field glass must be properly focused in order to present to the eye an unclouded view, the mind must be in proper focus when studying God's word.

NEGLECT AND IGNORANCE

Although we live in a land of Bibles, the attitude of many of our people may be described as one of neglect of the Bible and ignorance of its contents. Although almost every home in our land contains a Bible, there are many homes in which its covers are seldom opened, and its pages never per-used. (A few years ago a Bible examination, consisting of very simple questions, was given to a large class of college

students in one of our leading colleges. Less than 10 per cent of the members of the class made a passing grade. Such questions as these were asked: How many books are there in the Bible? How many books in the Old Testament? How many books in the New Testament? What book tells of creation? What book tells of the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt? Which books of the Bible are prophecy? Which books tell of the life of Christ? What is the last book in the Bible?

Such questions as these should be easily answered by every intelligent person in this land of Bibles. A boy in a Bible class told the teacher that he had always thought that John the Baptist was a movie star! In a certain men's Bible class, the cities of Dan and Beersheba were being discussed. When the discussion revealed that these were two cities, an otherwise intelligent man remarked, "Why, I thought they were husband and wife, like Sodom and Gomorrah." And then, perhaps you have heard of the man who thought that the "epistles" were the wives of the "apostles!" Such amazing ignorance of the Bible can be found in almost any group of average Americans. We have a rule in human law, that ignorance of the law excuses no man. Ignorance of God's law will not excuse us for our failure to obey it.

Ignorance of God's Word is no new thing. More than seven hundred and fifty years before Christ, the Prophet Isaiah said, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." To these same people God said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because they have rejected knowledge, I

will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me. Seeing that thou hast forgot the Law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." Ignorance is one of man's worst enemies. There is no more destructive influence in the world. Ignorance of the laws of health lead people to early graves. Ignorance of the laws of God lead people to eternal misery. Ignorance of the word of God leads people to do the exact opposite of that which God teaches, believing at the same time that they are doing God's service. When Jesus sent His disciples into the world, advising them that they would be persecuted and even put to death for His sake, He said, "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. and these things will they do unto you because they have^{not}/known the Father, nor me." (John 16:2,3).

PERVERTING THE GOSPEL

There are those who pervert the gospel. To the churches in Galatia, Paul wrote, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7). To pervert is to change. The Word of God may be perverted by addition, subtraction or by substitution. In the passage just quoted, Paul speaks of those who would teach "another gospel." That was substitution. The apostle hastens to explain that there is, in fact, but one gospel. There is not a separate gospel suited to the prejudices or fancies of each sect or denomination. All races---the rich and the poor, the high and the low, must be saved by one and the same gospel. From Luke 8:11, we learn that the Word of God is the seed of

the kingdom. It is a law of grace, as well as a law of nature, that like produces like; that seeds produce after their kind. From seed wheat, only wheat grows. The seed of the apple produces only the apple tree. Harvest of more than one type of fruit is positive evidence of the planting of more than one kind of seed. The sowing of the Word of God in human hearts produces but one kind of harvest. When we see so many differing faiths in the religious world, we know that more than one kind of seed has been sown--someone has perverted the Gospel of Christ---someone has preached "another gospel"; in spite of the fact that inspiration, through the Apostle Paul has announced: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed"(Gal. 1:8).

CORRUPTING THE GOSPEL

There are those who corrupt the Gospel(2Cor. 2:17). The Word of God is corrupted by mixing something else with it. To mix the theologies, philosophies and doctrines of men with the Word of God is to corrupt the Bible. The man-made creeds, disciplines and confessions of faith have been prolific agencies in the corruption of the Word of God. One of the charges which Jesus made against the Pharisees of His day was that they "made void" the Word of God by mixing therewith "the traditions of men." By "teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men," they made their worship of God a "vain worship" (Matthew 15:9). No doubt, these Pharisees taught much of the Word of God. In fact, the major portion of their teachings were truth----the word of God. Nevertheless, this minor element---the tradition of man---which they had mixed with the Word of

God made the Word of God void in their life and teaching, and rendered their worship vain. A glass of pure water may be so corrupted by a drop of poison as to make the glass of water a deadly potion. So, a sermon based principally on the Word of God, calculated to save the souls of men, may by having mixed with it a little of the poison of human tradition, become a message of death instead of a message of life.

REASONS FOR NEGLECT

1. Indifference

Why do men thus treat the Bible? Some neglect the Bible out of an attitude of pure indifference. They may go to church from time to time where the Bible is preached. They hear Bible messages, but are not deeply concerned about them. The Word of God is a mirror into which men may look and see themselves as they are. But there are many who, like the man described by James, "beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (James 1:24). When Paul preached to the intellectual and cultured people of the city of Athens, some of them said, "We will hear thee again of this matter." (Acts 17:32). But there is no record that these people ever again heard the gospel of Christ, or, if they ever did hear it again, that they did anything about it.

It certainly is not wise to be indifferent about our own welfare, and espically about our eternal destiny. The Bible reveals all that we know, or need to know, of heaven and how to get there. The fact that the Bible is the most widely circulated book in the world; that its principles are wrought into the world's wisest laws; that its sayings are quoted in the world's best literature; that its persons and themes are

portrayed in the world's finest art, and that its precepts are steadying the world's greatest lives---ought to be sufficient to jar any self-respecting mind loose from an indifferent attitude.

2. Dislike to Face Facts

There are those who neglect the Bible and remain ignorant of its contents because they have learned enough about it to know that it tells the truth about them. The Bible truthfully deals with whatever, or whoever, is mentioned therein. Both the evil deeds of its heroes, and the good deeds of its villains, are accurately portrayed upon its pages. Some fail to read the Bible because they know that its teachings condemn them. They do not like to face themselves as they are. They prefer the flattery of human deceit to the cruel truth of God's Word. It is not any wonder that men living in sin do not like to face such descriptions of themselves as are found in such passages as Gen. 6:5; Rom. 1:29,31 and Eph. 2:1-3).

3. No Love of Truth

There are those who do not learn the truths of the Bible because they have not in their hearts a love of truth. Such characters are described in 2Thess. 2:10-12. In this passage, we are told that when men do not have in their hearts a love of truth, they may become the victims of a strong delusion, that they may believe a lie and be condemned. In the parable of the sower, Jesus advises us that when the seed(which is the Word of God) falls into "honest and good hearts," it "brings forth fruit"(Luke 8:15). The Word of God fails to make an impression on some people simply because their hearts are not honest or good.

REASONS FOR PERVERSIONS AND CORRUPTIONS

1. To Ease Conscience

By why do men pervert and corrupt the gospel the Word of God? Sometimes it is to ease ^{their}/consciences. When men teach that there will be no final judgment, that there is no hell, that sin will not be punished, or that men will have a second chance to be saved after this life has ended, may it not be that they are motivated by a fear of the very things which they are denying? It is said that Col. Ingersoll, in one of his lectures, boldly declared, "There is no such place as hell." "Can I depend on that, Colonel?" asked a drunk man in the audience. Believing the Bible to be true, but not being willing to conform ^{thine} their ~~to~~ its teachings, some men pervert and corrupt its teachings, rather than honestly face the consequences of their disobedient lives. When some find on the pages of the Bible commands which they do not want to obey, they attempt to ease their consciences by denying that the Bible makes such demands, and by altering the demands of the Bible to suit ~~their~~ desires.

2. To Harmonize With Creeds

There are those who pervert and corrupt the Word of God in an effort ~~in an effort~~ to harmonize it with the creeds of men. This was one of the crimes of the Pharisees of Jesus' time (Matthew 15:9). Some open the Bible, not to find out what it teaches, but merely to prove that which they already believe. This is a prejudiced attitude. It seeks isolated proof texts and combines and arranges them in such a way as to support preconceived ideas, opinions and theories. The man who approaches the Bible with this attitude peruses its pages with

his eyes closed to everything except that which may be made to suit his pre-conceived theories. We frequently see only that which we want to see.] I am sure that the vulture as he flies above the earth, does not see the wavering grain of the wheat field, the apple blossoms of the orchard on the hillside, or the sunset tints on the hills and dales over which he flies. His eyes are focused on something else. The person who reads the Bible, not to find out what it teaches, but merely to confirm the faith of his church, or the teachings of his preacher, will probably succeed, to his own satisfaction, in accomplishing just the thing he set out to accomplish; but he will probably not learn the truth as it is revealed upon the precious pages of Holy Writ.

RIGHT ATTITUDES

We would not want to leave the impression that these are the only attitudes to be found toward the Bible. There are still many people, who, like the Bereans of old, when they hear any message hitherto unknown to them, "search the Scriptures, whether those things are so"(Acts 17:11). There are those, who, believing Jesus' statement that the truth makes men free,(John 8:32) and that the Word of God is truth,(John 17:17), study the word of God to learn its sacred truths.

1. Honor, Trust And Reverence

Our attitude toward the Bible should be one of honor, trust and reverence. It is the word of God. It is the message of the Creator to His creatures. We can trust it because God will not lie,(ISam.15:29); God cannot lie,(Titus 1:1,2); God cannot change,(Heb. 6:13-18). In this shifting, changing, uncertain world; where truth is often scarce and difficult of

discernment, we should be happy to have a message about the verity of which we are positive, and which is as changeless and permanent as the very God who gave it to us. The Bible should have a place of authority in our lives. Its Christ is declared to have all authority in heaven and in earth (Mt. 28:18). The Bible should occupy a place of love in our hearts. As Job of old, we should love it above our daily food (Job 23:12).

2. Candor, Honesty And Open-Mindedness

Our attitude in the study of the Bible should be one of candor, honesty and open-mindedness. Only with such an attitude can we expect to learn the truths contained in this Sacred Volume.

3. Devotion

Our attitude should be one of devotion. I do not mean by this that we should approach the Bible with a blind, unreasoning superstition, feeling that the paper is sacred, or that the volume, as such, is an object of worship; but that the Bible should be read in a devotional frame of mind, with an attitude of heart befitting the approach to a message from the Creator of the Universe. We should seek to be benefited spiritually by the Bible. The Book opens its treasures to the reader who approaches it "with a spirit at one with its own." Someone has said that he who reads, impelled by curiosity "finds little but curiosity."

4. Diligence

Our attitude toward the Bible should be one of diligence. (Note Heb. 11:6; Luke 15:8; Psm. 1:1-2). We should be ever mindful that "the pearl of great price" is to be found in this

volume.

5. Keen Enjoyment

Our attitude toward it should be one of keen enjoyment. It is he who thirsts that enjoys the refreshment of cool water. It is he who hungers that enjoys delicious food. The Bible contains refreshing water and nourishing food for the thirsty and hungry soul. The Bible is a letter from a loving Father to His child. All souls belong to the Lord (Eze. 18:4). The Bible contains a message from the "Father of Spirits" to every person. I should consider its messages that are applicable to me, as personal messages from One who loves me. We do not read messages from a loved-one in a critical, irreverent, and impatient mood. Letters from absent loved-ones are read with hearts filled with love and gratitude. We enjoy them.

6. Prayer

The Bible should be approached with an attitude of prayer. "Show me Thy ways, Oh Lord; teach me thy paths," (Psm. 25:4), should be the prayer of every Bible reader. Aside from the fact that God answers the prayers of His people; sincere prayer, within itself, has the effect of opening the understanding of the one who thus prays.

7. Obedience

Our attitude toward the Bible should be a practical one. There is no need of learning any truth unless we intend to apply it to ourselves. Jesus said, "If any man will do the will of God he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). He who studies the Bible with no intention of obeying its

commands---with no intention of conforming his life to its teachings---need not expect to learn much from its pages.

8. Hide it in the Heart

Those truths which we have learned from the Bible, we should hide in our hearts, lest we sin against God(Psm. 119: 11). Someone has said that the way to keep people out of hell is to keep hell out of people. The Word of God in our heart drives impurities from our hearts. A mother visited her son's room. On the wall she saw an unclean, unwholesome picture. Instead of remonstrating with her son about the picture, she said nothing about it. Instead, she gave him a beautiful and impressive picture of the Christ. On a later visit to her son's room, she found the picture of the Christ upon the wall, and the unclean picture had disappeared. The unholy had been ^{clean} driven out ~~driven out~~ by the holy. The unclean had fled from before the clean. To keep evil out of our hearts, we must fill them with good. The Word of God, kept in our hearts, will keep evil out of our hearts.

9. Guard It

We should carefully guard the truth in our hearts, lest it be stolen away. For we learn from Luke 8:11,12 that ^{the} enemy of all righteousness may sometimes take away the Word out of the heart.

What kind of an attitude do you think such a Book as the Bible deserves that we should have toward it? What is your attitude toward the Bible? Is it the kind of an attitude that the Word of the Creator so richly deserves?

"Blessed Bible, how I love it!
How it doth my bosom cheer!
What hath earth like this to covet?
What hath heaven that could be more dear?"