

Redwater Restorer

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness..." (Matthew 3:3)

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Understanding The Standard

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Redwater
Church of Christ

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 10:00 a.m.
AM Worship 10:45 a.m.
PM Worship 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

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How do we know that 12 inches is one foot? How do we come to the knowledge that three feet is one yard? When we buy wood for the winter how do we know we are getting a rick or a cord? It is because we have a standard. Webster defines standard as, "something established by authority, custom, or general consent as a model or example." Standards are important. Where no standard exists confusion reigns. If there were no standards for mileage, gallons, cups, teaspoons, tablespoons, medicines, etc. (the list is endless) then recipes would not turn out right, people would be overdosing or underdosing and dying and no one would be able to accurately estimate time and expense for trips. There must be a standard in order to have peace and unity.

In matters of religion the same holds true. A standard must exist. If there is no standard any doctrine or practice could be considered legitimate, and that would lead to utter confusion. Of course this is the idea most people have today, they fail to recognize the standard God has put forth for pleasing Him. We are not talking about matters of judgment such as what time to have services, what color to paint the meeting place or anything such as that. What we are talking about is the doctrine which we practice. Paul told Timothy that, "All Scripture inspired of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly furnished unto every good work," (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We know that God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33), and as such gives man a standard which he can go by.

The admonition given to the Corinthian brethren was that they, "speak the same thing," (1 Cor. 1:10) and in order to accomplish that we must speak by the same standard. The verse points out the result of not speaking the same thing—division—which is displeasing unto God. The peace of God that is to rule in our hearts unites us in one body (Col. 3:15) because we have the same standard which we can go by. When one rejects the standard strife and division occurs.

Often times members of the church of Christ are accused of being divisive; however, the opposite is true. Our plea is for unity, but for unity based upon God's truth. We believe in uniting men under one standard, the Bible. It being the inspired word of God it is the ultimate standard which if one adheres to it peace and unity can reign. God does not wish for us to base our service to Him on our own opinions of what He will like or dislike,

He does not reveal one thing to one and something else to another, this is confusion. Rather God has given us a standard for unity.

There are matters of liberty pointed out in the New Testament (Rom. 14), and we should be careful not to bind where God has not bound, nor loose where He has not loosed; however, the core principles of God's word are the same for everyone. No one can be pleasing to Him and reject His standard for salvation, the work of the church or any such thing He has given specific instruction or example for.

Some today cry for unity, but do not accept the standard. The question is who causes division when such is opposed? Is it the one who believes there are 36 inches in a yard, the standard, or the one whose yardstick is only 30 inches?

Recognizing that there is a common standard, the Bible, we then ask the question: Can we all understand the Bible alike? The claim is frequently made: You understand the Bible one way, and I understand it another. Neither of us should condemn the other. Another variation of the same tune is this: Well, that is your interpretation of the Scriptures. I have mine as well. Perhaps both of us are right. These statements contain a logical contradiction. There is no such thing as "understanding the Bible differently." If two people differ on the meaning of a Biblical text, one of them is wrong about the matter — possibly both. We might "misunderstand" something differently, but we do not "understand" something differently. Moreover, a passage does not yield two different interpretations; somewhere, there is a "misinterpretation".

We operate daily upon the presumption that we, frail mortals though we are, can make ourselves understood to our peers. A department store places an advertisement in the newspaper about an upcoming sale. Hundreds of people flock to the same establishment on the correct day at the right time expecting specific items at a certain price to be available for purchase. How is it that they understand the ad alike?

A physician prescribes an antibiotic for someone with the flu, do we believe that the pharmacist will understand what the doctor has prescribed, and are we confident that we can understand the instructions for taking the medicine?

Understanding The Standard (Cont.)

If we can sensibly operate our lives on a routine basis, recognizing that we are able to communicate with one another in an intelligible fashion, why can't we acknowledge that God, who is infinitely wiser and abler than man, can clearly make His will known to humanity?

If one suggests that Jehovah could not clearly make Himself known to man, he reflects upon the power of the Lord. If one argues that God purposely did not reveal Himself to mankind in a lucid fashion, he reflects upon the benevolence of his Maker. If one contends that man has no responsibility to understand and to obey the precepts of the Scriptures, it is he who evidences great ignorance of his obligation to Heaven.

The Bible is replete with passages which have as their underlying basis the assumption that we can uniformly understand our divine responsibility as made known in the sacred writings. Consider the following:

Christ declared that man shall not live by bread alone, but *"by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). If spiritual life is only to be found in the words from God, does it not stand to reason that humanity is capable of understanding that message?

When Jesus rebuked the Sadducees for their error concerning the resurrection of the human body, He charged that a part of their problem was that they were ignorant of the scriptures (Mt. 22:29). Does this not presuppose that had they been good students of the Old Testament they could have uniformly known that there was to be a resurrection of the body?

Though none of us was alive to witness the first-century miracles performed by the Lord Jesus, the history of those events was written down in order that we might believe those signs which documented the Master's claim of deity (Jn. 20:30-31). Can we believe the biblical narratives regarding Christ's deeds, and confidently have a united understanding that He is the Son of God? If not, of what value is the New Testament?

Of the early church it is said: *"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul"* (Acts 4:32). How could such a statement possibly be made unless those early saints were capable of agreeing upon the apostolic instruction?

The citizens of the city of Berea were considered to be nobler than those of Thessalonica, because they received the word of God with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily to determine the accuracy of what they were being taught (see Acts 17:11). Does this affirmation not imply that these inquirers were able to draw harmo-

nious conclusions about the word of God?

The Christians in Rome were commanded to be on the look-out for those who caused divisions and occasions of stumbling *"contrary to the doctrine which ye learned"* (Rom. 16:17). If we cannot understand the Bible alike, how could anyone ever be disciplined for walking contrary to sound doctrine? That would make no sense whatever.

In the New Testament epistles, the churches are constantly admonished to *"speak the same thing,"* to be free from divisions, and to *"be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (1 Cor. 1:10; cf. Phil. 2:2). How can we possibly take this instruction seriously if we are incapable of understanding the Bible alike?

The apostle Paul plainly declared that by reading the message which he wrote, we would be able to perceive his understanding of the gospel of Christ (see Eph. 3:1-7). He thus charges: *"Wherefore be ye not foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is"* (Eph. 5:17). Can we understand the Bible? Of course we can. Can we understand it alike? Why not?

If we can understand that $2 + 2 = 4$; then we can understand: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mk. 16:16). We can understand that there is *"one body"* (Eph. 4:4), and that that body is the church (Col. 1:18). We can further know that salvation is in that body (Eph. 5:23), and outside of that body no redemption is to be found (2 Tim. 2:10). The problem with those who contend that men cannot agree upon the scripture's teaching is simply this: they are seeking a way to **justify error!**

Friends, let's make it our goal to understand the Bible **alike**. Only in this way can we truly *"keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Eph. 4:3).

If you are interested in any of the following please check the appropriate box and mail to the address below. Please include return address and phone number if possible.

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