


JOHN 7:16-18

ACT LIKE MEN! INTEGRITY.

“My teaching is not mine, but His Who sent me. If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on My own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.”¹

 oing into Judea was a risky proposition for Jesus since the religious leaders wanted to kill Him. He had voluntarily restricted Himself to travelling in Galilee because of the threat to his life. It was not His time. Moreover, there was no need to expose His disciples to such threats before they were equipped to stand firm in the Faith.

The Feast of Booths provided opportunity for His brothers, sons of Mary and Joseph, to assail Him verbally. “Leave here and go to Judea,” they mocked, “that your disciples also may see the works you are doing.” The Bible is quite forthright in acknowledging, “Not even his brothers believed in him.” Jesus was not willing to take their bait, however. He said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come” [JOHN 7:1-8].

So, His brothers went up to the Feast. After they had gone, He also went up. However, He went privately, not openly. When He arrived, He discovered that the religious leaders were looking for Him. Of course, He was hiding in plain sight. He listened to what was bruited about concerning Himself. “He’s a good man,” some were saying. Others countered angrily, saying, “No, he is leading the people astray.” However, the conversations were always in hushed tones, the arguments conducted in whispers. Everyone was fearful of the religious leaders. Should they find someone talking about this Jesus of Nazareth, there was no telling what they might do [see JOHN 7:10-13].

The Feast had been going on for several days when Jesus at last went up to the Temple and began teaching. He boldly presented Himself and began to declare the truths of the Father. His teaching would be a source of controversy, seemingly a direct challenge to the authority and power of the religious leaders. After all, they did nothing to stop Him. Oh, they challenged Him; but the challenge was almost cursory. They seemed powerless before His unrelenting logic. He, on the other hand, just kept on speaking of life—real life, vibrant and scintillating, not some mere existence that was artificial and plastic.

It was as He began teaching that some of the religious leaders happened to come to one of His instructional sessions. They were astounded. “How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?” They were part of a tight fraternity that regulated who could join them. Their special clique was akin to ordination within a denomination today. They controlled who got in, and so they knew everyone. Those who got in had many privileges, and they would do nothing to jeopardise the privileges they enjoyed. Now, here was this man, and He was teaching—teaching! He hadn’t been to their approved schools! He hadn’t received their imprimatur! He hadn’t even asked their permission! And here He was *teaching* their people, acting like He belonged there.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

What is fascinating is that the grousing concerning His position as an instructor doesn't appear to have been open. Nevertheless, He knew what was in their hearts. So, Jesus answered them, exposing what they truly thought; and the answer He gave is what is recorded as our text. "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood" [JOHN 7:16-18].

He had much more to say, and perhaps we will be able to take a careful look at what else was said that day in another message. However, it will be enough for us to understand what was said at this particular time if we will understand something of the issue of integrity. Godly people act with integrity. Though integrity seems rare at times in this day, it is still the mark of authenticity for the people of God.

SOME INITIAL THOUGHTS — Before grappling with the meat of the message, I believe it will prove beneficial to lay a common foundation for our study by making some initial comments. Permit me to preface what I will say by noting that while integrity is valued by everyone, especially when they must depend upon another, the focus for this message is the veracity of the messenger and the accuracy of the message that is delivered. Fidelity in transmitting the message is essential to the Christian Faith. When we deviate from the message delivered by the Spirit of God through His Apostles, we will quickly drift into every sort of error.

While instructing pastoral students, one feisty young man commented, "Doctor Stark only has two messages: get saved and live like it." I accepted his commentary on my message as a compliment. Really, we Christians have only one message; and we are responsible to communicate that message faithfully. Whenever we attempt to superimpose our finest thoughts on the great issues of life, we inevitably distort the will of God and jeopardise the eternal welfare of those who listen.

Does one struggle to find meaning in life? No higher meaning can be conferred on the life of an individual than to know God and to enjoy Him eternally.

Does an individual struggle with financial reversal? We can tell that one of God who gives richly to all who call on Him. However, if we fail to caution that God is not some sort of celestial ATM, we do that individual no service. We urge such a one to receive Christ as Master, to honour Him with all that has been entrusted to him, knowing that the Master will be generous and gracious to all who call on Him in truth. Though God does not promise earthly riches to anyone, He gives life and joy and peace to all who seek Him.

Does one who listens struggle with family conflict? Is someone's home breaking apart? We remind each one that Christ the Lord is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Moreover, He gives wisdom, equipping His child to respond to the challenges of daily life.

We can discuss fine points of the differences in our theology, argue about the subtleties of doctrine and converse about the transmission of the Scriptures; however, until one has received Jesus as Master over life, all these will be but futile exercises destined to disappoint. All people need to hear the message of life; all are lost and in need of salvation. "You must be born again," applies to all people. Until one is born from above, all religious discussions and every religious exercise are but mere exercises in futility. Therefore, the responsibility imposed upon each one who names the Name of Christ is to accept the burden of the Great Commission. Each Christian is responsible to make disciples, telling others of Christ the Lord, leading them into a walk with the True and Living God.

With that, permit me to ask you to answer one question. Is Jesus Christ Master of your life? Let me rephrase that question. Are you born from above? Consider the same question from the perspective that is almost forgotten in this day so late in the Church Age. Are you saved? Nothing that I say will make sense, and you cannot possibly incorporate the truths of which I will speak, if you do not have this vital relationship with the Living Son of God.

INTEGRITY REVEALED IN AUTHORITY — “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory.” Whenever we speak of spiritual integrity, we cannot help but speak of spiritual authority. Integrity speaks of fidelity, adherence to a standard that is transparent and recognized as reliable. Integrity implies that we can have confidence that when an individual speaks, he or she faithfully communicates the message of the one who dispatched the messenger. Because this is true, we would say of the one possessing integrity that they speak authoritatively. The authority possessed by the individual with integrity is not an authority that flows from their own being; rather, they possess authority that flows from the One sending the messenger.

We expect religious leaders to be trustworthy; we are often disappointed, but the expectation persists, nevertheless. Those who promote themselves as preachers of the Gospel are expected to declare faithfully the will of God. Unfortunately, there are many who approach the role of a herald as a job. The writer of the Letter to Hebrew Christians stated of Jesus, “Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him” [**HEBREWS 3:1, 2**]. These words are an affirmation of Jesus’ assertion presented in our text. The authority of the Master flowed from the Father Himself.

Think with me of the act of preaching. All Christians have received a charge from the Risen Christ. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” [**MATTHEW 28:19, 20**]. We are to make disciples. The process of making disciples means that we teach them the Apostles’ doctrine, incorporate them into the fellowship and hold them accountable for living out the principles of Christ the Lord.

Reducing this to terms that are simpler still, we evangelise—we tell others that Jesus is the Christ, calling them to faith in Him as Master over life. When they have believed, we encourage them to identify with the Master through baptism as those who believe, bringing them into the fellowship of the Community of Faith. Here, they are to be instructed in the divine truths of the Word, encouraged in growth in Christian character and held accountable for their actions and for their words.

Let me pause to observe that if you are not telling others that Jesus is the Christ, you are disobedient to the command He gave to all disciples. One early example is provided by observing an incident in the life of the early church. Scattered by the persecutions led by the enraged rabbi, Saul of Tarsus, we read, “Now those who had been forced to scatter went about proclaiming the good news of the word” [**ACTS 8:4**].² Who was scattered? According to the Word, it was all the members of the church “except the Apostles” [**ACTS 8:1**]. It is evident that all who were Christians accepted responsibility to proclaim the good news of the Word. It required God’s permission for them to experience persecution to obey Him, but they do provide the example we need in this day.

² **The NET Bible First Edition** (Biblical Studies Press 2006)

Turn your mind to the text again. When you speak of what you know concerning Christ the Lord, you know that you are speaking as one with authority. You do not drift into speculation about philosophy and the specious sophistries of dying people; you restrict yourself to speaking of that which you know to be true. Think of the examples in the Word.

Jesus healed a man who was blind from birth. When that man was examined by the religious leaders, they urged him to speak ill of Jesus. Listen to the man's response, however. To the people who asked, "How were your eyes opened?" the man answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight" [JOHN 9:10, 11].

They brought him to the Pharisees, and the questioning began again. "Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.'" The answer was clearly offensive to some of the religious leaders, for we read, "Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?'" A miracle, a good deed performed for the benefit of a blind man, created trouble. Thus, the Pharisees were not finished with their questions. "They said again to the blind man, 'What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?'" The blind man, reflecting a less than perfect understanding said, "He is a prophet" [JOHN 9:13-17].

His response caused consternation for the religious leaders. They demanded that his parents verify that he was indeed their son. His parents attested that he was their son, but they would not allow themselves to be drawn into a controversy because they were fearful of what the religious leaders might do.

It is at this point that a significant truth for our study today is revealed. Listen to the exchange. "For the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, 'Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.'" Take special note of how the man who was blind answered: "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see" [JOHN 9:24, 25]. From this point, the rage of the Pharisees grew more intense, and the man who was formerly blind grew bolder still, leading him ultimately to do something that was unprecedented—rebuke the religious leaders. "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes" [JOHN 9:30].

Note that the man who was healed did not speculate—he confined himself to what he knew to be true. "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see!" There is a powerful lesson for each believer—you are an expert at what you have personally discovered to be true. You know Christ the Lord and you know that it was by faith that you came into this living relationship. You know that He is gracious, that He receives sinners and that He frees all who come to Him through faith. Like the blind man, you may not believe yourself to be qualified to argue philosophical issues; but you know that Christ saves all who come to Him through faith. You may not be equipped to prove that God called all things into being, defending this truth against the neo-orthodox doctrine of evolution; but you know that Christ forgives sin and accepts all who believe in Him. Speak of what you know to be true and refuse to speculate.

As a Christian, you are under the authority of Him you call "Lord." He has the right to direct you as He wills. You are responsible to communicate faithfully the message of life that He has entrusted to you. You are responsible to hold those who preach from this pulpit accountable for what they say. You are responsible to hold one another to the standard of righteousness expected of all Christians.

For a brief moment, think of the accountability imposed upon those who provide oversight of the flock of God. These are men under authority, and they must give an accounting to Him who appointed them. The writer of the Letter to Hebrew Christians makes a significant statement as he nears the end of that missive. “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account” [**HEBREWS 13:17**]. Focus on the responsibility of those who provide leadership within the flock. Such men keep watch over your souls, knowing they will have to give an account.

Surely the words Ezekiel penned against the shepherds of Israel apply to the undershepherd of any congregation. “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.

“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them” [**EZEKIEL 34:7-10**].

Attending a pastoral conference on one occasion, Lynda and I were seated at a table during breakfast with the pastoral staff of a large church from Calgary. As we ate, the staff was quite jocular, laughing in particular at the gullibility of the congregation. The staff were filled with mirth at how easily manipulated the flock proved to be, how they could disseminate doctrine they knew the people would never accept were it presented openly. They thought it was humorous to note how unsophisticated the congregation was; they were amused to witness how unsuspecting the people were. They took great delight in chortling at how their deacons thought themselves to be knowledgeable about the Word, and how easily manipulated they proved to be.

I listened, and when I had finished my meal, I simply said, “I’ve listened to you as you ridiculed the people of God and exalted yourself at their expense. I just want you to know that I don’t agree with one thing any of you stand for. I find you all to be phonies who must one day answer to God.” And with that, I excused myself, refusing even to be seated with them. What is especially tragic is that they were not the exception among modern churches; rather, they appear to have become the norm.

There is no integrity in such false shepherds. The flock does not belong to the shepherd; the flock is God’s! The shepherd is appointed to tend the flock. Let me say clearly that the shepherd is not hired to care for the flock; the shepherd is appointed by Him who owns the flock to provide care. Listen to the Word of God. Paul commanded the Ephesian elders, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” [**ACTS 20:28**].

The flock to which a shepherd is appointed belongs to Him who purchased it with His blood! This same truth is witnessed in Peter's words to the shepherds appointed to work among the believers within the Diaspora. "I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" [**1 PETER 5:1-4**].

It is at this point in the message that I must challenge you to think through an issue that is frequently ignored, or worse still, misunderstood in this day. When a congregation seeks a pastor, they usually turn to their denomination or a seminary or pastoral training institute. They form a pulpit committee and seek resumes and recommendations. What is most critical in the mind of most congregations seeking pastoral leadership are credentials and connections. They want someone whom the denomination will approve for ordination, and that means that credentials and connections assume a position of paramount importance.

The same was true at the time Jesus served in Palestine. One had to have studied under the right rabbi and had to have been certified by the proper authorities, or they weren't thought capable of teaching. People had substituted their best thoughts for God's approval and appointment. Consequently, they got what they sought. Scholarship and entertainment had superseded godliness and power; prestige meant more to the people than did piety.

Thus it is that in modern church life, graduation from the right school, study under the right teachers, having the right recommendations for pastoral office are all of greater importance than are the requirements outlined in the Word of God. God tells us that character is essential; religious leaders say credentials are more important than character. God says that calling is vital to success as a Christian leader; religious leaders argue that calling must yield to commendation. Because we seldom see pastors raised up from within the congregation, we are compelled to ask the advice of experts who will place pastors.

Consequently, authority in the modern congregation, much as authority in the temple in the days when the Master walked in Palestine, is handed down. To the Jewish mind, and unfortunately to the modern evangelical mind in too many instances, authority is secondary and indirect; it is passed down and conferred from denominational leader to denominational leader. Jesus, however, possessed authority—authority that was directly from the Father. Similarly, the preacher who declares, "Thus saith the Lord," bringing people back to the Word of God, possesses authority. It is the authority of the Word. No preacher possesses inherent authority; however, so long as the man of God provides exposition of the Word of God so that those listening know the will of God, he will speak with authority.

Integrity means that one accepts the authority of the One who sends him. Integrity means that one speaks with authority, refusing to be content with sermonising, seeking, rather, a message. Integrity means that the one who speaks on behalf of Him who sends His servants throughout the earth will always endeavour to point those who hear to hear Him who sends.

With the Saviour, I boldly say, if my teaching is my own, it will be quickly apparent. If, however, my teaching is from Him who sent me, then you must give an answer, not to me, but to Him who holds the power of life and death. If I speak out of my own imaginations, no one should listen to anything I may say. If, on the other hand, I bring you back to the Word, and if it is apparent that this is the Word of God, then you are responsible to Him who gave the Word.

INTEGRITY RESULTS IN GLORY — “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me... [T]he one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.” The individual who possesses integrity will seek the glory of the One who sent him. Individuals who seek to exalt themselves demonstrate that they lack integrity. If we are servants, we are to serve Him who sent us. We do not often hear messages delivered from some of the hard sayings Jesus delivered. For instance, you may recall this stunning statement from Jesus. “Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty’” [LUKE 17:7-10].

Did you get what Jesus said? We serve Him! He does not serve us! We seek His glory. Now, I’m cognizant of the fact that Jesus came to serve. I have read the Word, and I am quite familiar with the incident that occurred mere days before His passion. You will recall that James and John, apparently at the instigation of their mother, sought promotion within the Kingdom of Heaven. Of course, when the other Apostles got wind of this request (as inevitably they would), they were indignant. Their seething rage toward James and John necessitated immediate intervention. Thus, we read, “Jesus called them to him and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’” [MARK 10:42-45]. Indeed, Jesus came to serve; however, it does not change the truth that He is Lord, we are not. We seek His glory precisely for this reason. We dare not promote ourselves. Thus, the servant who has integrity seeks the glory of the Master and not his own exaltation.

We are also aware that when we glorify Christ as Lord, He is pledged on His holy honour to exalt us in due time. We have read the promises of God. James encourages the people of God, “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you” [JAMES 4:10]. This is a promise that is iterated by Peter when he writes, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you” [1 PETER 5:6].

Jesus presented a parable intended to correct the rush by some to promote themselves; however, the instruction is apropos this message today. “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” [LUKE 14:7-11].

When Spurgeon was declaring the Word from the Metropolitan Tabernacle pulpit, the story is told of a farmer who journeyed from a small country village to London. His business necessitated his staying in London over the weekend, which afforded him opportunity to visit a couple of the great churches in that city. He wrote home to his wife, and in his letter he wrote, “Last Sunday morning I went to hear Dr. Jones, and in the evening I went to the Metropolitan Tabernacle to hear Charles Spurgeon. I was so greatly impressed by both of them. Dr. Jones is certainly a great preacher, but Mr. Spurgeon has a great Saviour.”

After people have heard us speak, what impression do we leave? If they go away saying, “My, but he is erudite and polished,” we have failed. If they leave thinking, “Well he certainly knows his theology,” we have failed. If they exit this building thinking, “What a wonderful sermon,” I have failed. Our goal is for people to leave saying, “What a glorious Saviour!” With the Apostle, we contend, “What we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” [2 CORINTHIANS 4:5].

It is at this point that each member of the assembly has a role to play. First, let us consider our speech when we speak with friends and with family. Do they hear of Christ? Are we telling them of His glory and majesty? Have we acted honourably in promoting His Name? Again, each member of this assembly has opportunity to pray throughout the week, asking the Master to equip the preacher to demonstrate integrity through glorifying the Master. ‘Ere we arrive on a Sunday morning, let us each seek His presence with us individually and in our midst. As the message goes forth, let us each prayerfully seek the glory of the Master.

On the authority of God’s Word we are convinced that our first responsibility is to exalt Christ as Ruler over each life and over His church. We have heard His promise, “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” [JOHN 12:32]. Though we know that He spoke of His crucifixion, we also understand that when we exalt His Name, He draws all mankind to Himself. We seek to declare His Name to all peoples, knowing that as we make Him known, some will come to faith and He will be glorified.

INTEGRITY REFLECTS RELIABILITY — “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.” You can tell the preacher with integrity—he draws you back to the Word of God, always pointing to what is written so that you understand the source of his authority for what is taught. When he speaks of his suppositions—as all must inevitably do—he makes it clear that he is postulating, speculating, hypothesizing. However, when he declares what has been written, he does not simply tell you what he has read—he points you to what God has said in His Word.

The man of God will prove trustworthy because his teaching is that of God who sent him. Moreover, his teaching is not obscure, esoteric or cryptic as though only a few could understand. The teaching of the man of God will not be novel, as though only he was able somehow to discover what God really meant to say and failed to communicate throughout long centuries. When the man of God speaks, he will speak plainly, pointing to what has been written so that all who hear him may witness the simplicity of the Word and the beauty that flows from such a transparent and lucid revelation. In speaking thusly, the man of God shows integrity because what he says is trustworthy and he is reliable.

Let me say that when I declare the mind of God, if the revelation is not apparent, you are under no obligation to take my word for what is said. If God has not spoken and if somehow it is not apparent, you have no responsibility to believe what I say. However, if my testimony is borne out by what is written, you must grapple with this Word. Either it is accurate, or your thoughts are superior to what has been committed for all to see. If your thoughts are superior to this Word, then when you die, wisdom dies with you. On the other hand, if this Word is indeed the very Word of God, you must give a response to what has been revealed. You must either accept this Word as authoritative for your life, or you must reject it as unworthy of your obedience. However, whatever choice you make, you accept the consequences of your choice.

I have been confronted on occasion by people arguing that no one can understand me. These arbiters of vocabulary have suggested that I use too many words and that those words are too difficult for the average person to understand. My normal response is that apparently I am understood quite well or the individual wouldn't be irritated. Almost inevitably the individual complaining will offer some weak response to the effect that they know what I mean, but they don't use those words. Somehow, they imagine that they are speaking for others, and their approach is to make the message easy to be understood for others.

When we drill down to expose the root of their dissatisfaction, it is inevitable that the real problem is that they are offended by the Word of God. They are prepared to make accommodation to the changing attitude of this dying world, and the Word makes them uncomfortable. The man of God who demonstrates integrity will reliably communicate what God has written in His Word.

I was accused on one occasion of being out of date by one hundred years. I was offended! I had made every effort to be out of date by two thousand years! I have no new understanding. I have no novel interpretation. I have but the Word of God, given through the Apostles and the prophets of old as the Holy Spirit guided them. Thus it shall ever be.

Now, the message of the Word is just as simple as it ever was. Man has been ruined by the fall and is under sentence of death. God sent His Son to give His life as a sacrifice in the place of fallen man. Jesus, the Son of God was crucified, buried and raised from the dead. He ascended into the heavens where He is seated at the right hand of the Father. Now, He offers to all people grace and mercy—grace to cleanse us from all sin and mercy to receive us into God's divine family. Jesus calls all who will heed His call to life. The message of God is summarised in this manner. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved" [**ROMANS 10:9, 10**].

The offer of life is strengthened through citing the Prophet Joel when God promises, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" [**ROMANS 10:13**].

Jesus called the religious leaders of His day to receive life. He cautioned them, "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment" [**JOHN 7:24**]. The offer stands to this day. If you are willing, receive Christ as Master over your life. Accept the grace God now offers. Accept His gracious offer and come to life. Amen.