

## But It's In the Bible!

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A church was looking for a new preacher. They formed a Pastoral Search Committee that started interviewing candidates. During one of the interviews, they asked the candidate, "What part of the Bible do you like best?" He said, "I like the New Testament best." Then he was asked "What book in the New Testament is your favorite?" He answered "The book of the Parables." They looked at each other and then asked said, "Why don't you share a bit of that book with us?" This is what he said.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell on the stony ground among thieves; and the thorns grew up and choked the man. So he got up and climbed a Sycamore tree. He was there for three days and three nights, when Solomon and his wife Gomorrah came by and helped him down. They took him down to the Ark of the Covenant to take care of him. He went on and met the Queen of Sheba, and she gave him a thousand talents of silver and a hundred changes of clothing. And he got in his chariot and drove furiously, and as he was driving along under a fig tree, his hair got caught in a limb and left him hanging there! And he hung there for forty days and forty nights. The Ravens brought him food to eat and water to drink. And one night while he was hanging there asleep, his wife Delilah came along and cut off his hair, and his strength left him and he fell on stony ground once again. And it began to rain. And it rained for forty days and forty nights. And he hid himself in a cave and said, "I am the only one left!" Later he went on and met a man who said, "Come in and take supper with me." But he said "I can't come in, for I have married a wife" And the man went out into the highways and the byways and compelled him to come in! He then came to Jerusalem, and saw Queen Jezebel sitting high and lifted up in a window of the wall. When she saw him she laughed and he said "Throw her down out of there", and they threw her down. And he said "Throw her down again", and they threw her down again. In all, they threw her down seventy times seven. And the fragments that they picked up filled twelve baskets full! "Now, whose wife will she be in the resurrection?"

The search committee sat in stunned silence, and finally they agreed that this was indeed a very knowledgeable candidate!

Everything he said was in the Bible. And while you may have laughed at how mixed up it was, I would guess that most of you would have a hard time identifying the different Bible stories referenced here. Indeed, it is all in the Bible! Unfortunately too many people today are ignorant

of these stories, where they are found and the significance of them. You may know what the Bible says, but knowing what it says without making sense of it does you no good.

That is why I repeatedly encourage all of you to spend time in your Bibles every day. Read it for yourself. Don't rely on what I or anyone else tells you about it. Read it yourself. You have to know what it says, understand what it means for you, and believe it. That will not happen apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. Nor will it happen if you don't know what it says! I know there are a thousand different things screaming for your attention every day, and this is one of them that is so easily dismissed as not all that important. But consider this: **What is more important than God?** He wants to spend some time with you. He wants you to spend some time with Him. So I have a challenge for you. Instead of spending all evening watching shows that you've already seen on television or something you don't really want to watch, take ten minutes of that time and read a chapter of the Bible each night. Alone time with God. Instead of playing computer games for an hour, play for 45 minutes and spend the other 15 minutes reading God's Word. Become better acquainted with your God as He speaks to you in His Word. Make it a daily discipline to learn more about the one who made you, loves you, and sent His Son to redeem you. There is nothing more important than that, but you wouldn't know it by the way most of us prioritize our lives.

I read a story about a young woman who wandered into a church service one night, heard the message of God's love for her in Christ, and was led by the Spirit of God to put her trust in Jesus as her Lord and Savior. She had a very rough past, involving alcohol, drugs, and even prostitution. But all that changed once she met Jesus. In fact, the change was obvious in her life. As time went on she became a faithful member of the church. She eventually became involved in the ministry, teaching young children.

It was not very long before this faithful young woman had caught the eye and heart of a young man in the congregation. In fact, it was the pastor's son. The relationship grew and they started to make wedding plans. This is when the problems began. You see, about one half of the church did not think that a woman with a past such as hers was suitable for a pastor's son. The members of the church began to argue and fight about the matter. So they decided to have a meeting.

This was one of those knock-down-drag-out church meetings where the way people talked and acted didn't make them look like the followers of Jesus they were supposed to be. It got pretty ugly. As the people made their arguments and tensions increased, the meeting was getting completely out of hand. The young woman became very upset about all the things being brought up about her past. As she began to cry the pastor's son stood to speak. He could not bear the pain it was causing his wife to be. So this is what he said:

"My fiancée's past is not what is on trial here. What you are questioning is the ability of the blood of Jesus to wash away sin. Today you have put the blood of Jesus on trial. So, does it wash away sin or not?"

When the people assembled heard that question, it hit them right between the eyes. They all began to weep as they realized that they had been slandering the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Did the death of Jesus bring forgiveness or not? Was His sacrifice enough to cover all sins? Either Jesus paid for all sins or He didn't pay for any of them – which is true?

Too often, Christians we bring up the past and use it as a weapon against our brothers and sisters. I've even heard it described this way: All too often the Church shoots its wounded! And that is the exact opposite of how we should treat each other. Forgiveness is at the core of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. If the blood of Jesus does not cleanse the other person completely then it cannot cleanse us completely. If that is the case, then we are all in a lot of trouble.

But that is not the case. The message of God in His Word is clear.

***1 John 1:7-9 ... the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.***

The better you know God's Word, the better you will be able to apply it to your life, your living, your peace of mind. The more time you spend in God's Word, the less likely you will be to get as mixed up as that man at the beginning of this message. The better you know God's Word, the more you will understand the peace you have with God because of what Jesus did in your place. The message of Scripture is all about that. Get into the Word yourself to let God speak to you.