

God Has Spoken

Joe Slater

As the inspired author wrote Hebrews 1:1-4, that whole section is one long sentence. In the NKJV it has 107 words! But remember that every complete sentence must contain a subject and a verb. In this case “*God*” is the subject (v. 1). The verb doesn’t start until v. 2 with the helping verb “*has.*” Then, after the prepositional phrase “*in these last days*” we have the rest of the verb: “*spoken.*” God has spoken! That’s the point of the sentence.

We serve a God who has communicated with the people He created. In bygone days He did so through prophets by various means (visions, angels, audible speech, etc.). Now He has done so through Jesus, His Son. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth (John 16:13). That leaves no new truth to be revealed today. We have that body of truth in written form. We need nothing additional. Innumerable people still claim that God has spoken directly to them. Let it be said kindly but firmly, they are sincerely mistaken or else lying. If modern-day revelation is needed, then the Spirit guided the apostles only into partial truth at best. But Jesus said, “all truth.”

When we faithfully teach and proclaim what God has revealed, confirmed, and recorded in the Bible, we may hear people say, “That’s just your opinion!” But not even the inspired prophets of the past spoke their own ideas. “*For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:21).

God has spoken! We would do well to listen, submit ourselves to Him, and teach and encourage everyone to do likewise.

DON’T BE A STUMBLINGBLOCK

“The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him” (1 John 2:10 NAU).

One of the most common refrains in the Old Testament during the time of the divided kingdom was that the northern kingdom’s kings “*caused Israel to sin.*” This means these kings led the Lord’s people into idolatry, paganism, and the immoral behavior associated with those things.

The blame game is one of the worst forms of rationalization. If we can blame someone else for our wrongdoing, we don’t take responsibility for our actions, and we minimize the sin we’ve committed. It is a sign of true contrition when someone says, “It was nobody’s fault but my own.” This shows a sincere heart that recognizes in the end sin is between the person and God.

Often, however, this thinking is one sided. Others who may have contributed to the fall let themselves off the hook. The intention to take full responsibility is honorable, but we don’t lessen our responsibility if we admit the complexity of the causes of sin. Those who are led astray are responsible for allowing it to happen. However, leading others astray or failing to intervene when one could is as much a sin as the other.

Jesus warned of the consequences of sinning, but he also warned of the consequences of becoming a stumbling block for others (Matt. 13:41-42). The history of the Greek word translated “stumbling block” serves as a clear illustration of Jesus’ meaning. It first was used of the part of a trap for the bait, then the trap itself. Finally, it became a figure of anything that “arouses prejudice, or becomes a hindrance to others, or causes them to fall by the way” (W.E. Vine).

Jesus taught that we are our brother’s keeper, something that Cain refused to acknowledge. The Tempter was cursed for leading the first couple into sin, and the tempted who fell into sin were also held accountable. Jesus rebuked Peter and

called him Satan because the apostle tried to lead Jesus away from His path to the cross (Matt. 16:23). So, Jesus sees people acting as Satan when they lead others from God’s path.

We are indeed responsible for others. We are expected to be a proper influence and example, in word and manner of life, so that others may be encouraged to live godly lives rather than enticed, intentionally or unintentionally, into sin.

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)

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Leaving Joppa

I’ve had the privilege to walk the cobble stone streets of the biblical city, Joppa. As I walked on the streets of that city and looked out at the Mediterranean Sea, I couldn’t help but remember two significant biblical events that took place in this city. The first one involved the prophet Jonah. It was in Joppa where Jonah decided to flee from God by getting on a ship and disobeying God’s call to go preach to the lost of Nineveh (Jonah 1:3). The second noteworthy event that took place in Joppa was when Peter received a vision instructing him to take the gospel to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-22).

Two men. Two calls. Two responses. From Joppa, one man fled from God while another heeded God’s instructions. Every day, we walk the “streets of Joppa,” and are confronted with a decision. Will I heed God’s call, or will I turn a deaf ear and flee.

As you “leave Joppa,” which direction will you be traveling today? Give it some thought.

--Steve Higginbotham (via Campellsville, KY)