

Believing everything - Sunday May 12th 2013.

But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men. (Acts 24:14-16).

Beloved in the Lord,

We are blessed when we believe everything that is written in God's Word. I am constantly surprised to learn how many people, including pastors do not believe everything that is written in God's Holy Word. This explains why so many are so weak in their faith and understanding.

In order to live in the fullness of God's provision and blessing we need not only to read the whole of His Word, but we also need to believe it. It is difficult to walk on one leg, or to drive a car that only has three tyres. The person that does not believe everything that God has written in His word, hobbles along and makes little progress.

In our text today we have this wonderful confession from the lips of the Apostle Paul, who states that he believes everything that is written in God's Word. This is what motivates him to live a godly life and to serve the Lord in the way that he does.

Paul was motivated by the fact that one day there will be a resurrection from the dead, and one day every man will give account for his or her life. There will be a judgement. If you are a non-believer, do not believe in eternal life, do not believe in the resurrection from the dead of the just and unjust, do not believe in heaven or hell, then your life is incomplete, and you will never have a proper motivation to live and serve God.

Paul put it this way in his letter to the Corinthians: ***If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. (1.Cor.15:32)***

Paul is saying that if there is no eternal life, if this life is all there is and there is no accountability, then it is not important what we do and how we live. We may as well eat and drink and live it up for tomorrow we die, and that's it.

Oh, but the truth of the matter is contained in the next verse which begins with the words: ***"Do not be deceived."*** So many people have been and are being deceived by the devil. They think that it is of no consequence, not to believe in God. So many have died deceived, only to find themselves face to face with Jesus.

You see, the truth is that it is important how we live, it is of utmost importance what we believe. There will be a resurrection. There will be a judgement, and each one of us will spend eternity either in heaven with Jesus or in hell eternally separated from Him with no hope.

Today in our service we commemorate Jesus Ascension into heaven. Ascension Day was last Thursday. On Ascension Day Jesus returned to heaven to be seated at the right hand of God. After His resurrection on Easter morning, Jesus remained on the earth for forty days, during which time He appeared to His disciples and to over 500 other eye witnesses. During this time Jesus prepared the disciples for life after He has gone to heaven. Jesus taught them about the Holy Spirit, who He promised He would send after He returned to the Father.

Jesus Ascension ushered in a new era that theologians call the age of grace. This age will end when Jesus returns in power and glory.

On the day of Ascension, just after Jesus was taken up to heaven two angels appeared and proclaimed the truth that Jesus had taught, namely, that He would return one day.

We read in Acts 1:9-11: ***“And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. ¹¹ They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”***

Clearly the angels declare that Jesus will come back. This will happen on the day that God has appointed for it to happen, and it is not for us to spend time trying to figure out when that will be. It will be when God has appointed. The fact that Jesus will come back is to be believed, but the when is something we must leave to God. It is important, however, that we live in the knowledge and expectation that it could be at any time. This is why the Bible exhorts us to be alert, to be ready and to be occupied.

Last week we considered that faith is a verb. Faith is an active reliance upon God. We also saw that it is important that our faith is manifested in our works. We saw that a branch that does not bear fruit is to be cut off, cast away and burned.

We are to be busy doing the Lord’s work till He comes. We are to be about His business, till He calls us out of this life. In order to do this effectively we must believe all that the Bible teaches.

The best commitment we can make is to say “God said it, I believe it, and that settles it.” In this life we will never fully understand everything that the Bible says, but that does not mean that we should not strive to grow in our understanding every day. It is important to read the Word of God regularly, everyday. We need to study His Word and grow in our

understanding. We need to humble ourselves and submit ourselves to God's Word. The more we do, the more we will grow in our faith. The more we grow, the better the fruit.

Jesus told this parable: ³ *Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.*¹⁴ *“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.*¹⁵ *To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.*

¹⁶ *Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents.*¹⁷ *In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more.*¹⁸ *But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.*

¹⁹ *“Now after a long time the master of those slaves *came and *settled accounts with them.*²⁰ *The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’*

²¹ *His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’*

²² *“Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’*²³ *His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’*

²⁴ *“And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.*²⁵ *And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’*

²⁶ *“But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed.*²⁷ *Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest.*²⁸ *Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’*

²⁹ *“For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.*³⁰ *Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:13-30)*

There is so much that we could talk about in this parable, but time will not allow. The main thing I would emphasise is that the Lord was pleased with, and rewarded the two servants who worked to gain a profit with his money. They invested the talents, used them and produced more. The Lord's anger was against the servant who did nothing. He took the

talent and buried it in the ground. I believe that this parable is easy to understand and does not require elaboration.

God has given us His Word; He gives us our life; He has given to each one of us gifts and talents.

When Jesus returns, what will we be able to show for the investment He made in us?

Let us be serious about God's Word, let us work diligently in God's vineyard, let us sow the seed broadly. Let us live in the blessed assurance that the day is coming when the dead in Christ will be raised to a new eternal life, when Jesus comes again. In the meanwhile, let us be busy and may we believe the full counsel of God. May we like Paul believe in everything that is written in the Bible. May we strive to be like Paul who wrote:

I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.

Amen

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.