

# Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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## A FAITH OF OUR OWN

by David Harris

There comes a time in all of our lives that we need to believe something because we find it to be true. Many Christians are Christians because of the upbringing of their faithful parents. This is both good and right. We are admonished by the Word to teach our children (Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 4:9), and bring them to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). When one is taught the truth, so he can be saved, then that person must be able to see for **himself** the truth that will save him. This is a time in our lives when “we” must become the “they” we have been relying on all of our lives. In other words we must grow up spiritually (1 Peter 2:2).

In John 4, after Jesus had His conversation with the woman at the well, she was convinced that He was the promised Christ (verse 29). She immediately went and shared this valuable information with the men of the city with whom she came in contact. Because of this woman’s willingness to share this good news, “*Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman which testified, He told me all that ever I did*” (verse 39). These Samaritans were not satisfied with a belief based on the report of the woman only; they wanted a faith of their own. Here is a perfect example of how our faith grows (Romans 10:17). The text next tells us that the Samaritans “*besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days*” (John 4:40). One can

only imagine how great it would be to listen to the Savior of the world in a setting such as this. What all did Jesus tell them? Did He tell them of His fulfillment of prophecy? Or did He tell them of the new covenant that was “at hand”? We can only imagine. One thing we do know is that His Word caused them to have faith; “*And many more believed because of his own word*” (4:41). This growth in their faith caused confidence, trust, courage, and hope in their own salvation. We know this by their own words; “*And they said unto the woman, now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Savior of the world*” (4:42). These individuals now had a faith of their own, based on God’s Word, not the word of someone else.

When we study God’s Word we not only increase our faith, we gain confidence in what we believe, trust in what we know, gain courage in our ability to share this same good news with others, and most of all we obtain the “*grace and peace*” that is multiplied unto us through the “*knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*” (2 Peter 1:2). No one can do it for us. We must increase our faith by our own diligent effort, through God’s inspired Word.

2535 Northwest Loop  
Stephenville, TX 76401

## EQUIVALENT MATTERS

by Eddy Gilpin  
(FCGN Editor, 1989-1991)

The Bible employs a grammatical tool called parallelism on several occasions. Although Hebrew writers were most noted for it, it is used in the New Testament as well. A quick example of parallelism can be found in Psalm 119:105. The Psalmist said, “*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*” Both of these phrases express the same thought, but use different words in doing so.

In the New Testament there is an interesting and quite informative use of this grammatical device found in 1 Peter 1:22 and 23. In the former verse the Bible states: “*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*” The latter reads: “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*” Of these two passages, the latter explains or expounds upon the former. Notice the parallel statements:

1) “*obeying the truth*” (verse 22) is equivalent to “*being born again*” (verse 23).

2) “*through the Spirit*” (verse 22) is equivalent to “*by the word of God*” (verse 23).

From these it is readily seen:

1) When one “obeys the truth” (cf. Romans 6:17, 18, 3-4; etc.) he is “born again.” Thus, the “new birth”

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Lee Moses . . . . . EDITOR  
Phone . . . . . (870) 625-3217  
E-Mail . . . . . cocfcgn@centurytel.net  
Website . . . . . www.fultoncountygospelnews.org  
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## THE TWO-EDGED SWORD

by Dub McClish

*“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).*

In a most expressive figure, the writer to the Hebrews compares the Word of God to a sword, an offensive weapon of war. This is a reminder that God’s people are in a war, a death-struggle, and our own faithfulness in combat will determine not only our own eternal victory but that of many others. Therefore we must “*war the good warfare*” (1 Timothy 1:18) as “*good soldiers of Jesus Christ*” (2 Timothy 3:3). In preparing for battle we have many pieces of armor but only one weapon—the “*sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Ephesians 6:17). However, we need none other, for it is abundantly adequate to teach, reprove, correct, instruct, rebuke, and exhort (2 Timothy 3:16; 4:2).

### The Sharp Word

God’s Word, under the figure of a sword, is described as to its mighty capabilities.

*It is sharp.* It is not merely a single-bladed instrument but one with a keen edge on both sides. Such an instrument is able to pierce and cut in all directions and to do so deeply and quickly. God’s Word is even sharper than such a finely honed, double-edged combat sword. This same striking figure was seen in John’s visions of Christ on Patmos: “*and out of his mouth proceeded a*

*sharp two-edged sword*” (Revelation 1:16; compare with 19:15).

*It pierces.* Its penetrating power is due to its keen double-edged “blade.” Although a different word is used, the idea is the same when Luke describes those on Pentecost and those in Stephen’s audience as “*pricked in their heart*” and “*cut to the heart,*” respectively (Acts 2:37; 7:54).

*It divides.* As a literal sword partitions the living flesh of its victim as it penetrates, so the Word of God is so powerfully effective and sharp as to penetrate and divide matters within the depths of man’s spiritual nature. “*Joints and marrow*” are obviously not to be taken literally for two reasons: (1) They are not in contact with one another—the marrow is inside the bones which are connected at the joints. (2) The spiritual sword does not have any effect upon the physical structure of man’s body. “*Joints and marrow*” is a figurative reference to the innermost recesses of man’s spiritual nature. “The word of God . . . divides and lays bare the soul and spirit even to the extent of their joints and marrows.”<sup>1</sup>

*It discerns.* “Discern” is from *kritikos*, “skilled in judging.”<sup>2</sup>

. . . The usual New Testament meaning being “to sift out and analyze evidence.” In the word *kritikos*, the ideas of discrimination and judgment are blended. Thus, the Word of God is able to penetrate into the furthest recesses of a person’s spiritual being, sifting out and analyzing the thoughts and intents of the heart.<sup>3</sup>

The searching and judging power of God’s Word is such that it penetrates and exposes the depths of the inner man. It is that “mirror of the soul”

*continued from page 1*

described to Nicodemus by Jesus (John 3:1-13) is simply obedience to what God has commanded concerning salvation. As Peter states in this same verse (22), the soul is “purified” in “obeying the truth.” This being the case, can the soul be “purified” without “obeying the truth?” The answer, of course, is “No” (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:8.)

2) When one is directed by “the word of God,” he is being directed “by the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit operates through the word, and only through the word.

If you write in your Bible, you might want to draw an arrow from the phrase “*obeying the truth*” (verse 22) to “*Being born again*” (verse 23); and from “*through the Spirit*” (verse 22) to “*by the word of God*” (verse 23). This might assist you in remembering that these are parallel passages and equivalent thoughts.

1840 Tucker Lane  
Salem, VA 24153

that does not deceive us when we gaze into it. It is only by knowledge of the Word of God that we have our “senses exercised to discern good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14).

When the sword pierces and discerns, either of two results will obtain. When the sharp, piercing, dividing, discerning sword of God’s Word did its work on Pentecost, those who were “pricked in their heart” by it immediately realized their guilt and cried out, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). When the same sharp sword did its work on Stephen’s audience and they were “cut to the heart” as the faithful words of the evangelist found their mark, rather than repenting of the sins of which Stephen’s words convicted them they violently seized the preacher and stoned him to death. Some who are pierced by the sword of the Spirit rebel, perhaps even violently, while others are brought to humbly seek peace with God by conformity to His will. However, in both reactions, the discerning power of God’s Word in the spirit of man is clearly demonstrated. Again, if we preach a spineless, diluted message that is purposely designed to stir guilt in the vilest sinner, we rob it of its discerning power.

The Lord’s sharp sword does its work on man’s spiritual nature. I agree with Milligan’s summary of the sword’s piercing and dividing work:

The separation takes place within the region of the soul and the region of the spirit; not between them. The living word cleaves and lays bare all parts of the soul and all parts of the spirit, even to the extent of their joints and marrows; so that all the perfections and imperfections of man’s spiritual nature are made perfectly manifest.

And not only so, but even the thought and purposes of his heart are, by this infallible Judge, fully analyzed and perfectly classified.

### **The Completed Word**

After summarizing how God had in earlier ages revealed His will to men, the Hebrews writer then said that God “hath . . . spoken unto us in his Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2). The inspired writer makes it clear that the last medium of God’s revelation to man was His Son. God’s Son taught and preached constantly during the last years of His earthly life, ever conscious that He was revealing the Father’s will: “For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:49). Moreover, Christ was aware that His word was God’s final revelation. Thus He says that men who reject His word will eventually be judged by it (John 12:48).

In giving God’s final revelation to men, Christ not only spoke much of it personally, but He also employed other worthy men through whom He spoke. The twelve apostles were granted at least some measure of inspiration to equip them for their very first preaching assignment: “It shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you” (Matthew 10:19-20). As the Lord tried to prepare them for His fast-approaching departure from them, He promised them more specifically that “when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things so ever he shall hear, these shall he speak; but

*what things so ever he shall hear, these shall he speak; And he shall declare unto you the things that are to come*” (John 16:13).

Christ also empowered the apostles so they could confer the gift of inspiration as well as other miraculous abilities on certain others (Acts 8:6-8; 8:14-19; 2 Timothy 1:6; etc.). Such explains how Mark, Luke and James could write by inspiration while not being apostles. Let it be clearly noted that the work of all of the New Testament writers is quite accurately termed the work of the Son, for it was work done by His command and power. Let it also be noted that all of the non-apostolic New Testament books (Mark, Luke, Acts, James) were written no later than 70 A.D., giving them ample time to have been renounced and repudiated by the apostle John had they been uninspired. Yet, history shows that they were freely accepted as inspired accounts and for this reason are incorporated into the New Testament canon.

Perhaps the most significant thing to note about the promise of inspiration to the apostles is the phrase, “he shall guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13). This promise demands the following: (1) The Spirit was going to come upon the apostles at a certain time. (2) From the time of the coming of the Spirit upon them until sometime before all of the apostles died (Christ made this promise exclusively to them), He would guide them into all the truth. (3) Therefore, all of God’s revelation through His Son was completed before the last apostle died. There are only three other possible conclusions, one or more of which must be accepted by those who deny that revelation ends with the book of Revelation: (1) Christ was sincere in His promise, but

He was honestly mistaken. (2) Christ was a false prophet and knew that He was deceiving the apostles. (3) Christ's promise is true, but some of the original apostles are still living. If one accepts either of the first two possibilities, then Christ is disqualified as man's Savior. If one accepts the third possibility, that person is insane.

We not only have the living, active, keen-edged Word of God through His Son, but we also have His completed, final Word. Just as God did not call any of the angels "Son" (Hebrews 1:5), and Moses said nothing of priests in the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14), so He mentioned nothing of Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, and Roman popes, or any others since the close of the apostolic age, as those through whom He would speak. The truth is, we have God's Word—His final Word, "*the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3)—in the New Testament. There has been no further word from God and there shall be no further word. All who deny this truth are victims of infidelity!

**Conclusion**

The beauty, glory and power of the everlasting Word of God make it the marvel of all time. Let us handle it reverently, study it diligently, believe it hopefully, obey it faithfully and communicate it accurately. Only when we do so will we both save ourselves and those who hear us (1 Timothy 4:16).

908 Imperial Drive  
Denton, TX 76201

<sup>1</sup> Robert Milligan, *Hebrews*, p. 140.  
<sup>2</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 5, p. 363.  
<sup>3</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, *Hebrews in the Greek New Testament*, p. 89.

**GIVE ME THE TRUTH**

Author unknown

If you are my friend, if you are concerned about my soul, give me the truth. Do not flatter me. Do not praise my virtues while remaining silent about my vices. Do not fear the truth will offend me. Do not treasure our friendship, our friendly relations, above my salvation.

Do not think by ignoring my sins you can help me. Do not think that being blind to my sins will prove you charitable. However I may react to it, whatever may be my attitude toward you after you have done it, GIVE ME THE TRUTH. For the Truth, and only the Truth, can make me free from the shackles of sin, strengthen me in the pathway of righteousness, and lead me to heaven's joy.

If I am wavering, weak, lukewarm, indifferent, neglectful; if I have been overtaken in a trespass; if I have been drawn into the pleasure of the world; if I have left my first love; if I have been led astray by error; or if I have done none of these, but simply need to grow in knowledge and be edified, GIVE ME THE TRUTH!

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**GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION**

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

**THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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