

What We Believe Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, July 22, 2018

Main Theme – Considering the Sixteen Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God – “Part 1”

WORSHIP & PRAYER

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Upcoming Events (REGULAR)**
 - Potluck Supper – Taking Place July 29 (Post-Service)
 - Ministry Sabbatical – WM, MM & CYC on Break in August
 - Sunday & Thursday Ministries UNAFFECTED by the Sabbatical
 - Week of Prayer & Fasting – August 6–10 (Night of Prayer Aug. 9)

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work

-Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

OCC PRESENTATION

OCC IN JULY! BY RUTH DAHLSTROM

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- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN’S CHURCH**
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INTRODUCTIONS

As always, it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these weekly moments of worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what God has for you today! Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes.

SUMMATIONS

LAST Sunday morning, we began a new extended series on the basic tenets of our faith (16 Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God). The 16 Fundamentals comprise the CORE BELIEFS that we embrace and affirm as a local branch of the universal Church of Christ.

KEY – IF we are to ‘contend for the faith’ as Jude noted, we must first know what it is we teach. IF we are to effectively defend and proclaim our beliefs, we must first know what we believe. Thus said, this series is designed to provide you with a general OVERVIEW of our foundational theology. I want to equip you in the faith, that you might grow AND more effectively share it with others!

As I noted at the end of our last session, we will spend the whole of the SUMMER considering the 16 Fundamental Truths. Some weeks we may cover just one—other weeks we will combine two or more closely related tenets. IF you attend and actively listen to the teachings, you will deepen in your understanding of the things of God.

FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINE #1

This morning I want to consider the FIRST Fundamental Truth. In many ways, it is the most ESSENTIAL, as it provides a suitable FOUNDATION for the remaining fifteen tenets of the faith. Thus said, let me put forth the first Fundamental Truth (**SLIDE**)...

1) We believe that the Bible is inspired by God and declares His design and plan for mankind. The Bible is the revelation of God to man and the infallible, inerrant and authoritative rule of faith and conduct.

NOTE – I know that this is a mouthful. We will take the time to break this down piece by piece. In essence, we believe that the Bible is the final/sole authority on faith and practice because it is the inspired, infallible and inerrant revelation of God!

SETTING THE STAGE

KEY – This morning I want to open with a brief VIDEO that will set the stage for the following teaching and discussion. This is a video I have used in years past, but it is gripping and pertinent to the topic at hand.

VIEWER ALERT – This video does contain disturbing imagery. Moreover, what you are about to see is based on a TRUE story. The video centers upon the experiences of a man named Bounchan (N. Laos). Allow me to read the following synopsis from Voice of the Martyrs (i.e., the makers of this video):

Bounchan was on the career path to success. He had a good job as an assistant to the Communist Party district leader. But then he met the Christians and was intrigued by their enthusiastic worship.

Later, he met Jesus himself.

Bounchan was so thrilled about his newfound faith that he began to share it freely. But his new allegiance was not welcomed in communist Laos, where loyalty to the party is all-important and ancestors are worshiped as gods.

Bounchan lost his job, his place in the community and, finally, his freedom.

In 1999, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison for telling others about God after authorities had forbidden his evangelical work. While in prison, he was tortured, beaten, starved, locked in stocks and condemned to solitary confinement for weeks. But for Bounchan, those weren't the worst punishments."

Thus said, let's watch the [VIDEO](#).

REFLECTIONS PT. 1

NOTE – This is a DIFFICULT video to watch/meditate upon.

- It stirs within us a wide variety of challenging emotions
- It opens our eyes to the unfamiliar sight of Christian suffering
- It causes us to wonder how we might fare under such conditions
- It opens our eyes to a hunger for/faith in God that likely dwarfs ours

I find the final question posed by the video to be probing: i.e., “What would you do for a Bible?”

KEY – For us, such a question is a little FOREIGN/DISTURBING, as we all have at least one Bible...

Q. Do we really want to stand before the Lord and tell Him we were too busy to read the Bible with a man like this standing in our company? Do we really want to tell the Lord that His Word was too hard to read from the comfort of our own home while this man sought to read it in chains?

-I FEAR for the many who have access to God’s Word and find so little time for it. To whom much is given, much is required...

REFLECTIONS PT. 2

Allow me to ASK one more question (vital for the remainder of this message):

Q. WHY was this man so desperate for a Bible? WHY was owning and reading a copy of this text a greater priority than his freedom, physical well-being and even his own wife and family?

To quote Bounchan:

“I will risk everything to have a Bible”

“I can handle torture and starvation, but I desperately need my Bible”

Q. WHY was a book so important and essential to this man in chains/imprisonment?

REFLECTIONS PT. 3

A. Because he realized that the Bible is NOT just a book – it is THE authoritative Word of God!

As one unknown author so ELOQUENTLY stated:

This Book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions immutable.

Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.

It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter.

Christ is its subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently and prayerfully. It is given to you in life, will be open in the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and condemns all who trifle with its holy precepts.

THE WORLD V. THE WORD

NOTE – Of course, the world REJECTS such a notion. The world has LITTLE TO NO regard for the authority of God’s Word. Rather, lost humanity prefers to trust in OTHER authorities. Please note...

1) Many Look to Human REASON/INTELLECT

For centuries, many have looked to human intellect and the powers of reason as the highest authority to govern life and living. Such people believe that—given enough time—human genius will unlock the secrets of the universe and usher in a utopia for all to enjoy.

Do we as Christians dispute that humans are intelligent creatures? NO! Human intellect and the God-given capacity to reason has produced an amazing array of achievements. Do we dispute the place of human reason and intelligence? NO. Human intellect has its place in the course of daily life and living. Balancing a checkbook or shopping for groceries is a function of human intellect. Even reading the Word and considering its precepts requires the human capacity for thought. God has given such powers in order to function in this world and live before Him.

Q. But do we consider human reason/intellect the final authority for life and living? NO.

For all of our intelligence, the one problem we cannot seem to solve is the problem of human EVIL. No matter how hard we try, we always fail to usher in that anticipated utopia. History is the unbroken record of the failure of human government (i.e., attempts to establish paradise on earth). More often than not, humanity—justified by reason—becomes monstrous (i.e., capable of any evil). The human mind is far too flawed to be the final/sole authority for anything.

NOTE – It is interesting to me that those who deem human reason to be the final authority end up making their OWN reason the final authority. It is a broken society when ‘everyone does that which is right in their own eyes’ (cf. Judges 17:6; 21:25).

2) Many Look to Human EMOTION/FEELINGS

In many ways, this is the polar OPPOSITE of the previous concept. Many reject the human intellect as the final authority to life and living. Rather, they place their trust—i.e., their faith—in human feelings/emotion. In other words, they do what makes them FEEL good.

Do we dispute that humans are emotional beings? NO. We recognize that humans feel deeply and passionately throughout the entirety of their lives. Do we dispute the place of emotions? NO. We're not Vulcans (Star Trek reference FYI)! There is a place for feelings, but feelings are NOT to guide our decisions in an unfettered and unchecked way.

NOTE – God DIDN'T give us feelings to make decisions, but to experience the benefits or consequences of the decisions we make!

The heart of man is far too FLAWED and its passions far too unbridled to trust. The human HEART—as Scripture declares is 'desperately wicked' and the CONSCIENCE can all too easily become seared. Doing what feels good often ends up in a life that is by no means good.

There is a way that seems right to man, but the end thereof is death (cf. Proverbs 14:12).

KEY – It is INTERESTING to note that both systems DIMINISH God and ELEVATE man (HUMANISTIC). In the end, the world doesn't seem to get it right. Their 'authorities' prove to be ILL-SUITED as the final measures of truth!

THE CHURCH V. THE WORD

Sadly, this are often NO BETTER in the church. The church often builds on foundations that are just as unstable (e.g., church tradition, hierarchy, etc.). For instance, allow me to touch upon the practice of ROMAN CATHOLICISM.

In Roman Catholicism, authority ultimately rests in the church ITSELF. The Bible is believed, but only as the church interprets it. Moreover, the traditions of the church are, along with the Bible, a source of divine revelation. Various councils and popes have from time to time made pronouncements that are considered authoritative and, therefore, binding upon the church.

In practice, the Catholic church exalts ITSELF above Scripture. Although they originally held to the supremacy of Scripture, by the time of the Reformation it had exalted its traditions beyond the Word of God. More significantly, the church insisted that the teachings of the Bible could be rightly mediated only through the church leadership.

Q. Does the church of Christ have a place in the purpose and plan of God. YES!

It must contend for the faith (i.e., body of teachings entrusted to each generation of believers).

Q. Does the church have the ultimate authority, even over God's Word? NO.

It is to contend for the body of biblical teachings, not elevate itself over biblical teaching.

KEY – It is interesting how this system also diminished God and elevates man (HUMANISTIC). In the end, much of the church doesn't seem to get it right either. Their 'authorities' prove to be ILL-SUITED as the final measures of truth!

FINAL AUTHORITY?

Q. So what are we to trust as the FINAL authority for truth, faith and practice?

We believe that the Bible is inspired by God and declares His design and plan for mankind. The Bible is the revelation of God to man and the infallible, inerrant and authoritative rule of faith and conduct.

The Bible is the SOLE authority because it is the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God!

Q. What do these terms mean? Great question! I am so GLAD you asked!

NOTE – These terms are absolutely VITAL in understanding this particular Fundamental Truth.

INSPIRED

Let's begin with the word INSPIRED. We believe that the Bible is INSPIRED by God and declares His design and plan for mankind. Note that this term is actually borrowed from biblical language:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed [i.e., inspired] and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Q. What does INSPIRED indicate? It means/indicate that the Bible did NOT originate with man but came THROUGH man, as God supernaturally came upon and moved through human authors.

KEY – The GREEK word herein is ‘theopneustos’ (lit. God-breathed)...

This Greek word is used to describe ships, with their sails filled, being carried along over the seas. Borrowing this imagery, Paul says that every Scripture is the product of the Spirit's work (breath). He filled the writer and so carried him along that the words produced—though they bear the mark of the writer's personality—remain the true/certain words of God Himself. -Richard O. Lawrence

THUS, when you read the Bible, you are reading the very revelation God to man. The words herein were NOT borne of human reason, intellect and insight, BUT of the mind and heart of God. The apostle Peter affirmed this concept in his own writings to the church...

2 Peter 1:20

20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

KEY – SINCE the Bible was inspired of God, it is the ABSOLUTE authority on matters of faith and practice. It is the means by which we are to measure truth AND the only suitable foundation for life and living. The primary question we ought to ask in the whole of life and living is, “What does the Word say?”

INFALLIBLE & INERRANT

Let's consider TWO other terms from our statement of faith:

We believe that the Bible is inspired by God and declares His design and plan for mankind. The Bible is the revelation of God to man and the INFALLIBLE, INERRANT and authoritative rule of faith and conduct.

INFALLIBLE – The TEACHINGS of Scripture are trustworthy and true.

e.g., When the Bible speaks of God's love, grace, justice and judgment, it is speaking accurately of genuine realities. When the Bible speaks to the reality of eternal life and death, its teaching and message are true. When God's Word offers direction for life and living, that direction—being true—brings life. When the Bible puts forth faith in Christ as the only means of forgiveness, that message is accurate and true.

INERRANT – The Bible is FACTUALLY accurate and free from error.

e.g., When the Bible speaks to distances, times and other factual information, it must be true, as it is inspired by a perfect God. The Bible is not only true in terms of its message, but also in terms of its content.

Augustine – I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error

Martin Luther – The scriptures never err. ... Where the Holy Scripture establishes something that must be believed, there we must not deviate from the words.

John Calvin – Calvin described the Word as the 'sure and infallible record, the certain and unerring rule and free from every stain or defect.'

KEY – Of course, this is deeply connected to the PREVIOUS point. We believe the Bible to be infallible and inerrant BECAUSE it was inspired by God.

Because a perfect God inspired the Scriptures, they must contain the infallible and inerrant revelation of Him, His ways and His purposes. If they were found to be fallible and errant, how could we possibly trust them as the FINAL authority by which we determine what is true?

NOTE – If you would like to go DEEPER into this topic, we will be offering some related STUDIES during the Thursday Night Bible study in the weeks to come. "How did we get the Bible? Is it trustworthy? Is it true? What do we do about supposed contradictions? etc." are questions and topics we will take some time to look at. We hope to see you then!

CONCLUSIONS PT. 1

Let's summarize what we have learned this morning:

1) The Bible is AUTHORITATIVE

i.e., It is the sole/final authority for matters of truth, faith and practice.

2) The Bible is INSPIRED

i.e., It was uniquely and supernaturally borne of God, as he moved through men of old.

3) The Bible is INFALLIBLE

i.e., Its message and teachings are perfectly true, accurate and trustworthy.

4) The Bible is INERRANT

i.e., It is factually true and free from all error.

CONCLUSIONS PT. 2

BECAUSE the Word is authoritative, inspired, infallible and inerrant...

- Let it inform our view of the Lord and His nature
- Let it inform our view of ourselves and our place before Him
- Let it inform our view of God's purpose for His creation & world
- Let it inform our view of our purposes as we live before Him
- Let us live according to its righteous standards/precepts
- Let us embrace its wisdom and moral admonitions
- Let us rest in its promises for time and eternity
- Let it be the final and sole arbiter of truth
- Let it be our only foundation

Matthew 7:24-27

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

CONCLUSIONS PT. 3

As we close, it is tragic how many 'believers' reject such foundational concepts...

A study by George A. Marsden—recorded in his work, *Reforming Fundamentalism*—informs us that 85% of the students in one of America's largest evangelical seminaries stated that they do not believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. Beyond that, a poll of 7,400 U.S. clergymen (conducted by sociologist Jeffery Hadden) reveals the true condition of much of the church...

When asked if they believed that the Scriptures are the inspired and inerrant Word of God in faith, history, and secular matters:

- 95% of Episcopalians said "No."
- 87% of Methodists said "No."
- 82% of Presbyterians said "No."
- 77% of American Lutherans said "No."
- 67% of American Baptists said "No."

KEY – We CANNOT speak for these fellowships. We CAN, however, speak for ourselves.

Q. What do we believe?

We believe that the Bible is inspired by God and declares His design and plan for mankind. The Bible is the revelation of God to man and the infallible, inerrant and authoritative rule of faith and conduct.