

Certainties Of The Word Of Life

Introduction. We live in an era that looks with suspicion on any type of certainty or conviction about the truth. Our society has abandoned the idea of absolutes, choosing instead to arbitrarily grant equal validity to every opinion and philosophical musing. Sadly, many Christians, influenced by the surrounding culture, have fallen prey to it and tolerate seemingly any and every viewpoint, except dogmatism.

The writers of scripture were absolutely certain of what they believed and, under the Holy Spirit's inspiration, wrote with a clarity and boldness that makes the message of salvation in its fullness understandable to us.

Many people live their entire lives without thinking very much about unseen realities. A lot of people are more concerned with the material world than the spiritual world. When they do begin to think about the spiritual realm they are often easily duped. John helps us to pierce the veil about Jesus because of the special circumstances he shared with our Lord. Those who love the truth are quick to seek it out and apply it to their lives (John 3:21). Let's be that way as we study about the "Word of life" this morning.

I. ***The Word Of Life Is Unchangeable***

- A. The reader is clearly pointed back to John 1:1 -- "In the beginning was the Word" -- and from there to Genesis 1:1 -- "In the beginning God" -- with this difference: the gospel deals with the "personal Word" of God's eternity and His entrance into time.
- B. The message of redemption is unchanging. From the beginning of the proclamation of the gospel it has been the same. Those who preach the true gospel have always commanded faith and repentance (Matthew 4:17; John 3:16-18; Acts 2:38; 17:30), declared that the kingdom of God is at hand (Matthew 3:2; Acts 19:8), announced the merciful and gracious availability of divine forgiveness (Acts 10:43; Ephesians 1:7), and urged sinners to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).
- C. When the apostle John wrote this epistle, an incipient Gnosticism was already threatening the churches of Asia Minor.
 1. Its proponents denied the full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ and, therefore, His true nature essential to the gospel.
 2. They also claimed to have attained a transcendent knowledge of the divine, available only to the "spiritual" elite and otherwise beyond the reach of the common believer.
- D. Any alteration of this heavenly revelation, whether by adding to it or taking from it, constitutes an attack on the truth. All preachers and teachers -- in any generation or location, for any reason, including making the message more acceptable or marketable -- should know

they cannot change with impunity any element of God's revelation (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19).

II. ***The Word Of Life Is Historical***

- A. Obeying Christ is not some mystical, spiritually transcendent, secret insight reserved only for those elite who ascend to some higher understanding. John told his readers -- even those who were young in the faith (cf. 2:12) -- that they could apprehend the actual, historical truth about the Word of life.
- B. John listed four ways He had actually observed the Word of life.
 - 1. He had heard the Lord speak. John heard the parables, sermons, and private words of instruction and counsel from Jesus. John did not merely hear something from Jesus on a single occasion. He was present throughout Jesus' earthly ministry (cf. John 20:30-31; 21:24-25).
 - 2. He had seen the Lord. John added "with our eyes" to make it clear that he was referring to the physical experience of seeing. He was not referring to some kind of spiritual vision that was only in his mind. Jesus was not a phantom image.
 - 3. He had looked at the Lord. This word involves more than a mere glance or quick look; instead, it denotes a long, searching glance (cf. 4:14; Matthew 11:7; Luke 23:55). It is the same word translated "beheld" in John 1:14. Beyond the works that Jesus performed, John and the other apostles watched Him intently for several years and saw the stunning and unmistakable realities of who He is. As intimate and constant eyewitnesses to His earthly ministry, they had ample proof that Jesus Christ was God in human flesh (John 14:8-11).
 - 4. He had touched with his hands the Word of life. The word rendered "touched" means "to feel after" or "grope" (cf. Luke 24:39). John described himself as one who leaned on Jesus' chest (John 13:23, 25; 21:20). The Lord encouraged Thomas to touch Him after His resurrection (John 20:27).
- C. "Manifested" means "to reveal" or "to make visible what was hidden." God did not reveal Himself in human flesh until Christ's earthly ministry when the divine became visible to mankind (John 5:26; 6:37-40; cf. Exodus 33:20).

III. ***The Word Of Life Is Teachable***

- A. John's privileged life in the presence of the Lord Jesus was not a private experience to elevate him above others who were not so blessed, as if he were somehow one of God's "favorite sons." Instead,

his privilege became the platform for his responsibility and mandate, as an apostle and eyewitness, to bear witness of the truth and proclaim the gift of eternal life in Him (cf. Psalm 145:11-12). John was a true and credible witness (John 19:35-37).

- B. John knew that the matter of communicating the Word of life was not an option but a command (1 Corinthians 9:16). The content of the message was not to be hoarded, but its unchanging truth declared far and wide.
- C. Having received a commission, John proclaimed the gospel with authority, for the gospel is neither a philosophical speculation, nor a tentative suggestion, nor a modest contribution to religious thought, but a dogmatic affirmation by those whose experience and commission qualified them to make it.

IV. *The Word Of Life Is Relational*

- A. Fellowship (*koinonia*) is a personal experience of sharing something significant in common with others (Galatians 2:9; 6:6; Philippians 1:5; 1 Timothy 6:18; Titus 1:4; Philemon 6; 1 Peter 4:13; Jude 3). The Greeks used this word group to describe partners in business, joint owners of a piece of property, or shareholders in a common enterprise.
- B. Fellowship is the pleasure of being in a group when you see eye to eye on what really matters (Titus 1:4; 2 Peter 1:1). It is having similar values and responding with the same kind of affections to what really counts.
 - 1. It is far more than a mere partnership of those who have the same beliefs and are thus drawn together; it is the mutual life and love of those who are one in spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17; cf. Ephesians 5:30-32).
 - 2. The apostle wished that they might share with him all the peace and happiness which resulted from the fact that the Son of God had appeared in human form on behalf of men to "seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10).
- C. The aim of gospel preaching is to produce faith and that rests in Christ (John 6:29; Acts 20:21). Those who obey Jesus enter into a union with the Father, His Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

V. *The Word Of Life Is Joyful*

- A. Because it is a transforming truth, John's message is one that brings consummate joy and produces full satisfaction (John 15:11; cf. 16:22, 33; Luke 2:10; Romans 5:1-2; 14:17).
- B. The dictionary definition of joy is "the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune, or by the prospect of possessing what one

desires." These kinds of definitions are thoroughly inadequate when applied to the Christian.

1. Joy is something that is deep and profound, something that affects nothing less than the entire personality. Jesus satisfies my mind; He satisfies my emotions; He satisfies my every desire. In Him I am complete (Colossians 2:10).
2. Joy, in other words, is the response and the reaction of the soul to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:13; cf. 16:24; Psalm 16:11).

Conclusion. In the judgment God will have questions for people who have read this letter and not believed its testimony. Did John manifest the traits of a liar or lunatic? Was his teaching not consistent with itself? Did the message of his letter contradict reasonably established facts of history? Did his insights into the ways of God not help make sense of reality? Did his testimony not fit with the other testimonies of my Son? Why did you not believe his testimony?

On that day of truth there will only be one answer. Everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed (John 3:20). It is not because we lack reliable testimony to the truth of Christ that we are slow to believe. It is because to believe is to be broken and to let the blackness of our hearts be exposed to the light of God's truth (1 John 5:11-12).