

True Faith Rests Securely on God's Word Alone

Luke 1:1-25, Advent Sunday I

November 30, 2008

Beloved of the Lord.....True faith rests securely on God's Word alone. The Bible is the only book we have in all the world, that is God-breathed, God-inspired. The Bible is far more dependable than text books in schools, or the scientists and historians of the world. For only the Bible alone is without error. We know this to be true because the Bible says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Hence our faith in the Scriptures does not rest upon human writers, but the God who directly inspired these penmen. The men themselves were instruments, a pen or pencil in the mighty hand of God. The Holy Spirit put into their very minds the very words they wrote and the thoughts they expressed. The beloved physician Luke was one of these chosen writers. Luke's Gospel is based upon the collection of many eyewitnesses. He writes, "Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first.....that thou mightest know the certainty of those things." God gave Luke a perfect understanding of the life of Christ, through the apostle Paul and eyewitnesses. More importantly the Holy Spirit directed his every word.

We will begin today with the understanding that all men are born into this world, doubters of God's sacred Word. Then let us be convinced by the Holy Scriptures themselves, that God's Word is true. For the Bible says, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." True faith rests securely on God's Word alone.

I. The old man doubts God's Word. Concerning doubters of God's Word, we have a priest named Zacharias. Both he and his wife were devout believers, "They were both righteous before God", walking in all His commandments. "They had no child because Elisabeth was barren." This had been a heavy cross for Elisabeth to bear yet she bore it with patience. In the course of time, by God's providence, Zacharias drew the lot to burn incense in the Holy Place of the Temple. This happened once, at most, in the lifetime of any priest. At the time of the morning sacrifice, as the people prayed outside, Zacharias went into the Holy Place. From a golden bowl he sprinkled sacrificial blood on two sides of the altar and sprinkled incense upon the red hot coals. The sweet smoke rolled up into the air, being symbolic of the prayers of the people that ascend upward to heaven. When the angel Gabriel suddenly appeared, Zacharias "was troubled, and fear fell upon him." "Don't be afraid, your prayer has been heard Zacharias" the angel told him! They would have a son named John. Here was the answer to thousands of prayers, but being an old man

Zacharias doubted! "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." This doubt angered God so greatly Zacharias was unable to speak for nine long months. The angel's words were God's Words..

This is a fitting picture, that Zacharias as an old man doubted God's Word. To this day, we too doubt God's Word because of the old man within us. When the Holy Spirit comes to us through the Word, we find it far easier to doubt God's Word than admit it is true. We try to get around the truth, rather than submit in obedience to it. For example, human reason cannot fathom the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea. Bible critics refuse to accept this truth and they call it the "Sea of Reeds", perhaps only two or three feet deep. This is a crossing they can believe. Nevertheless what does God say? Exodus 14:22 says, "the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left." Mapmakers can lie and deceive but God's Word is true.

Human reason is the king of all doubt. While God did indeed give man the ability to reason, Christian faith is not derived from human reason, but God's Word alone. "When God has spoken, the right of private judgment ceases." (Koehler) God speaks for Himself in the Scriptures and we dare not make God say what we want Him to say. Instead we submit to His every Word and obey. If we add to His Word or insert our meaning into His text, God will add to us the plagues written in the Bible. Nor can we take away from His Word, for then God will take us out of the Book of Life. Human reason cannot be a judge over God's Word. That would be comparable to a blindfolded scientist who sits as a judge in a courtroom listening to the words of Jesus and then says, "I can see that you are lying." God doesn't lie to us in the Bible. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Bible says, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." Even as Christians we must learn to recognize the enemy within. When we find ourselves questioning one thing or another about God's Word, rest assured the enemy within is seeking to overthrow our own faith. I John 1:10 says, "if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

Not only is there the enemy within, but also the enemy without. Unbelieving scientist will continually deny the world was created in six 24-hour days. Unbelieving historians will continually discount the chronology of the Bible. This week I read an incredible article in a woodworking magazine on the ancient Kauri tree of New Zealand. They say these gigantic trees lived 50,000 years ago, and were preserved in an oxygen starved bog. While I do not doubt they were preserved well by an oxygen deprived bog, I know they cannot be 50,000 years old, because the Bible teaches the world is roughly

6000 years old. Likewise evolution cannot be true because "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth". Theistic evolution is a not only a compromise of God's Word, but a denial. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God..... All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Scientists as men are fallible. Historians as men are fallible. Christ alone and His Word are infallible. If men or human reason teach you something which contradicts God's Word, "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

Ultimately we need to understanding that by attacking the truth of God's Word, the devil seeks to overthrow our faith in the Gospel. The devil seduced Eve by leading her to doubt God's Word. The blindfold of sin was put over her eyes, when she God was lying to her, when in truth it was the devil who lied. In like manner, if the devil can shake our faith on God's Word regarding the six days of creation, or the historical accuracy of the Bible, where will it end? If one passage is questionable, they all become questionable, even the Gospel. The devil doesn't want us to believe the truth, that through the blood of God's only-begotten Son, God has forgiven all sins. He therefore lies and says, "Did God really say this? Are you sure?" More than anything the devil wants us to doubt that God through Christ has justified and declared the whole world righteous, and faith alone in Christ is necessary for salvation.

II. Faith can rest securely on God's Word. But who should we listen to?...God or the devil? Who will tell us the truth?...God or the devil. What does God say? What is truth? Jesus said, "Thy Word is truth" and God's Word says Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The truth of God's Word is simply this, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God proved His love for us when Christ came to die for us. "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Our justification has already taken place in a most wondrous way, through the blood of Jesus Christ. "We shall be saved from wrath through Him!" Jesus is our Savior. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, the Son of man came to seek and to save, that which was lost. In like manner, though Zacharias doubted God's promise of a child, God did not forsake him because of his doubt. God forgave and kept His promise. Elisabeth conceived a child in her old age. We too, like Adam and Eve, Zacharias and Elisabeth have been given a promise by God, namely that "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." The truth that sets us free is the Gospel promise, that all sins, even our sins of doubt, through Jesus are forgiven. It is the

Lord Jesus Himself, the Good Shepherd of the sheep, who takes the blindfold of sin from off our eyes, that we begin to see His tender mercies. We are born from above, when the Holy Spirit works the Gospel faith into our heart. The Gospel Word reveals unto us that God is not our enemy, but our gracious Fiend. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

When we trust in God's Word, we have joy and gladness. Though Zacharias first foolishly doubted, he nevertheless repented and had faith in God's promises. The birth of John the Baptist brought them great joy and gladness. Many rejoiced in his birth. What a fitting picture of both Advent and Christmas. For we too wait for the birth of God's Son, we wait for Christmas. Yet we already know by faith that God's promises are all fulfilled, and the little child was born in Bethlehem. Just as John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ, to prepare the hearts of the people to receive Him, so Advent is the forerunner of Christmas. We too should prepare to receive Christ, by repenting of our doubt, and placing our faith in His work on the cross. We should also cherish His birth. It is a new birth. Both John the Baptist and Christ were filled with the Holy Ghost, even in their mother's womb. It was different with us however. We were not given the gift of the Holy Ghost until our baptism. Nevertheless the same Holy Ghost which lived in John the Baptist and Christ, also lives in our hearts even now by faith. When we picture then the new birth of the sinless Son of God, on that still and quiet night long ago, let us remember this was a holy child, the innocent and sinless Son of God. His birth is our birth too. Through Christ we too were conceived and born sinless and innocent. Christians are born from above.

Beloved of the Lord, our faith is secure if only our faith rests upon God's Word. Let us therefore this Advent and Christmas season, be truly filled in our hearts with all joy and gladness, similar to the joy and gladness of Zacharias and Elisabeth when they say their newborn child. For this child named Christ, was born for each and every one of us. And thanks be to God, through Him we are new creatures. Old things are passed away, behold all things become new. Amen.

Pastor Tobin Pederson, 7685 Maple Hill Rd. Corcoran, MN, 55340, 763-494-5164, solideogloria96@comcast.net srmn0721