

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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THROUGH PREACHING

Clay Bond

The word of God has the ability to reach into the innermost depths of our being and transform who and what we are. When the Gospel is properly heeded and applied, it produces abundant life (John 10:10). The words of the prophet Jeremiah, “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD”, ought to ring in our ears, for these words reflect our Creator’s greatest desire (Jer. 22:29). The word of God is “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). It is the preaching of this powerful word that can strengthen and sustain the body of Christ in every age and through every challenge.

Jesus identified truth as the means of our liberation from the bondage of sin (John 8:32). When Paul came into the debauched city of Corinth, he preached the Gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Paul proclaimed the power of God’s word to those who were living in sin and called upon them to submit to its transforming power (1 Cor. 6:9-11). God, who desires for “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”, has designed Gospel preaching to save souls from eternal damnation through knowledge (1 Tim. 2:4). By hearing the Gospel preached, the lost can come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:14). However, Jesus once warned, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). It is through repentance that we come to the “acknowledging of the truth” that sets us free from Satan’s captivity (2 Tim. 2:25-26). Many of the Corinthians who heard the Gospel “believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). They were washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:11). In Paul’s letters to Timothy, knowledge and repentance are closely linked with salvation

(1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25). When the gospel is preached, the church is strengthened by seeing sinners repent of sin and debauchery and come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

While converting sinners is an important purpose of Gospel preaching, equally important is the edification of the saints. When Paul left Timothy at Ephesus to build up the saints in the most holy faith, he exhorted him to “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). In order to develop Christian character, those who are converted out of darkness need to hear consistent Gospel preaching (2 Pet. 1:5-8). Paul said, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Gospel preaching feeds our faith and helps us to grow in faith (2 Pet. 3:18; Col. 1:9-11)! Even the most mature of Christians needs to be built up and prepared to overcome

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WE HAVE NO KING BUT CAESAR!

Cody Westbrook

The Kingship of Jesus is one of the themes of the book of John, particularly toward the end. In fact, the words “King” and “kingdom” appear 15 times in John 18-19, the two chapters describing His trial and crucifixion. Many of those occurrences, perhaps surprisingly, come from the lips of Pontius Pilate. The Jews delivered Jesus to Pilate for crucifixion. Because they had no legitimate accusation to raise against Him, and the law would not allow them to carry out a capital sentence even if they had, they raised one of the few issues likely to capture the attention of any Roman governor, “Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar” (John 19:12).

Though the accusation certainly captured Pilate’s attention, upon further review the procurator obviously determined that Jesus posed no real threat to the rule of Caesar (John 18:33-38; 19:12). Thus, with mocking amusement he paraded our Lord before the Jews as their king. After all, why would any subjugated people want to murder their own deliverer and king? His mocking jabs only stiffened the infuriation of the heart hardened Jewish elite. Pilate asked, “Shall I crucify your king?” To which they replied, “We have no king but Caesar!” (John 19:15).

Their statement is pregnant with tragic irony. By claiming “no king but Caesar” they effectively abandoned Messianic hope. For centuries the Jewish people recognized Jehovah as their only king. The song was sung, “O Lord our God, masters besides You have had dominion over us; but by You only we make mention of Your name” (Isa. 26:13). The people in Gideon’s day cried for his rule but he refused. “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you” (Judges 8:23). Israel cried for a king to rule over them like the nations around them and the Lord granted the request (1 Sam. 8). But even those kings ruled on “the throne of the Lord” (1 Chron. 29:23) and at His pleasure. Old Testament prophecy makes clear the fact that Jehovah’s Kingly rule would be ultimately realized through the Messiah who would rule as King

over His Kingdom (cf. Isa. 9:6-7). The Jewish leaders knew this fact well and yet their statement implicitly rejects anyone who would claim to be the Messianic King for which they longed.

Additionally, they unwittingly admitted that what Jesus had said about them all along was in fact true. The Jews claimed God as their Father (John 8:54), but in fact He wasn’t. To be the children of God is to serve God, to serve God is to acknowledge His Kingship, and to acknowledge His Kingship is to acknowledge the Kingship of the Son (cf. John 5:23). But they rejected the Son and thus rejected the Father. They did not really know the Father because they did not know the Son. “If you had known me, you would have known my Father also” (John 8:19). Jesus said, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God” (John 8:42), but they did not because they were of a different father, the Devil (John 8:44). One can claim incessantly to be a child of the Living God but simply making the claim does not make it so. Jesus pointed out this truth to the Jewish leaders time and time again and they refused to acknowledge its veracity. Yet by claiming “no king but Caesar” they outed themselves as being exactly what Jesus said they were.

Fundamentally the problem with the Jews was one of allegiance. Their claim of Caesar’s kingship over them was lip service motivated by hatred, they despised his authority over them. A similar statement could be made regarding their acknowledgment of Jehovah’s Kingship. They claimed to serve Him, but they really did not. The only real allegiance they had was to themselves and to their own tradition and ambition. Had they truly been the servants of God they would have recognized the Messiahship of Jesus and bowed themselves willingly before Him as humble servants. That truth applies today as well. Our mouths may easily proclaim “Jesus is Lord!” but what do our thoughts and actions say? Some of us are better citizens of the United States than the Kingdom of God. Our thoughts more focused on the preservation of the American ideal

than the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. Some of us have crowned materialism as the king of our lives. Much of our time and energy spent in pursuit of gain instead of the pursuit of holiness. Some of us are far too enamored with ourselves. We think constantly of what we desire instead of prioritizing what He desires. Where is our allegiance? Is Jesus our King or have we no king but Caesar?

CW

CHECK YOUR SOURCES

Kevin W. Rhodes

Historical writings provide an essential resource for Bible students, offering important information regarding the background of various biblical texts and sometimes filling in gaps of knowledge that further illuminate events recorded in Scripture. Nathan Steinmeyer, for example, notes how Shishak's Bubastite Portal inscription provides corroborative evidence regarding that ruler's march on Jerusalem recorded in 1 Kings 14:25-28 and 2 Chronicles 12:1-12.¹ Likewise, Josephus' account of Herod Agrippa I's death provides additional information explaining the details of what happened to the king after God struck him (Acts 12:21-23; Josephus, *Antiquities* 19:343-350). The geographer Strabo similarly offers background and insights into the history of numerous locations cited in Scripture that prove helpful in understanding the environment of the early church. Indeed, history and archaeology have contributed greatly in enhancing our knowledge of the people, places, and events previously known to us only through the Bible. But using ancient works comes with some risks for those unfamiliar with the background of the authors or circumstances under which they wrote.

When I was studying history, in both undergraduate and graduate school, all my professors consistently stressed both the importance of looking for primary sources (those closest in both chronology and proximity to the people and events) as the basis for research and the need to evaluate

¹ Steinmeyer, Biblical Archaeology Society, "Shishak's Campaign: A Meeting of Archaeology and the Bible?" (<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/people-in-the-bible/shishaks-campaign-a-meeting-of-archaeology-and-the-bible/> accessed August 6, 2022).

them for their own mistakes, biases, and points of view. For instance, when researching the early Roman Empire, rather than relying on other historians who had written about it, the historian focuses on the works of Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio Cassius, and Josephus. However, rather than just accepting everything each source has written without further examination, the historian crosschecks the sources against one another, against archaeological evidence, and against themselves to uncover inconsistencies and potential problems. Thus, we can recognize Josephus' tendency to exaggerate numbers, probably because he lacked the means for a precise count, though other possibilities exist. Additionally, careful evaluation of the writing style helps immensely in ferreting out rumor, gossip, and innuendo. While The History Channel promotes the most lurid of stories in Roman history by retelling the descriptions of Suetonius, most historians recognize his well-honed ability to report gossip convincingly, partly due to his own admission and partly due to the impossibility of access to some of the facts reported. The historian also looks at each source in its own time to consider potential motives or influences that might reveal a particular perspective. For example, Josephus enjoyed the patronage of the Flavian dynasty, making it in his interest to portray those emperors favorably while also seeking to argue for the legitimacy and legacy of the Jews. Tacitus, usually regarded as the least biased ancient historian, had a major political interest in portraying the Flavian dynasty poorly since he wrote during the reign of the succeeding line of emperors.

Preachers' usual lack of historical and rhetorical training can lead to their taking ancient works at face value without any scholarly skepticism. In short, preachers sometimes treat historical works as if they are as accurate and unadulterated as Scripture. And that presents some problems. Some quote from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* without considering the origin of that work as a collection of various *Lives of the Saints*, which themselves have anonymous origins rooted in tradition and legend and served as encouraging propaganda during the dark days of the church in the Roman Empire. A quick perusal of these accounts demonstrates the exaggerated and even fanciful nature of many entries. This does not imply a rejection of their value but rather the importance of placing them in their context. Similarly, the varying traditions that originated from an unsubstantiated source deserve healthy scrutiny rather than mindless acceptance.

In the last few years Bible students also have shown an increasing interest in expanding their knowledge of ancient

literature. These works have immense value in providing insight into what their authors believed, taught, and promoted during their time. The second century Gnostic works provide valuable, though limited, information that helps the Bible student understand the writings of John, who confronted a nascent form of this error in his inspired works. Therefore, while the world marvels in the *The Gospel of Thomas* and *The Gospel of Judas*, treating them as reliable and realistic counters to the inspired accounts, the Christian should recognize them as important contrasts that demonstrate the difference between those fictional accounts that emphasize the trivial and fanciful and the inspired accounts that highlight the subtle and sublime.

All of these principles matter greatly when reading Jewish literature of the intertestamental period. As works produced throughout the Koine period, especially between the Maccabean Revolt and the beginning of Roman domination, these writings, collectively known to us as the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, provide valuable information regarding the theological thinking during that historical period. The impact of the earlier writings continued into the latter first century, as the epistles of

2 Peter and Jude make clear. Since the Jews already had the Talmud as extensive rabbinical commentary on the law, these works served a different purpose. Typically attributing authorship to a respected forefather, the works contained in the pseudepigrapha served as religious tracts to persuade their readers to a particular point of view (usually Pharisaical). While most Christians easily recognize the (sometimes denied) syncretism of the Catholic Church in providing through the veneration of saints a competitive outlet for newly converted pagans, they fail to recognize the pseudepigrapha's background during the period of Hellenization as a means of providing a competing mythology to the Greeks to prevent full religious capitulation and to reaffirm themselves as a credible and ancient culture—a similar approach to what Josephus sought to do through history during the Roman period. (Just consider the *Additions to Esther* as an example of their obvious motives.) Admittedly, the pseudepigrapha covers several centuries, and the regular reliance on symbolic rhetorical forms to argue rather odd questions theologically (such as questions of the calendar) creates its own problems. However, their hyper-spiritualism combined with their material vision of the Messianic kingdom explains much about the origin of the disagreements between the Pharisees and Sadducees as well as the mindset Jesus confronted during His ministry.

Unfortunately, the lack of training necessary to evaluate these types of documents has left preachers in the Age of Narrative vulnerable to their mysticism. It is an easy mistake to make—especially when so many other explanations lack the charisma of Jewish mythology.

Brethren, in writing the above, I do so not to castigate and condemn but rather to encourage a greater attention to scholarship and wisdom. I remember reading from my hardcopy edition of Charlesworth almost twenty-five years ago when first considering the role of these works on Bible study. Since that time I have grown immensely as an historian and as an exegete. We have sufficient challenges in reaching a lost and dying world with the gospel and calling the faithful to greater holiness than to expend so much energy on ancient Jewish propaganda. I do not question the sincerity of those who find this fascinating. To the contrary, I believe them to be not only sincere but also full of zeal in seeking answers. I simply believe they are mistaken in purpose. And I write, hoping to prevent others from blindly following that path.

CW

WHEN THEY RETURN

Don Walker

In the fifteenth chapter of Luke, Jesus spoke the parables of “the lost things.” There was a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. Though our space does not allow a full study of this great chapter, there are observations that will help us concerning our attitude towards those that return.

First, we would see the urgency on the part of the shepherd and the woman. It says of both of them, they went after and sought diligently “until he [she] found it” (Luke 15:4, 8). It is certainly a reflection of the value placed upon the object. Secondly we would notice the response of the father when his son returned. Jesus said “His father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). The father said, “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry” (Luke 15:22, 23). Before we leave this context, there is one other observation. Jesus concluded the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin

with this statement: “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth (Luke 15:10). It is interesting to see that it does not say the angels are rejoicing. It says, “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God.” If the father of the prodigal represents our Father in Heaven, then we see there is joy, even with God, when they return.

We see the same truth in a practical way when we turn our attention to 2 Corinthians 2. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul encouraged them to practice discipline concerning the man who was living in dark immorality (2 Cor. 5). When we consider chapter two of 2 Corinthians we conclude that he must have repented and desired to return into the fold. Yet, there seems to have been some apprehension on receiving him back. Paul wrote,

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. Now with the remaining space, let us notice the three-fold response that Paul expected of them.

First Paul said, “ye ought rather to forgive him.” There comes a time in the lives of every individual who has reached the age of accountability when they will stand in need of forgiveness. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray he said, “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12). It is a divine truth that our being forgiven can and will be affected by our willingness, or lack thereof, to forgive. When the erring returns, we cannot afford to “forgive” with reservation. We should manifest the same desire to forgive as our Lord did in the shadow of the cross. His stated desire must be our desire. “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). It was the attitude that Stephen displayed as he was being stoned to death. He said, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60). When we consider the great injustice that was heaped upon Jesus and His great servant Stephen, and the willingness they had to forgive, we learn it ill behooves us to respond in any other way than with forgiveness.

Secondly, Paul said the Corinthians should “comfort him.” Consider for a moment the shame and embarrassment that is associated with sin. When one who is immersed in sin finally comes to his right mind, there is great embarrassment, and rightly so. The prodigal reasoned after he had come to his senses, “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as

one of thy hired servants” (Luke 15:19). There should be on our part a response that lets the brother or sister know that they have made the right choice by coming back. We would certainly not want them to “be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow” (2 Cor. 5:7). As those who are building up the church rather than tearing it down, we must strive to be encouragers in these situations.

Thirdly, Paul told the Corinthians to “confirm your love toward him” That the religion of Christ is a religion of love is beyond question. “God is love” (1 John 4:8), and He “commendeth his love toward us” (Rom. 5:8). We are to be a people of love. We must “love the brotherhood” (1 Pet. 2:17) and we must show that love in action (1 Thess. 1:3; 1 John 3:18). Peter wrote, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1 Pet. 1:22). Notice that our obedience to the Gospel is unto “unfeigned love of the brethren.” Our reception of the penitent one is a direct reflection of our attitude toward them and their soul. Any less response would raise a serious question concerning our love. Our love, or lack of love, will be seen in our actions on these occasions.

It is certainly a joyous time when the erring comes to his senses and returns unto the Lord and His way. Yet, we must be aware of the trepidation that may exist on the part of the one who is returning. We should join in the joy of heaven and rejoice when they have come home. We must forgive, comfort, and confirm our love on these most joyous occasions. May we meditate on these things as we study our Bibles more and more.

CW



DO I HAVE THE RIGHT TO SIN?

Ronnie Scherffius

In American society, we are constantly bombarded with "rights": women's rights, civil rights, human rights, children's rights, parents' rights, homosexual's rights, immigrant's rights, victims' rights—even criminals have lawyers that specialize in rights of violators of civil law! The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) fights tooth and nail for the right of freedom of speech (a right that seems to be extended to all except those who espouse and promote Christian values). One hot-button topic and a rights issue that has caused much controversy and gained tremendous support and popularity among the left-leaning population of America is abortion rights.

That abortion is sinful there can be no doubt. Abortion, or more correctly stated murderous infanticide, is very clearly and strongly condemned in the scriptures:

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren. (Pro. 6:16-19)

The word "abomination" literally means "disgusting" and carries with it the sense of extreme hatred and detestation. To Jehovah God, hands that shed innocent blood is a disgusting, detestable thing; a thing worthy of extreme hatred! Is there any blood more innocent than that of a child? Is there any creature more defenseless and helpless than a child in the womb? How disgusting and detestable is such a heinous act as the murder of an innocent child, and that with the consent of its own mother!

A statement heard loud and long from abortion rights activists is, "A woman has the right over her own body and thus she has the right to an abortion." Sadly, some have bought into his folly. People who would never ascend to guiltlessness of murder outside the womb readily argue that as long as a "fetus" is in its mother's womb, it is the "woman's choice"; the woman has the right to abort (murder) the child. Some professed Christians also go so far as to say that while they do not agree with abortion, a woman should have the "right to choose."

This mindset has carried over into many other areas,

such as homosexuality. While one might not practice homosexuality, they may affirm that a person has the "right" to be a homosexual if he so chooses. Is this true? Does a person have the "right" to choose that which is disgusting and detestable in the sight of God? Does man indeed have the right to sin?

Look up the word "right" in the dictionary and you will find multiple definitions. Webster's 1828 Dictionary provides no less than 36 different usages of the word "right." As we are considering it here, the word "right" is used by Webster as follows: "Just claim; immunity; privilege. All men have a right to secure enjoyment of life, personal safety, liberty and property. We deem the right of trial by jury invaluable, particularly in the case of crimes. Rights are natural, civil, political, religious, personal and public." Clearly set forth is the idea of "rights," both those enjoyed individually and those enjoyed collectively as a nation.

One fact that begs to be emphasized, however, is that along with rights comes immunity. In other words, if a man has the right to do a thing, he cannot be held guilty and penalized if he, in fact, does that thing. For example, if a man acquires a permit to hunt on a federal game reserve, even though that land is posted NO TRESPASSING; NO HUNTING, he has secured that "right." If he is found hunting on that land according to the terms agreed upon, he cannot be prosecuted by the government for trespassing and hunting on posted land. Why? He has been given the right and privilege to be on the land and hunt and is, therefore, granted immunity.

Using this same logic, we must conclude that if a man has the right to sin, he must also have immunity from guilt and penalty that comes with rights. The Bible is clear that sin carries penalties with it:

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (Isa. 59:1-2)

For the wages of sin is death. (Rom. 6:23)

Man no more has the right to sin than he has immunity from the penalties of sin:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10)

But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons. (Col. 3:25).

A problem regarding the “right to sin” may be that some confuse freedom to choose to obey God’s will with the right or privilege to sin. God has created man with free volition, i.e., God allows man to make his own choice to obey or disobey. This free volition, also referred to as the free agency of man is clearly established throughout the Bible. Adam and Eve were commanded not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but they were also given the freedom to choose whether or not they wanted to obey God in that command (Gen. 2-3). Joshua admonished Israel,

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 25:15).

Jesus also, speaking to His disciples, affirmed man’s freedom to choose, saying, “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

The freedom to choose between right and wrong, however, does not affirm the right or privilege to sin. The Bible also makes this point clear. While God has given man the freedom to choose between right and wrong, He has also legislated punishment for those who choose to do wrong. To Adam and Eve, God declared,

And the Lord God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Gen. 2:16-17).

God’s prophet Ezekiel forever affirmed this same truth saying,

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. (Ezek. 18:20)

The New Testament also sets forth penalties for those who violate God’s laws (Rom. 6:23; 2 Thess. 1:1-9, et al).

Do I have the right to sin? No! Will God grant me immunity from the penalty of sin? Yes, but only if I apply the blood of His Son to my sins through obedience to His will:

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. (Heb. 8:12)

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (1 Pet. 1:18-19)

CW

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temptation (Acts 20:32; 1 Cor. 10:13; Jas. 1:13-14). Through Gospel preaching, the Christian learns to deny ungodliness and worldly lust and “live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” (Tit. 2:12). Truly, the bride of Christ is strengthened beyond measure when she sits at the feet of her Bridegroom receiving instruction from His word.

When we preach the preaching that God bids us, we can trust that His Word will not return unto Him void (Jonah 3:2; Isa. 55:11). In Mark 16:15, we read Jesus Christ’s marching orders to His church, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Through preaching, the church of our Lord will be strengthened, for the preaching of the gospel will convert sinners through the knowledge of God, it will bring the erring to repentance and it will edify God’s children. May every Christian share in Paul’s sentiment, “Woe unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16). Let us lift up the hands of men who seek to strengthen the precious body of Christ through preaching.

CW





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From the Director's desk



Steven Lloyd
Director SWSBS

I read Homer's *Odyssey* recently, and was, again, struck by the ancient Greek world of gods and goddesses. While some of these gods can be characterized as moderately virtuous by our standards, they are flawed. They are not perfect. They just have more power to affect things on earth. They can be capricious.

How should we as Christians read literature like Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with all their gods? Or should we read them at all? Paul writes, that no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no God but one (1 Cor. 8:4).

Northrop Frye observes, “When a system of myths loses all connexion with belief, it becomes purely literary.” This quote hit me like a ton of bricks because I believe this is precisely how many read the Bible today.

I read Homer's *Odyssey* as literature because I do not believe in the gods. It was simply an interesting story from the past. No doubt, it has not always been read like this, but it is read this way by many today, and many today read the Bible with the same set of spectacles that I read Homer.

The Bible is a work of literature, but there is a serious danger in reading the Bible as if it were only literature. God reveals Himself and His will to us by literary means, but it is more than literature, and must be read as such.

As a case in point, consider the damage done to the old nation of Israel: “For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard” (Heb. 4:2).

My reading of the *Odyssey* was not united by faith, but I dare not read the Bible like that; not reading it united by faith is lethal.

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