

The Brown Street Beacon

"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,

holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)



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Those Poor First Century Saints?

When I hear some brethren talk today, I wonder how the first century saints ever made it. After all, all they had to be edified were local churches and individual saints. How did they ever grow spiritually with just that? No institutions to teach the gospel to them. No camps or colleges to give them that extra teaching they so desperately needed. All they had was what God provided. You really have to wonder how they got by, don't you? How were their children brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4) with nothing more than their parents, individuals Christians, and the local church to help. How did the young women survive with no more than aged woman teaching them how to love their husbands and be managers of the home (Titus 2:3-5), unaided by organizations providing special retreats for women? Those poor first century saints. It must of really been a struggle.

I am obviously being sarcastic, but listening to some in the church today, they sure make it sound like the local church is insufficient. We recently lost a family here at Brown Street and I was extremely saddened by their departure. I was looking forward to seeing them grow as a family and as Christians in the Lord. I love all the good families here at this local church, and each one is unique and have their own special qualities. When this particular couple left, they did the right thing and wrote a letter to the elders and members of the Brown Street church, explaining why they were leaving. There was one thing they said, however, that I found interesting and that seems to be a growing sentiment among some brethren. With regard to the camps, colleges and other organizations that have developed among us to do the work of the church, they wrote, *"We know we would not be the Christians we are if those activities had not been a part of our life."* What kind of Christians are they? They always appeared to me to be strong, faithful Christians. Now, I know that their statement about being what they are is not meant to be an indictment upon the church, but it is nevertheless. They are saying in essence that the church by itself, apart from man-made organizations, can't produce strong Christians. This, it seems to me, is the message that rings out from every camp, college, foundation or organization that begins to do the work of the local church which was designed by God to edify the saints (Ephesians 4:16). The message is that the church by itself isn't enough.

This was the same message that was echoed by W.K. Pendleton in 1849, at the convention in Cincinnati which produced the American Missionary Society, the first institution that plagued the church. Pendleton said, "There are some duties of the church, which a single congregation cannot, by her unaided strength, discharge." This statement is a synopsis of why brethren believed there was a need for institutions to exist. It appears that we are being plagued again by a new kind of institutionalism. It is new only in that it doesn't solicit money from local churches. However, it is the same in that it involves human institutions or organizations doing that which God specifically designed the local church to do.

As with any controversial issue, there are always misrepresentation. I have personally been accused of not believing in home Bible studies. Nobody I know opposes studying the Bible in the home. We don't oppose colleges, camps or publishing companies, as long as those organization do what they were designed to do and not the work of the church. It is the work of the church to win souls and edify saints (1 Thessalonians 1:8; Ephesians 4:16). The church is a part of the eternal purpose of God (Ephesians 3:10-11). Human organizations are not necessary. The church can help individuals be strong and faithful Christians all by itself.

Don

The Inspiration of the Bible

Douglass Hills Website

Some people attack the Bible today, claiming that it is no more than an old book full of men's opinions. Referring to it this way enables them to dismiss its teachings that conflict with their chosen lifestyle. Is this a proper view of the Bible? Is the Bible more than just the ideas of the men who wrote it? Consider the following as we look at the Bible's inspiration.

The Bible is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16-17), but what does it mean to say the Bible is inspired? The word translated in our English Bible "inspired" literally means "God breathed." Therefore, something inspired is something that has been issued, or sent, from God. All scripture has the breath of God on it, and is much more than just the ideas of the men who wrote it. It is as if God spoke them Himself. That should be our first understanding of the Bible.

However, simply knowing that God has spoken is not enough. Accepting that God has spoken implies a responsibility on our part. We can take comfort that what God has spoken is true. Titus 1:2 and Hebrews 6:18 states that God cannot lie. Notice that it does not say that God will not lie; rather, God cannot lie. It goes against His very nature and character. Whatever we find in scripture is the absolute truth, and we can rest assured that there is no error in it.

God has certain things He wants us to know and understand. The only way for us to know these things is for Him to tell us. We learn in 1 Corinthians 2:10-13 that the thoughts of God have been written down by men guided by the Holy Spirit, and we can read them today and know what God expects of us. Indeed, God has made known His very thoughts.

This discussion of God's inspired word would not be complete if we did not mention our responsibility. Hebrews 1:1-2 says how God has spoken to us today - through His Son Jesus Christ. Then, in Hebrews 2:1-3, we are encouraged to pay attention to what is spoken lest we are punished for not listening and obeying. Dear friends, our very souls depend on understanding God's word (1 Timothy 2:4)