

GLEANINGS — January 18, A.D. 2015
Textual Criticism, Part One

Textual criticism when Scripture is the text? What a concept! It smacks of an incredible arrogance. As if man, instead of living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, could treat Scripture like food columnists who discuss the pros and cons of certain restaurants and the meals they serve!

Be assured that rightly understood, that is not the meaning of the term. Yes, there is something called "higher criticism." Its lofty ideas have been brought low again and again as believers worked to destroy intellectual strongholds of the kingdom of darkness in the spirit of 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Ephesians 5:11. Yes, there is the danger that an uninstructed Christian might be led into doubt as he considers this perplexing subject. Take that as a call to advance in knowing what you believe and why you believe it!

The Gospel of Mark chapter 16, verses 9-20, provides a wonderful opportunity to do that. Comparing different English translations of that passage (originally written in ancient Greek), we find that different translators handle it in diverse ways, some even omitting the verses. Many Bibles have footnote statements about comparative ancient manuscripts. Some put the verses in brackets. What are we to make of all this? Let's go straight to the Word of God, the source of truth in all areas of knowledge.

Regarding portions of itself, the Bible teaches there are, "...some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction..." (cf. 2 Peter 3:16). Following are seven Biblical calls to hearts renewed by the power of the Gospel, preached by Holy Spirit sent from Heaven (1 Peter 1:12), to lay hold by faith on the trustworthiness of Scripture as the same Holy Spirit illumines those renewed hearts by His divine power:

1. "And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God." (Exodus 31:18)
2. "Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, than fine gold! Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right; I hate every false way." (Psalm 119:127,128)
3. "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him." (Proverbs 30:5)
4. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." (Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, and Luke 21:33 – *identical words in the same order in the original language in all three referenced verses; of course it is the Lord Jesus Christ Who is speaking*)
5. "...and the Scripture cannot be broken." (from John 10:35 – *a parenthetical but not one bit less authoritative assertion of the Lord Jesus Christ*)
6. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)
7. "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

Upon this solid rock we stand by faith alone, making no excuses for that. And we rest assured that any skeptical challenges to the infallible, inerrant, God-breathed and hence fully authoritative holy Bible can be effectively addressed. In the words of old time radio broadcasters, "Stay tuned..."