

...FOR THOSE SEEKING THE EMPOWERING PRESENCE OF THE *Holy Spirit*

LutheranRenewal

Number 252 • March 2008

BEHAVING *the* WORD

by Paul Anderson

My friend Kevin told our young adult group, "I don't just want to read the Word. I want it to read me!" More important than scrutinizing the Scripture is letting it scrutinize us. "Search me, O God," says the psalmist, "and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts" (Ps. 139:23). We need to come away from encounters changed, not just inspired. We won't always "enjoy" devotions; maybe we'll feel unsettled.

Jesus said to "search the Scriptures," but we also need the Scriptures to search us in order to judge "the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). The arbiter of truth hands me a "guilty" or "not guilty" verdict when I read its pages. It digs below the surface to where I really live, into hidden attitudes that need to be awakened and confessed.

Jesus once asked would-be followers, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" Their lives did not match their words, and the appearance of living under Christ's lordship proved a pretense. Then He told a story about the difference between doing the will of God and ignoring it. "I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built" (Luke 6:46-48).

By contrast, Jesus said that "the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete" (v. 49). That man might be wondering what went wrong, but a look at how he was building tells the story. He didn't let the word dig into his thoughts and motives. He stayed on the surface and was not prepared for the storms.



THE GREAT COMMISSION
does not call us to know more
but to obey better.

I allowed people in my congregation to think that knowing meant doing. We went from Sunday to Sunday without taking sufficient time to do what we learned. I worked harder at educating than equipping. I wish that I had slowed down to

help people write it on their hearts, not just in their notes. The Great Commission does not call us to know more but to obey better.

Lutheran Renewal

(Independent of North Heights Lutheran Church)

Telephone: 651-490-1517 • Fax: 651-486-2865

2701 Rice Street • St. Paul MN 55113-2200

www.LutheranRenewal.org • ilrc@aol.com

Alliance of Renewal Churches

www.arcusa.org • 651-486-4808

The Master's Institute

www.themastersinstitute.org • 651-765-9756

We err when we call people to believe but not to obey. We settle for a faith that stops at intellectual assent rather than radical obedience. James mocks such head knowledge, calling it “useless” (James 2:20). He also says that we are living in self-deception.

When Mary and the siblings of Jesus came to see Him, He said, “*My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice*” (Lk. 8:21). Simply put, Jesus considers those careful to do what God’s Word tells them to do as closer to Him than His family of origin.

Luke places this incident just after the parable of the sower, where Jesus again told of the importance of doing the Word. The fourth kind of soil stood for those “*who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.*” Good intentions do not make it for the farmer or for the faithful. Follow-through is what counts! Every time I praise the Lord in the midst of difficulty or stop my tongue when insulted or deny myself to help a brother or sister in need, I am strengthening my foundation and fertilizing the crop.

**“BLESSED RATHER ARE THOSE
who hear the word of God
and obey it!”**

Luke 11:28

Easier said than lived out. How do we apply every Scripture when we read a different passage each day and hear a different sermon every Sunday? Answer: “We can’t.” When a voice teacher said to me, “Keep your shoulders low, your gut firm, your chin in, your arms relaxed, and don’t sing from your throat. And...” I interrupted her: “I can learn only one thing at a time.” So you may want to pick one Scripture truth for a season, praying that the Spirit translates it into your habits.

Jesus persisted with this theme of doing the Word. When a woman tried to praise Him by shouting in a crowd, “*Blessed is the mother who gave you birth,*” He responded with, “*Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!*” (Lk. 11:28). I would have politely acknowledged the affirmation. Jesus deflected it toward a higher priority.

Jesus distinguished the punishment between those who knew God’s will and disobeyed and those who disobeyed unknowingly. Knowledge can condemn. The more we know, the more we stand accountable. To know and not to do is not to know. To study the Scriptures and not to do what

they say puts us in more dangerous territory than not studying at all! (Suggestion: try praying them into your life. If you read about worry, pray, “Forgive me for worrying about finances. Please help me to live without anxiety.”)

Later in His ministry, Jesus told a parable of two sons. When the father asked the first son to work in the field, he refused but later changed his mind. The second son said he would, but did not. Obedience trumps profession—every time. Simple obedience does not always follow easy assent. Words come naturally for religious types who want to look good. The first son proved more in touch with his own independence, and God changed his heart

Just days before the crucifixion, Jesus told three stories, all of which ended with horrendous judgment. The verdict came not on the basis of belief but of behavior. Five virgins missed the Party because they forgot oil. A servant missed the celebration because he didn’t invest

his master’s money. The goats were separated from the eternal kingdom because of the compassion they failed to extend. These examples tamper with our theology that claims that believing suffices. Apparently, believing without responding invalidates the belief. Or in the words of Jesus’ brother, “*Faith without works is dead*” (James 2:26).

Are you reading the Word of God on a regular basis? If yes, good. Are you letting the Word of God read you? Even better. I once said to a pastor friend, “I want to study more about repentance,” to which he responded, “I want to repent.” Or like the new Chinese believer said, “I am now reading the Bible and behaving it.”



Know the Voice

Equipping Conference

Featuring James Goll and Mark Virkler

Those in attendance at the February 1-2 Equipping Conference were fed a well-balanced meal of prophetic impartation and practical teaching on hearing the voice of our Shepherd.

James passionately shared his heart for Jesus and encouraged us to deepen our level of intimacy with Him. We will not soon forget the prophetic enactment during the ministry time at the end of James' Friday night session. He set a chair up front, encouraging each of us to "take our place" in regard to the next step of impartation and obedience. Someone later shared, "I haven't sensed that kind of prophetic anointing and power since the early days of the Jesus movement!" To order resources from James, please go to: www.encountersnetwork.org.

Mark's teaching on how to hear God's voice was ground breaking! Even those who have been "listening" for many years were given special tools to sharpen their hearing. He gave biblical examples of how God speaks and it was exciting for us to hear what the Father had to say to others during one of the sessions. Mark is a bible scholar and teacher and has over 4,000 students enrolled in his online school, and we were blessed to receive his teaching in person. You can order the complete 10-session series on "How to Hear God's Voice" from Mark's website: www.cwgministries.org. This would be great for personal use, an adult class, or for a small group study.

Here are a few testimonies from this weekend:

"Having walked in and ministered in the Holy Spirit for many years, Mark Virkler's teaching was the best Biblical teaching I've received in years."

"I believe it was the best one I've ever attended! ...each of us were greatly blessed and challenged to grow in listening to the Lord's voice. Jim Goll just filled up our spirits with passion for loving others to Christ. Is he always this poured out??! Then Mark Virkler unfolded this very useable and well explained plan to hear from God. They complemented one another so beautifully—as only the Holy Spirit can do! WOW!"

If you were unable to join us, you don't have to feel left out! You'll find the recordings order form on the back page of this newsletter.

To see the full-color version of this painting, please go to LutheranRenewal.org.



"I will lead the way. I will fly first and you will be in the shadow of my wings. I will protect you—we will GO! There is a new awakening and a new birthing. We will be bold. The heavens will have their way! And the fires will burn in our wake. The fires of the Holy Spirit. Like the fire that led the exodus. The people will follow. Destruction of the enemy will take place!"

Prophetic painting created during the worship time on Friday - Sue Kemnitz, DesignStudios-Inc.com