

Handling the Scriptures

by Josh Reimer

I. Introduction

- a. As Christians, we have a pretty good deal.
 1. We have been given the gift of the remission of our sins (Romans 3:21-26).
 - A. As it says in verse 23, we "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
 - I. We fell short, but God brought us back up. John 3:16 says: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*
 - II. God brought us back up by sending his own Son to atone for our sins.
 - B. As verse 25 says, God set Him forth as a propitiation. A propitiation is a means of appeasing. Jesus appeased the justice that is required for sin. He paid for our sins with His own blood.
 - C. And this is a gift. It's free, not something we have to earn. Verse 24 says we are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."
 - D. As I said, this is a pretty good deal.
 2. And now that our sins have been taken care of, we are free to receive the reward.
 - A. Recall John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*
 - B. The reward is everlasting life.
 - C. And it's everlasting life in a place we want to be. Jesus said in John 14:2+3: *In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*
- b. We have such a good deal - what kind of people would we be if we didn't try to help others get in on it? Maybe that's why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:16: *For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!*
- c. This is our responsibility: to spread the gospel - the good news - of how we can be saved from our sins and receive that reward.
 1. Jesus started His followers doing this during His life (Luke 9:1+2, 6). He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, which was also called the gospel, as we can see in verse 6.
 2. Again, at the end of His life here on earth, He told His followers to do this (Mark 16:15+16).
 3. And so the message was spread.
 - A. In Acts 2:41, at the conclusion of Peter's sermon, three thousand people accepted the message and were baptized.
 - B. In Acts 8, Christians were persecuted and so they were scattered. And so the gospel was scattered with them and it spread. Acts 8:4 says: *Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.*
 - C. And men went on journeys, and preached, and wrote letters to spread the gospel.
 - D. And now it's our responsibility to keep teaching it and spreading it.
- d. (Flow of the lesson)
 1. Point one of this lesson will cover our responsibility to teach.

2. Point two will be where we really get into the topic at hand. Point two will be about using the Scriptures in our teaching.
3. And for point three, we will consider whether or not we can actually use too many Scriptures in our teaching.

II. Christians have a responsibility to teach.

- a. Our first point is still more or less introductory so we'll move through it pretty fast.
- b. Teaching the gospel was not just the job of the Apostles or the people who heard Jesus speak in person (2 Timothy 2:2).
 1. Paul was passing this on to Timothy, who was supposed to pass it on to others.
 2. And those others were supposed to pass it on to still others. They needed to be "able to teach others also."
- c. Teaching is expected of us as we mature in our Christianity (Hebrews 5:12).
 1. These Christians apparently still didn't even have a firm grasp on the basics.
 2. But we can see in verse 12 that enough time had passed so that they should have been teachers themselves.
 3. As we mature, teaching is expected of us.
- d. As I said earlier, this message is so important and so good - how could we live with ourselves if we don't try to bring it to others?
- e. Besides that, this is God's message. This is the message of our creator and the one who provided us with forgiveness of sins and who prepared a reward for us. With that in mind, how could we keep it in? That's how Jeremiah seemed to feel (Jeremiah 20:7-9).
 1. Jeremiah's preaching of God's word was not being very well received, and so he decided to stop. We can see that in the first half of verse 9.
 2. But look at the second half of verse 9. He tried to hold it back but he just couldn't. It "was in [his] heart like a burning fire."
- f. Teaching is our responsibility and it should be our desire as well. That's the example Paul set for us.
 1. He wanted the good news to get out any way it could (Philippians 1:18).
 2. Paul was ready to go to great lengths to teach the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).
 - A. Paul made himself a servant, and his service was to teach the gospel.
 - B. We can see that he made himself whatever he needed to be in order to teach the gospel the most effectively.
- g. We've already been given the good news. Now it's our job to pass it on to others. That's our responsibility and, really, it would just be selfish to not do this.

III. There's no better way to teach than with the Scriptures.

- a. We saw already the lengths that Paul was willing to go to in order to be effective at teaching the gospel.
- b. If we are going to be serious about spreading the good news, then we are going to want to be good at it. And the point I want to make now is that we cannot be good teachers without the Scriptures.
- c. Let's go back to the verse we already read about how mature Christians are expected to teach (Hebrews 5:12+13).
 1. These people are ineligible to teach because they don't have the knowledge themselves.

2. Look how verse 13 describes them: "unskilled in the word of righteousness."
 3. Without some knowledge or skill in the word, we really can't teach.
- d. Unless we use the Scriptures to back it up, anything we teach is not going to carry much weight.
- e. It's important to prove that what we teach is from God and not men, because if it's from men, then what good is it?
1. Jesus criticized the Pharisees for respecting man-made traditions more than God-given ones (Mark 7:6-13).
 - A. It's important that we don't do what the Pharisees were doing here - respecting their man-made tradition at the expense of a command from God.
 - B. And not only is it important that we don't do this, it's also important that we don't even appear to be doing this - especially when we are trying to teach the truth.
 2. Any gospel besides the gospel of Christ is false teaching (Galatians 1:6-12).
 - A. The Galatians had been taught the gospel and here Paul is warning them not to accept any other gospel, not even if it comes from him or an angel.
 - B. There is only the one true gospel - the one that had already preached to them. And the true gospel did not come from man (verses 11+12).
 - C. If we don't support our teaching with scripture to prove that it's from God, then how is our audience going to know it's not false?
- f. And if we don't use the Scriptures in our teaching, then how are we going to know our own teaching is not false?
- g. While the church was still relatively new, there was disagreement and confusion over whether or not the Gentiles could be a part of the church. Let's look at how they resolved it.
1. First, we'll look at the issue at hand (Acts 15:1-5).
 - A. The issue was over the Gentiles. Some of the Pharisees believed that the Gentiles essentially had to be converted to Judaism before they could be saved.
 - B. Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them.
 2. Let's read on about how the issue was addressed (Acts 15:6-12).
 - A. The apostles and elders at Jerusalem met to try and discern the truth of whether Gentiles needed to be circumcised and keep the Old Law requirements of the Jews.
 - B. Peter brought forth some evidence to support his belief that the Gentiles did not need to keep the Old Law.
 - C. And then Paul and Barnabas did the same.
 3. Now let's see how the issue was decided (Acts 15:13-19).
 - A. James started by acknowledging the evidence that Peter had brought forth.
 - B. And then notice what he says in verse 15. He says that the words of the prophets - in other words, the Scriptures - agree with Peter's argument.
 - C. James then quoted the Scripture he was referring to and he gave his conclusion, which was that the Gentiles should not be expected to keep the Old Law.
 - D. If you read ahead a little bit more you will see that this seems to settle it.
 - E. They arrived at a conclusion because of the Scriptures. If we don't use the Scriptures in our teaching, then we have failed to prove anything to our audience and - worse than that - we have failed to prove anything to ourselves.

How would I even know if my own message was true if I had no scriptures to back it up?

- h.** Now let's look at a couple of examples of how the Scriptures were used in teaching.
- 1.** First, let's look at Peter's sermon in Acts 2.
 - A.** At this time, the Holy spirit had just come upon the Apostles and allowed them to speak in languages they didn't know (Acts 2:4-6).
 - B.** This confused the people there and some of them jumped to the conclusion that the Apostles must be drunk (Acts 2:12+13).
 - C.** So the first task Peter had for his sermon was to clear up the conclusion about what had happened and how they were able to speak in these other tongues (Acts 2:14-16).
 - I.** Notice that Peter said they were not drunk because it was too early in the day.
 - II.** But he didn't just leave it at that. He used a scripture from the prophet Joel to prove that God was behind what was happening.
 - D.** Peter's second task was to tell them about Jesus.
 - I.** First, in verses 22-24, he explained who Jesus was.
 - II.** And then he proved it with the scriptures - two prophecies David had made. Those are in verses 25-28 and 34+35.
 - E.** Peter taught the truth and he used scripture to prove that it was the truth. And the results were significant (Acts 2:41).
 - 2.** Let's look at another of Peter's sermons. Again, he is preaching about Jesus here (Acts 3:18-24).
 - A.** First, Peter spoke of the importance of Jesus.
 - B.** Then, in verses 22 and 23, he used scripture to prove what an important figure Jesus was.
 - C.** The Jewish authorities did not appreciate Peter's preaching, but he was successful nonetheless (Acts 4:4).
 - 3.** And Peter wasn't the only one who used the Scriptures in his teaching.
 - A.** Stephen did the same in Acts 7.
 - B.** Acts 18:28 says that Apollos *vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.*
 - C.** You can read through Romans and see all the Scriptures Paul used there to prove his points.
 - D.** Or you can read through Hebrews and see the many Scriptures that are used to prove those points.
- i.** And today, our Scriptures do not just come from the writings of the Law and the Prophets in the Old Law. But also from the writings of the inspired men who wrote the New Testament (2 Peter 3:15+16).
- 1.** Notice that Peter is referring to Paul's epistles at the beginning of verse 16.
 - 2.** And then at the end of the verse, he mentions "the rest of the Scriptures."
 - 3.** In other words, Paul's writings were a part of the Scriptures.
- j.** We started today by looking at the importance of teaching. It's our responsibility to teach the gospel and it's our responsibility to try and teach it well. And as we have seen, this is something we just can't do without using the Scriptures.

IV. Can we use too many Scriptures?

- a. And I believe the answer to that question is yes.
- b. Think back to the examples we looked at of how the Scriptures were used for effective teaching.
 1. The teachers didn't just read or quote fifteen minutes worth of scripture and then say, "there you go."
 2. They made their points and they used the Scriptures to prove those points.
- c. Let's look at a couple more examples of teaching.
 1. First, the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-38).
 - A. Notice what this man was already doing when Philip came to him. He was reading the prophet Isaiah.
 - B. When Philip got there, the Eunuch asked him a question regarding what he was reading.
 - C. I think we can all see that it would have been pretty pointless for Philip to say, "oh, you don't understand that? Let me try reading it out loud to you."
 - D. The Eunuch didn't need that Scripture read to him. He already knew how to read. He needed it explained to him.
 2. Let's look at another example - Apollos (Acts 18:24-28).
 - A. Apollos is immediately described in this passage as eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures.
 - B. But his understanding was lacking. Aquila and Priscilla helped him with that. Verse 26 says they "explained to him the way of God more accurately."
 - C. They didn't just read the Scriptures to him. Apollos was already mighty in the Scriptures. They explained it to him.
- d. The goal is not to jam as much bible down our audience's throat as we possibly can (1 Corinthians 14:14-19).
 1. Paul is talking here about speaking in tongues. This was a miraculous gift that some had to be able to speak in a language that the speaker didn't even know.
 2. But if the audience doesn't know that language either, then what is the point? Nobody would have any idea of what was said. It would just be noise.
 3. Again, the goal can't be to just fit in as much scriptures as possible. If we jam in too much or go through our scriptures too fast, then has anyone actually gained a better understanding of anything? Or was it just noise?
 4. The goal is to enhance our audience's understanding. As verse 19 says, better to speak five words with understanding than ten thousand words without.
- e. I believe this is an even more important concept today than it was back then, and here's why.
 1. First, reading is more common today, and so are books.
 - A. You are unlikely to be teaching the gospel to someone who can't read unless it's your kid when he's three years old. I'm not a huge history buff, but as I understand it, reading was not as common an ability back then.
 - B. Plus, we have mass production of books today. Back then, if you had a copy of the Scriptures, it was because a scribe copied it all down by hand. Today, we often have more bibles in our household than we do people. And I've seen bibles at the dollar store. It's easy for a person to get their own copy of the Bible and it's easy to read it.
 - C. We don't have the same need for reading the Scriptures aloud as they would

have had back then.

2. Back then, simply getting the word out was probably the more difficult task. Today, almost everyone in this country has heard of Jesus and understands the basics of how he died for our sins. But also today, there is so much false teaching to deal with.
 - A. And the Scriptures warn us of it (1 Timothy 4:1-3, 2 Timothy 4:1-4).
 - B. People will even twist the Scriptures to use them in their false teaching (2 Peter 3:15+16).
 - C. So perhaps today the more difficult task is straightening out people's understanding of the word, as opposed to simply getting it out.
- f. Please don't think that, by saying we can use too many scriptures, I am minimizing the value of God's word. In fact, I believe it's just the opposite.
 1. Simply reading or quoting God's word is the easy way out.
 2. What we need to do goes deeper. We need to study it and understand it (2 Timothy 2:15).
 - A. It's not enough to read the word of truth.
 - B. We need to be able to "rightly [divide] the word of truth."
- g. And if we are going to teach and teach well, then we need to be able to explain it.

V. Conclusion

- a. We started by looking at the importance of teaching. We have the good news about how to receive the gift of forgiveness of sins and the everlasting reward. It would be selfish not to share that good news.
- b. Teaching is so important, we should not only strive to teach, but to teach well.
- c. And we can't do that without the Scriptures.
 1. The Scriptures contain the true gospel - if it's not in the Scriptures then it's something besides the true gospel.
 2. Our use of the Scriptures can prove that what we are teaching is the truth.
 3. And if the Scriptures don't back up what we teach, then we are teaching something else.
- d. But let's not stop at just reading the Scriptures. There's more involved in teaching than just that.
 1. Our audience probably already knows how to read.
 2. We need to be able to understand the Scriptures and explain them.
- e. It will take more effort than it would take to simply read them, but this is the word of God. It's worth the effort.