

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



Volume XXIX

November 2008

Number 4

Is the Bible Vague? Can We Learn by Logical Implication?

By Jackie M. Stearsman

These two questions are asked to help us reflect upon the need for study and the application of principles to life. Some seem to have developed a method of study that would accept only what is explicitly stated in a given document. Were the Pharisees of this persuasion (Jn. 9:40-41)? Others seem to have a very selective view of how a given principle might apply to them. In the Book of Ezekiel, some who heard God's teaching from Ezekiel caused the prophet to write, "Then said I, Ah Lord Jehovah! they say of me, Is he not a speaker of parables?" (Ezk. 20:49, ASV).

No passage in the Bible has my name explicitly stated, yet I learn from the truths contained therein what applies to me. It seems that I recall that the things written in the pages of inspiration were written for my learning (Rom. 15:4).

One of our instructors at the school once sent me the following set of passages he and the congregation had been studying from the Book of Proverbs. I wonder if he thought the congregation or I could possibly learn anything from the principles contained therein? The following list, taken from the New King James Version, is what was sent:

Proverbs 26:4-5, Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him. ⁵Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.

Proverbs 29:9, If a wise man contends with a foolish man, Whether the fool rages or laughs, there is no peace.

Proverbs 17:12, Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, Rather than a fool in his folly.

Proverbs 14:7, Go from the presence of a foolish man, When you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge.

Proverbs 13:20, He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.

Proverbs 18:2, A fool has no delight in understanding, But in expressing his own heart.


Proverbs 20:3, It is honorable for a man to stop striving, Since any fool can start a quarrel.

Proverbs 18:6-7, A fool's lips enter into contention, And his mouth calls for blows. ⁷A fool's mouth is his destruction, And his lips are the snare of his soul.

Proverbs 12:15, The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise.

Proverbs 26:20-21, Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. ²¹As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife.

Are these principles too vague for your logical makeup? Does your form of "logic" keep you from learning from logical implication?

Do you think the following two passages need to be considered by one and all? "For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of them that commend themselves: but they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding" (2 Cor. 10:12, ASV). And we must never forget these words, "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Cor. 10:18, ASV). 

Partaking of the Divine Nature

By Gene Burgett

In Second Peter 1:4, we have what I consider to be an amazing statement,

[B]y which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (NKJ)

It is the idea that we can become “partakers of the divine nature” that I find so intriguing. Is not that the dream of the human race? Have not men been trying to make themselves into gods from the very beginning?

In the Genesis account of the first sin, the serpent approaches Eve desiring to entice her to turn her back on God. He begins by ascertaining what she understood to be the expectations of God.

And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” (Gen. 3:2-3)

The Serpent asserts two things as he tempts Eve to turn on God. First, God has not been truthful with you. “You will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). Second, and this is where he got her, “you will be like God” if you eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the Garden (Gen. 3:5). We have no account of exactly what Eve said to Adam to get him to join her in rebellion, but I highly suspect she told him what the Serpent told her, “You will be like God!”

There are two courses we can pursue in our quest to be like God. The first option, which is the one most frequently sought, is to bring God down to our level. The Bible states man was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27).

That means God is the original, the pattern after which the human race would be fashioned. Romans 1:23 teaches that it has forever been the endeavor of the unconverted world to reduce God to something made in the image of man, if not something even lower than man.

[A]nd [the heathen world] changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Why does this option seem to be the one people most often opt for in their quest to make themselves gods? I think the answer is simple: it is the easiest option. As earlier noted, the first option is to bring God down to the level of the human race. If we can remember anything about mythology we may remember that the Greek and Roman gods acted pretty much like the human race in general. They fought with one another, conspired against one another, lied, cheated, had extra-marital sexual relations, murdered, kidnaped, and in general did all of the things most despicable in human nature.

The second option, and this is the one Peter has in mind, is for people to raise themselves nearer to the level of God. Of course Peter is not saying we can in anyway obtain the infinite characteristics of God. We can never be omnipotent, omnipresent, or omniscient. What Peter has in mind is our character. We partake of the divine nature when we add to our being the characteristics mentioned in Second Peter 1:5-7.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

If my years in construction taught me anything it taught me this: it is easier to tear something down than it is to build something. Tearing something down takes no special skills learned through hours of repetitious practice. However, at the end of the day, the one who has built something has created something for which he can be pleased, while those who merely seek to destroy stand amidst ruins. The serpent said we can be like God, and he was right, just not in the manner in which he said divinity is obtained. We partake of the divine nature as we become more like God in our manner of life. We become like God when we become more like Him. The serpent promised a shortcut in this process when he asserted that Adam and Eve could become like God through the simple action of eating a piece of fruit. If only it were really that easy. Peter states that obtaining the divine nature requires “giving all diligence.”

Each one of us has a choice to make. We can take the high road or the low road. Which road will you take?



The Harvester

Published Monthly
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“Do You Understand Restoring the Erring?”

34th Annual Lectureship **Jan. 19-22, 2009** Jackie M. Stearsman, Director



Earl D. Edwards



Bill Greer



Tom Holland



Don Hudson

MONDAY

9:00 God's Interest In Reconciliation Jeffrey McNeal
 9:40 Man Needs To Be Restored George F. Beals
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 The Price Paid To Reconcile Man Jason Roberts
 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Identifying The Lost

1:30 Individuals May Be Lost Larry Calendine
 2:00 Families May Be Lost Ryan Tuten
 2:30 Congregations May Be Lost Michael Dockery
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 What We Learn From Luke 15 Christopher Lowe
 7:45 Problems/Solutions In Differences Jackie M. Stearsman

TUESDAY

9:00 David's Attitude Of Restoration Melvin Sapp
 9:40 True Spirituality In Restoring The Lost James Colwell
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 Restoring Our Attitude On Finances (1) Dwayne Wilson
 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Identifying Peacemakers

1:30 Insight From The Beatitudes David Stearsman
 2:00 Insight From The Fruit of the Spirit Melvin Sapp
 2:30 Insight From The Christian Graces Gene Burgett
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 Paul's Concern For His Own People Will Vann
 7:45 Insight From Lamentations Jimmy Clark

WEDNESDAY

9:00 Difficulty Of Pharisaical Characteristics Freddie Clayton
 9:40 Congregations Can Be Restored Jimmy Clark
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 Restoring Our Attitude On Finances (2) Dwayne Wilson
 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Identifying Methodology

1:30 Importance Of Personal Contact Don Hudson
 2:00 Essentiality Of Genuine Concern Frank Parker
 2:30 All The Lost Are Not The Same Brian R. Kenyon
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 All Members May Not Be Receptive Bernard Cooper
 7:45 Personal Accountability Bill Greer

THURSDAY

9:00 Gentleness And Peacemaking Miles Peebles
 9:40 Wisdom From Above In Restoration Earl Edwards
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 Restoring Our Attitude On Finances (3) Dwayne Wilson
 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Identifying Differences

1:30 Be Sure We Know All the Facts Bill Greer
 2:00 Be Sure We Do Not Act Hastily Freddie Clayton
 2:30 Withdrawing Fellowship As Last Step Earl Edwards
 3:00 BREAK
 3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
 4:30 DINNER
 6:30 Congregational Singing
 7:00 Mercy Extended, Mercy Received Ryan Roark
 7:45 Forgiveness Is Not Easy Tom Holland

“Do You Understand Restoring the Erring?” is a very relevant and much needed topic for the church and world today! This lectureship will study who really is in error from a Biblical standpoint, why all of us should care, and how can we best reach the erring while keeping “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). January is a great time of year to be in Lakeland, Florida, and there will be no better place at that time for a study of restoring the erring. Come be with us!

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*Our final deposit for the month is usually made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month's financial statement.

Financial 9/11?

The recent collapse of some of our nation's financial institutions has caused some to refer to this time as a "financial 9/11." While this could be hurtful to works such as us, who rely on free-will offerings of individuals beyond their first day of the week contributions, our supporters have proved generous even in difficult times. Our 2002 lectureship, which was the first one after the real 9/11, was very well supported by our brethren's generosity, despite a down economy after the twin towers fell. Though the economy may be down now, the Lord's work through us in training preachers must continue. Without your help, we could not function as we do. We still need your support. We pray that "thou mayest prosper...even as thy soul prospereth" (3 Jn. 2), and that you can continue supporting this work!

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