

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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PROMPTED BY GOD

by Barry O'Dell

The student of the Bible should be very familiar with what Paul wrote to Timothy: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The phrase *given by inspiration of God* is translated from the Greek word *theopneustos* meaning, “breathed out by God or God breathed.” The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament says of *theopneustos*, “Prompted by God, divinely inspired, occurs only in 2 Timothy 3:16 in the New Testament.” The obvious implication is that the content of the Bible is a product of Divinity. Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation. For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). In other words, those men who spoke (or wrote)

God’s word did not come up with it out of their own initiative. Peter states that they were moved, i.e. borne along, by the Holy Spirit. An excellent illustration of this is found in the words of David: “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2).

One’s understanding of *inspiration* is critical to the understanding of Scripture and the application of it to daily life. If the Bible is just another book, as some claim that it is, it really has no authoritative relevance in life. However, if it is the God-breathed, Holy Spirit revealed word of God, it holds eternal relevance for every man! If it is just another book then all the claims, both Old Testament and New, are nothing but lies. There are literally hundreds, if not thousands of statements from Genesis to Revelation claiming that the very words have been given to man by God. For example, Jeremiah 36:1-2 reads, “And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from

the Lord, saying, ‘Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.’” Concerning the New Testament writings we have this claim: “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which is preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11-12).

What is the significance of the doctrine of inspiration? Paul revealed several points in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that cause us to realize the gravity of this subject. First, Paul wrote that the God-breathed Scriptures are profitable or useful for *doctrine*. This word refers to the things that we teach. Contrary to popular belief in the religious world today it does matter what one teaches and practices. Paul referred to a particular form or pattern of doctrine that the Roman Christians had obeyed (Rom. 6:16-18). That doctrine

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led them, and can lead us to be “servants of righteousness.” Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, commanded that we be united in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).

Second, Paul wrote that the God-breathed Scriptures are profitable for *reproof*. This word implies that the Scriptures reveal when man is doing something wrong. Jesus quoted the Scriptures to reprove Satan (Matt. 4:3-10). He also quoted Scripture to reprove the Pharisees (Matt. 15:7-9). Stephen referred to many Scriptures in order to reprove the Jews (Acts 7). Reproof is also a necessary part of preaching today. Paul wrote, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; *reprove*,

rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Third, Paul wrote that the God-breathed Scriptures are profitable for *correction*. Literally, “to set right again, to make straight.” God’s word does not leave us in the dark. The Bible does not tell us we are wrong and then let us guess as to how we are to get right! David wrote, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple . . . Moreover by them is Thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward” (Ps. 19:7, 11). When man has gone out of the way God has a plumb line that will set him straight again (Amos 7:7-8).

Fourth, Paul wrote that the God-breathed Scriptures are profitable for *instruction in righteousness*. God’s word instructs or trains us in the way we should go. David wrote, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Ps. 119:11). There are many who do not like the idea of “instructions” or “rules” when it comes to following God. Many want to bring God and His standard down to their level. Many have a zeal for God, but are seeking out their own way of righteousness (Rom. 10:1-3). In order to be righteous (right with God) we must come to Him on

His terms, not our own. The wise man who built his house upon the rock *heard* Jesus and *did* what He said (Matt. 7:24-27).

Finally, Paul wrote that the God-breathed Scriptures are able to *completely furnish* the child of God in order to do all good works. God’s word gives us the capability of doing all things that please Him. Paul and others had been given the Spirit of God so that they could both speak and write the things that God has freely given (1 Cor. 2:9-13). It is not impossible to please God. In fact, we are told that our love for God is shown by our keeping His commandments which are not grievous (1 Jn. 5:3). Children of God can be confident that (1) we have the complete, inspired will of God and (2) we are able to read and understand the things that God has revealed to us in order to please Him (Eph. 3:3-5; 5:17). It must be remembered that one’s view of the Bible is critical to how one might or might not apply its teachings to his/her life.

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 MOODS OF JOHN 3:16

by Tom Franklin

John: 3:16 states, in part, that those believing in Christ “should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Berry’s Interlinear New Testament translates the Greek here as “may not perish, but may have life eternal.” Both of these translations, as well as the original Greek text, reflect the use of the subjunctive mood. Thus, while the statements of fact in the first part of John 3:16, relative to God’s love and sacrifice for mankind, is properly put in the indicative mood; the hoped for results of man’s belief in Christ, in the latter part of the verse, could only be expressed by the subjunctive mood. This switch in moods was not accidental.

The subjunctive, per Webster’s collegiate Dictionary is, “that mood of a verb representing the denoted action or state not as a fact but as contingent, possible, doubtful, desirable etc.” The two quotations following indicate a similar use of the subjunctive mood in the Greek New Testament. “The subjunctive differs from the future indicative in stating what is thought likely to occur, not positively what will occur.”¹ “The subjunctive is the mood of mild contingency; the mood of probability. While the indicative assumes reality, the subjunctive assumes unreality. It is the first step away from that which is actual in the direction of that which is only conceivable, and, therefore, properly leads the list of the potential moods.”²

Thus John is not saying that those who believe in Christ absolutely will not perish and already possess eternal life; but

rather that such believers should, by virtue of their faith, be equipped to avoid perdition and to attain to eternal life. This is in keeping with what John 1:12 states. He wrote there that those who believe on His name are thereby given the “power to become the sons of God.” *Power to become* is both future and contingent. It points to something that might be attained if necessary requirements are met. Hence believers are not, at the initial point of belief, saved as sons of God; but this belief enables them to become (future conditional) sons of God and to become such as may have (future conditional) everlasting life.

Now let us read John 3:16 again. “For God so loved (a fact–indicative mood) the world that He gave (another fact–indicative mood) His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish (a hoped for possibility–subjunctive mood) but have (literally, may have–another hoped for possibility–subjunctive mood) everlasting life.” Notice that the Holy Spirit changed the mood of the verbs right in the middle of that verse. An accident? I think not! This change precludes the idea of salvation at the point of faith only, as well as the idea of “once saved, always saved”.

As pointed out above, John had written that those who believed on the name of Christ would be given the “power to become the sons of God” (Jn. 1:12). In other words, their faith did not instantly make them sons of God, but, it did give them the ability to become His children. Now John did not change

his mind about this sometime between chapter one and chapter three. So, in John 3:16, he is still rejecting the idea of salvation at the point of faith. That is why he said that believers “should not perish” but “may have” (Douay Version) everlasting life. That faith should lead them to obey the Lord and obtain eternal salvation. Note that Hebrews 5:9 states that Jesus is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”

If in John 3:16 we change the “should not perish” to “shall not perish” as the NIV does, we have changed the meaning to what the Baptists and Calvinists have always maintained that it meant, i.e. saved immediately at the point of faith, and once saved always saved. Hence, the Holy Spirit guided John to switch to the subjunctive mood in the middle of this one verse in order to avoid teaching two false doctrines. Isn’t it amazing to note how effectively the very language of John 3:16, properly translated, refutes the false doctrines that a person, at the moment of belief in Christ, is saved both instantly and irrevocably?

I’ve seen articles written by some (who should know better) who were interpreting John 3:16 from an NIV perspective, i.e. that John is affirming that all who believe shall be saved. Recognizing that this would teach salvation by faith only, they then felt obligated to come up with a definition of faith that would include all of the things necessary to obeying the gospel. One way they do this is to say that faith or

“believeth”, as it is here, is a synecdoche—a figure of speech which puts a part for the whole. But if we correctly translate and understand the subjunctive mood of this verse, no synecdoche argument is necessary to make this verse agree with all the other passages on the subject of salvation. It will stand on its own as meaning that faith should lead to obedience and salvation. But this is conditional, as the mood requires. Some believers, for example, refused to confess Christ. John 12:42 reads, “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.” The Holy Spirit calls these disobedient Pharisees “believers,” hence they were. However, that belief did not extinguish their free-will. They, just like the believers of John 3:16, could still choose whether or not to act upon that faith.

Faith is not repentance, it is not confession, and it is not baptism. It doesn’t include any of these; it leads us to them. Paul expressed this principle in Romans 5:2 when he wrote, “We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand”.

John 3:16 is the most widely known verse in all of the Bible. If the Lord’s church is to be the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), we must earnestly contend for a faithful translation of that truth, including the retention of the proper moods, tenses, and number. We can enhance our credibility by learning to read our Bibles with precision and accuracy.

¹A.T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p.925


²E. Dana and Julius L Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), p.170

Tom Franklin worshiped with the Leonard Street church of Christ with the editor of FCGN and currently resides in Ft. Worth, TX.

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