

OLD-TIME RELIGION

12 Fervent, Soul-Winning Sermons

By

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CHAPTER FOUR

"I BELIEVE GOD"

(Sermon preached September 20, 1943, at Wheaton College revival, Wheaton, Illinois, and Stenographically reported for The Sword of the Lord).

Our Scripture is taken from the twenty-seventh chapter of the book of Acts, the account given there of Paul's shipwreck in the Mediterranean Sea. The storm in the account given here lasted fourteen days and nights and grew more severe day by day. At first they threw overboard the cargo of the ship, hoping thereby to lighten the ship and make less perilous their voyage. Then the storm became so intense that they undergirded the ship and tried to hold it together and finally we have these words:

"And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:20-25.

I call your attention to the statement in the last verse. I change the wording of it a bit, but not the meaning. **'Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God,** that it shall be exactly as GOD has said.

I wonder how many times how many of us who claim to believe the Bible as the Word of GOD really and truly believe it. I wonder how many of us give a mere mental assent to it rather than believe it with our hearts and souls. There is a great deal of difference between mental assent and really believing a thing. I am persuaded that many of us give mental assent to many things in the Bible because we have been taught from childhood that it is the Word of GOD, but deep in our hearts we do not really believe them and accept them as the very Word of GOD.

I thank GOD that after going through many battles and conflicts in my own soul, I have come to the place where I can say that I believe the Bible with all my heart as the very Word of GOD. I believe that GOD meant everything He said in it and I believe that GOD will do exactly as He says.

I believe the Bible as William Jennings Bryan said he believed it. You remember the Scopes trial at Dayton, Tennessee, when he was called to prosecute the case. During the course of the trial, Clarence Darrow, brilliant infidel lawyer of Chicago, put Mr. Bryan on the witness stand and began firing questions at him about his belief in the Bible, intending to try to confuse him and make him ridiculous before that crowded courtroom because of his simple faith in the Word of GOD. During the course of questioning, this infidel lawyer, thinking that he would catch Mr. Bryan off guard, said,

"Tell me, do you believe everything in the Bible?"

"I do, sir, without any question," Mr. Bryan replied.

"Do you mean to tell me you believe Jonah swallowed the whale?"

Mr. Bryan said, "No, sir, I do not; for the Bible does not say Jonah swallowed the whale, but that the whale swallowed Jonah, and I believe that. But sir, I want you to understand that if the Bible had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, I would believe it."

I believe the Bible just like that and also that GOD meant every word in it.

I think like the little teen-age girl they tell a story about down South. She was a wonderful Christian girl. Her church had called a man out of one of the modernistic seminaries. He would read the Word of GOD and say, "Now the Bible does not mean what it says here."

He read the story of the rich man and Lazarus and said, "Now the Lord did not mean that there was any real fire in Hell. The Lord did not mean that this man was actually thirsty, nor that his tongue was being parched in flame, nor that he was calling for a literal drop of water." Then he gave the modernistic interpretation. The little girl had all she could stand. The Word of GOD was precious to her heart. After the service she went to the pastor and said,

"Pastor, might I ask you just one question? I know you are an educated man and I am not an educated girl, but pastor, I want to ask you one question if I may."

"Why, surely you may," he replied.

"I want to ask you this question: You keep saying when you read the Word of GOD that it does not mean what it says. Now, if the Lord did not mean what He says in the Bible, why didn't He say what He meant?"

How easy it would have been for the Lord to have said what He meant if He did not mean what He said!

Not only has the Lord said what He meant, but He meant what He said.

GOD said, **'When the word has gone out of my mouth, I will perform the doing of it.'** JESUS said, **"Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"** (Matthew 5:18). GOD will not fail in a single word. In this Book there are many thousand precious promises; and as Joshua said when he gathered Israel together for his farewell address:

"Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof" (Joshua 23:14).

Yes, GOD means what He says, and you can count on GOD's doing what He says. He will never let you down. Your best friend in the world may fail you. If you have gone through that experience, you know that it is a bitter one. When your best friend on earth fails you, when people whom you would trust your life with fail you, it is a bitter experience. But I can tell you one thing from experience: GOD will never let you down.

There never has been in the history of humanity a greater time to be a Christian than today.

With all the uncertainty of human life; with all the restlessness; with the very foundations literally crumbling from under our lives; with all the perplexity and uncertainty with which men face the future, and with **"men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth,"** it is a great source of comfort to believe the Bible.

Thank GOD, when I pick up the Book of GOD, I know that it is true; and I believe with all my heart that GOD tells me just exactly what to expect. GOD tells us that underneath it all, and in it all, and through it all, there is an eternal purpose of GOD that cannot be defeated.

In spite of all that wicked men may do; in spite of all that Hitler and Hirohito and all the rest of the dictators of the world may do; in spite of all that men might do to try to rule GOD out of their lives, GOD is moving toward a glorious consummation with a purpose that cannot be defeated.

One day men will **"beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: . . . neither shall they learn war any more."** One day **"the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."**

What a difference real faith in GOD makes in a person!

Look at Paul in the midst of this storm, when the rest of the crowd gave up hope. When all hope was taken away that they should be saved, one man stood in that panic-stricken crowd like the Rock of Gibraltar. The rest gave up in despair and sat down to await the inevitable end. But in the midst of the storm there stands one man unafraid and as calm as a baby in a mother's arms. Hear him as he encourages that hopeless crowd!

"Be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. [Not one man shall be lost even though the ship go to pieces.] Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:22-25).

I. I Believe All Men Without CHRIST Are Lost

I believe GOD means exactly what He Says in this Book when He tells us that all people without JESUS CHRIST are lost.

That is a hard thing to get even Christian people to believe. Oh, we believe that the down-and-outs, the drunkards, the immoral people, the highjackers, the liars, the thieves - that crowd that wallows in sin, the scum of the earth in the gutters, in the places of sin and shame - we believe that they are lost.

But these fine, clean, upright, lovable, wonderful, moral men, women, and young people without the Lord - most of us do not believe that they are lost. But the Word of GOD says, **"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"** (John 3:3).

I tell you, if we Christians really believed that, everyone would be a soul winner. If we really believed that every person in this world who is old enough to know right from wrong, who has not been born of the Spirit of GOD, is a lost soul; that he does not have a chance, not a chance on earth of ever seeing the kingdom of GOD, without the new birth; that all are lost - if we could get Christian people really to believe that, we would have solved the greatest problem that confronts the church today.

We would have more soul winners than we have ever dreamed of, if people really believed the Word of GOD, that the whole world is lost; that the best, finest, cleanest, most wonderful people on earth must have JESUS CHRIST or go to Hell.

II. I Believe God Tells the Truth About the Doom of Sinners

I believe that GOD means exactly what He says when He tells us where the lost soul will go that passes out of this life without the Lord JESUS CHRIST as his personal Saviour. I tell you, in GOD's Word you will find the blackest picture you have ever read in your life; the darkest picture ever painted in human language - that picture the Lord gives in this Book of the doom that awaits the soul at the end of life's journey who dies without the Lord JESUS CHRIST as his personal Saviour.

Listen to these words: **"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"** (Matthew 25:41).

Listen again: **"Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer**

darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 22:13).

Hear JESUS again: **"The rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame"** (Luke 16:22-24).
Do you believe that?

Listen to GOD's Word: **"The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth"** (Matthew 13:49, 50).

Listen again: **"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"** (Revelation 20:15).

"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever" (Revelation 14:11).

I tell you that if half of what the Bible says about the doom that awaits a soul who dies without CHRIST - if only half of that were true, if but the half of what that signifies were true, then it is an awful thing to be lost!

Think of it!

- a soul lost forever in outer darkness, in the bottomless pit, in a Christless world where there is no GOD and no hope;
- a soul hurled by the wrath of GOD out yonder somewhere, beyond creation's boundaries, doomed to wander throughout all eternity, in outer darkness where no ray of light shall ever pencil an image on the walls of Hell;
- where no friendly hand will ever touch that tired, suffering, tormented soul;
- where no friendly voice will ever be heard;
- where the only sounds that shall greet those weary ears throughout all eternity will be the mocking and jeering of demons, the groans of the dying and the wailing and gnashing of teeth of the damned.

Oh, think of a soul lost and doomed to wander through all eternity in infinite, bottomless, boundless darkness; blighted by the curse of GOD; sinking down, down, down, forever! I tell you again, if but the half of what the Bible says about the doom of a soul that dies without GOD were true, it is a terrible thing to be lost!

III. I Believe GOD Will Require Their Blood at Our Hands

Did GOD mean it when He said: **"When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand"** (Ezekiel 33:8).

If He did, those are some of the most solemn words a child of GOD ever faced. Yes, GOD meant

it; but very few of us have ever taken GOD seriously in the matter of our responsibility to others.

Ever since the days of Cain, man has tried to dodge this responsibility and is still asking, "**Am I my brother's keeper?**" Nothing is taught more clearly in the Word of GOD than that we are our brother's keeper and that we are going to have to account to GOD for this responsibility and for our influence upon others.

This is what Paul meant when he said, "**For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself . . . For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ**" (Romans 14:7, 10).

The teaching of this entire chapter deals with our responsibility to others and our influence on them. He brings the discussion to a close by saying, "**It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended, or is made weak**" (Romans 14:21).

How can people who say they believe this pass by the unsaved day by day and never make an effort to win them to CHRIST? How can they go month in and month out and not even pray for unsaved souls? But, not only do multitudes of professing Christians never attempt to win a soul to CHRIST; they even live in such a way as to become stumbling blocks over which the lost stumble into Hell. Yet these same people claim to believe the Bible. "**His blood will I require at thine hands.**"

This Scripture haunts me. It has driven me like a slave all my ministry. It has sent me out at nights when I should have been at home with my family. During the seventeen years I was pastor it drove me to preach somewhere almost every night - in schoolhouses, in country churches, under brush arbors, on the street corners, in jails, and everywhere I could find unsaved people who would listen. Now it has caused me to all but give up my home and go from one end of the country to the other preaching the Gospel, because "**I believe God!**" and I believe He means exactly what He says.

IV. I Believe GOD When He Tells Us in His Word How His People Ought to Live

Did GOD mean it when He said, "**Come out from among them, and be ye separate . . . and touch not the unclean thing**"? (II Corinthians 6:17).

Did GOD mean it when He said, "**Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them**"? (Ephesians 5:11).

Did GOD mean it when He said, "**The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world**"? (Titus 2:11, 12).

Did GOD mean these words, "**Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God**"? (James 4:4).

I am astounded at the way people who claim to be saved ignore these plain teachings of the Word of GOD, and deliberately and willfully violate them, many times even scoff at them, and still maintain that they believe the Bible as GOD's Word. How can saved people so trifle with GOD! It is not a question of the Bible not being clear on the standard in this matter. It is so unmistakably clear that a child can understand. They deliberately ignore GOD's standard and set their own.

Do they not know that GOD has said, **"If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes"**? (Psalm 89:31,32).

Hear the Word of GOD!

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Hebrews 12:6-8).

That ought to settle the matter of worldliness, disobedience, carelessness and indifference once for all, for every child of GOD. It simply means that if you persist in these things, you are daring GOD to lay the rod on. And, I can tell you from experience that GOD won't take your dare.

Paul told the Corinthians that because they had persisted in certain sins and disorderly conduct, **"For this cause many are weak and sickly [lost your health] among you, and many sleep [have died]"** (I Corinthians 11:30).

How many of us have ever taken CHRIST seriously when He says, **"Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple"**? (Luke 14:33). Or, how many have ever seriously considered the following words of His: **"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple"**? (Luke 14:26, 27).

If these words of the Master mean anything, they certainly mean that our loyalty to Him is so completely to transcend our loyalty to the dearest in human relationships that it would be as love compared with hate. Did He mean what He said? In the words of those who left Him after the discourse on the bread of life: **"This is a hard saying."** How do we measure up in light of it? **"Lord, are there few that be saved?"** (Luke 13:23).

V. Thank GOD, I Believe CHRIST Is Able to Save All Manner of Sinners

"He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Sometimes we are tempted to give up certain people and refer to them as "hard cases." But, thank GOD, there are no hard cases for JESUS. It was as easy for Him to cast the seven devils out of

Mary Magdalene and the legion of demons out of the man of Gadara as it was to cast the one evil spirit out of the little boy. One word from Him and it was done. He who could speak the word and save the dying thief is able to save all who will call upon His name.

As Dwight L. Moody used to say, "He can save the Devil's outcasts."

In my brief ministry, I have seen Him save drunkards, murderers, and harlots. I tell you, we have the message this old sin-cursed, broken, bleeding, dying world needs. I wish I could stand on some mountain peak and shout it so that it could be heard around the world:

"He is able also to save them to the uttermost."

Some years ago I was conducting a revival meeting under a brush arbor on a cattle ranch in north Texas in a big bend of the Red River. One night just before the service a man came rushing up to me and said, "The worst man in this bend is out here. This man has killed three men in the past fifteen years. Nobody has ever seen him at a religious service before."

He pointed out an old man seventy-six years of age, squatting beside a big oak tree about fifty yards away. That night I preached to one lone sinner - the old man by that tree. The next night he came again and sat by the same tree. The third night he sat on the back seat of the little brush arbor, but when I gave the invitation, he slipped out and disappeared in the dark. The next morning a little group of us had gathered in front of the brush arbor before the morning service. We were discussing this old man when suddenly we heard a Texas cowboy yell. Upon looking around, we saw that old sinner climbing over a pasture fence. When he got on top of the fence, he took off his big Texas hat, threw it up in the air and let out another yell.

Then he came across that cow pasture yelling at almost every step. When he reached us he said, "I don't know how He could do it, but He has! JESUS has saved me!"

Then he told us of how, when he left the service the night before, the Spirit of the Lord had laid hold on him; of how he had walked the floor and the yard and all about the place in utter misery all night long. He said, "When daylight came, I said, 'I will get away from it.' So I got my cotton sack and went to the field to pick cotton. I picked enough to make a pillow out of that sack. By that time I was so miserable that I felt I would die.

I made a pillow of that cotton sack and lay down between two rows of cotton and buried my face in that cotton sack and began to pray - "O Lord, the preacher said, He is able to save to the uttermost all that will come to GOD by Him. Lord, if that is so, have mercy on my poor soul.' "

Then the old man said, "It just seemed like something 'busted' inside of me. I don't know how He could do it, but JESUS has saved me!" I saw that old man, seventy-six years old - the worst man in that bend - and his seventy-three-year-old wife buried with CHRIST in baptism in the waters of the Red River.

Two years later he died praising the Lord.

I believe GOD, that it shall be exactly as He has said.

Praise GOD for such a message to give to the world! Others can have their social gospel, but give me the old-time religion!

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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