

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2018  
Two stories.

We are looking at 2 Chronicles 34, and Acts chapter 8, the accounts of the Law being found in the days of King Josiah, and the story of Philips encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch. The main thing I desire to bring to your attention today is the importance of the Scriptures, the Bible, and how it should be approached and used. I intend to try and keep this simple and short. It is important that we get the message.

2 Chronicles 34.

1. How could the Law have been lost?

The book referred to was the five books of Moses. 2 Chronicles 6.16 has King Solomon referring to it in such a way that it was the duty of the King to keep the Law on his and the nations agenda. This is probably the idea that Paul has in 1 Timothy 2.2 where Paul gives instructions as regards prayer for those in government to be a priority. The idea is that God gives government whose responsibility it is to ensure peace, so that the Gospel message is free to be declared. I wonder how many governments even regard that as of any importance. It was important in the OT days, so how had it come to this, that the Law of God had been misplaced, and did it matter?

It probably happened in the days of Manasseh, a wicked king, who purposely went after pagan deities in crass disobedience to the duties of an Israelite king. There were various rules and regulations laid down in the Law to ensure that it was read to the people on a regular basis, and when the ruling class decide to do things differently, it was not long before it became the practice of the people.

The fact that the Law was later found in the Temple when they were cleaning out the rubbish, gives the impression that it had been thrown down somewhere and through disregard, had had piles of stuff thrown over it until it was not only out of sight, but out of mind. One would have to ask the question, what had the priests and the Levites been doing while all this was being forgotten and ignored?

The serious truth is that it is the responsibility of every generation to carry the baton of upholding the Word of God. The Queen has the title, 'Defender of the Faith', as regards the Church of England, and this was the duty of the Israelite King. Manasseh had failed to do this purposely, and the following generations had not done anything about the situation, because after all it was the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC, not the dark ages! Isn't that always what people say who do not want to heed the Bible? They say that it is an old book of a bygone age, and that in our modern age, we have moved on from the former myths which held us in captivity, guilt and bondage, that kept us advancing to our human potential! Even in David's day, people were saying this, Psalm 2, and people have been saying this ever since.

It is actually a very old attitude that did not even originate from mankind. Read the early chapters of Genesis, and there you will find the Serpent, the devil saying to Eve, 'did God really say that?' The temptation was to throw away the one command God had given Adam and Eve, and that is what they did! The neglect of the Law of God, the Word of God, is an old lie reheated generation after generation, and it still works! The most effective bait for fish is an earth worm. Worms have been used from time immemorial, and despite this, the fish keep falling for an old bait. It is a foolish fish that thinks that a baited hook will not take it!

## 2. Can the Law of God, the Scriptures be lost in our generation?

The Bible cannot be physically lost. There are still more copies of the Bible printed and sources on line, than for any other writings. However, possession is not the issue, but use. I have probably only come across a handful of people in the UK who do not have a Bible somewhere in their homes, even if they would find it a challenge to find it. The issue is what place we give to the Bible and the reading of it in daily life.

In the quad outside the New College Library in Edinburgh is a statue of John Knox. One of his arms is held aloft as in full flight in preaching, and in his other hand is an open copy of the Bible. Yvonne was amused recently when we were at the General Assembly when I said 'good morning John,' as we passed him each day on our way into the Assembly. The day I forgot to say hello to John, she asked me why I had not done so.

This statue says a lot about our former days in Scotland. Scotland was once known as, 'The Land of the Book,' meaning the Bible, but no longer. The Bible has fallen into neglect, and is lost to our population. The Bible has also suffered at the hands of the 'Experts' in the Church and Universities, who spend much of their time looking for and formulating all sorts of alternatives to what the Bible teaches. This is usually defended on the grounds that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we have moved on, and that belief in a creation, in miracles, in the divinity and manhood of one Jesus of Nazareth, is to be foolish and naive! Some even decry the Cross and the shedding of Christ blood as too distasteful to be considered by any civilized intelligent person. Such people do not seem to have noticed that the Bible itself says that the days will come when people do such things. Even the unbelief of our nation is spoken of in the Bible! Also, the Cross was not a human theory, but a God given gift. The old Hymn has it absolutely right when it says,

There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin.  
He only could unlock the gate, of heaven and let us in.

No Cross, no heaven!

## 3. Does this matter?

It does matter. Josiah, when he heard the Law read realized that to ignore the Law, the terms of the covenant, would result in the curses of the covenant being enacted and released. Deuteronomy 28. You see, the Covenant was given to the people by God. In it

God obligated Himself to bless and prosper His people. In the Covenant, the people were brought under obligation to make a response to God, and that was to obey His stipulations. Punishments were also included in the Covenant in the event of disobedience or faithlessness to it. Therefore, within the terms of the covenant there was a blessing clause, and a penalty clause.

When from Manasseh's days the Law was ignored and forgotten, the penalty clause came into play. In this we need to see that in either blessing the people, or bringing hardship to the people, God Himself was acting in utter faithfulness. 2 Chronicles 6 also explains that if the people return to God, then in His faithfulness, the blessing clauses of the Covenant will be restored. Decline is never final or fatal while we have breath.

The ignorance and forgetting of the Law had another very serious consequence, as does the ignoring and disregarding the Bible.

The Law and the Bible as a complete Book does many important things. I will list four very important ones.

- (a) The Bible gives us information about who God is and what He is like.
- (b) The Bible tells us what God's plan is for humanity and the ages.
- (c) The Bible tells us what God has done to accomplish His plan. This is Christ, the Cross and the Resurrection.
- (d) The Bible tells us what God promises to do. The fact of what He has done according to His promise gives us the grounds to believe and venture all on the promises that await fulfillment.

What happens if we remove these things from our lives and minds? What we get is a people who live by their own reasoning's and passions. Isaiah has summed it up well by saying that whenever mankind forgets and departs from God's word, then things get very mixed up,

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil,  
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness,  
Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.”

Isaiah 5.20

Does this not sound a bit like what we are finding today? All manner of things are now being promoted as good that before were regarded as bad, and vis versa. Consider things like parental discipline, drugs, even shop lifting is becoming regarded by many people as being legitimate.

This however is not the end of the matter. Someone may point out that if God is angry with this generation and the Church in the West today, then where are the punishments. My first answer to that is that they are all around us! Secondly, and much more frightening, I would refer us to Romans Chapter 1 verses 24 and following. Here we have the terrible judgment of God effectively saying to humanity that if we do not heed Him, then He will leave us to our own devices until we really get into trouble! This is the

downward spiral of sin, and do we not see this happening today in our society. Did you catch the news during the week, that Scotland has the worst drug abuse problem of all the European countries? Does that not grieve us and bring disgrace upon us. Why do we not queue at the Church door to pray and ask God for help and mercy on all such, and to find out what He would have us do?

All of this is not contrary to God loving us. Every one of us who is a parent, at some stage has become so exasperated with our children that we let them face the consequences of their actions. We do not love then any the less, our hearts bleed for them, and we want them to be responsive children, not the horrid, sneering, rebels they have become.

My proof of this is that Christ did come and His heart bled for us both figuratively and actually! It was love for us that was the reason Christ died His bloody death on the cross, to save horrid, proud, rebellious, obnoxious, wicked, evil, transgressors such as you and me!

#### 4. What has been lost?

When the Bible is lost to us and ignored, we lose the possibility of knowing anything about God, about His plans, about Christ dying to save us, and about the future promises, even the hope of heaven.

What then are people left with? This life alone, three score years and ten. Some do not even get that long. Perhaps this is what drives people to the ends they pursue to try and live as long as they can.

#### Acts 8.26-40

This is the account of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch.

There are so many delicious things in this account, but the basics are these. The Eunuch is an intelligent man. He is in charge of the treasury of Candice, and he has gone up to Jerusalem as a God seeker. We don't know how he had become interested in Judaism, but when people go on pilgrimage it is often because they are not satisfied and convinced of the beliefs they have, and are looking for something that does meet that hole in their heart. The fact that he was reading the Book of Isaiah indicates that he was a seeker after truth, and not someone who thought that a pilgrimage would somehow appease God. He wanted the goods, but was utterly baffled by Isaiah. The question he asked shows that he had used his intelligence and mathematical abilities to analyse the situation, and he had come up with the correct questions to ask.

Philip is engaged by the Holy Spirit - 'the angel of the Lord,' is one way of expressing how the Holy Spirit is manifest to communicate to mankind. Whether or not it was a

winged actual angel or not does not matter, because v39 tells us that it was the Spirit that took him away! The Spirit orchestrated and completed the encounter.

It is not enough just to read the word, it must be illuminated. We cannot read a book in the dark, and we cannot understand the Bible in the spiritual dark. The Bible must be opened to our understanding by its author, the Holy Spirit. The way the Holy Spirit works is this. He opens our hearts and minds to understand as we interpret Scripture with Scripture, and this especially so in the preaching of the word and its explanation – this is what Philip did. He being a Spirit filled man, shared his light with the Eunuch, and the Spirit communicated understanding to the Eunuch. Look at Acts 16 v 14. God opened Lydia's heart to respond to Paul's message. If someone like Paul was not able to reach the heart of a person, what hope is there for any of us. God must act. He acts by the Holy Spirit.

The proof that the Eureka moment had come, when the Ethiopian suddenly saw the meaning is that he believed in Christ, and this belief was demonstrated by his seeking to be baptized.

We have lost the Bible under the rubbish of 'modern' values and material life. This is shown by us being unfamiliar with it, and disregarding it. We need to take up the reading of Scripture again if we desire to be saved, to please God, and live in His blessing and not be left to our own devices.

Psalms 1 is the essential guide to how to do this – we turn to the Word, and turn away from other voices. We read and meditate, that is, we think about what we read, we ask what it means for us, what it tells us about God, how we can apply this to our lives. This is what we can do.

God however does the big part. 1 Corinthians 3 v6-7 tells us this. Paul has farming in mind. The farmer sows and waters the seed, but only God can make it grow. So it is with the Bible, we read and meditate, and God gives us the realization of its truth and relevance.

This is a life-long and a serious and demanding activity. Don't think that this is something we can do for ten minutes a week and expect to see our lives transformed. Every gardener knows that in very dry weather it is not enough just to give the plants a sprinkle of water. The plants must be drenched so that the water will soak down to the roots to refresh the plants and enable them to take up the nourishment and minerals they need to grow. Plants don't take in solid food, it must be in a soluble form, in the water! In the same way, we need to be much in the word, or the growth of our souls will stall. We need to be drenched with the Holy Spirit to have the Word made alive in us, so we ask daily for God to give us a greater infusion of the Holy Spirit.

The great need of our age and the Church, is not more stuff or more activities, but more of the Word and the Spirit forming the life of Christ in our souls.

The food is available, the table is set, the invitations have been sent out, we have no excuse to die without Christ and go to a lost eternity, Jesus is the ample supply of bread and water. As Christ said at the Last Supper, take and eat, take and drink.