

Our Chart and Compass for this Year

Leonard Ravenhill:

Without a qualified guide, no mountain climber would attempt such an ambitious enterprise as the conquest of Mt. Everest. Before he reaches the upper areas of the Himalayas, which are shrouded in mists and blizzards, and have concealed crevices, he must cross a wilderness of ice. Every mountain climber knows there is but a step betwixt him and death. He may have the best climbing gear, his chart and compass may be the last word in efficiency, but still he needs a guide.

Modern ships are equipped with radar; some are loaded with sounding gear. Yet they are compelled to carry chart and compass, and at certain points must take a licensed pilot aboard.

Dare we as Christians attempt to walk the lonely heights of spirituality in the coming year without the chart of the Word of God and the guide of the Holy Spirit? Is the sea of life that is before us in this year less dangerous than the choppy ocean before the Atlantic liner?

It would be a good thing if, at the beginning of what must be a very fateful year in the affairs of men, we would say with the patient Job: "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

Once again in many parts of the earth, the Word of the Lord is being blamed, burned, or banned. History is repeating itself. But God's Word is imperishable and infallible. Even in this super-scientific age we have no apologies to make for the Bible. It is God's final word to man. It is at the present God's only word to man. It is an infallible revelation from an infallible God to fallible man.

Any society which obeys the Bible's ten basic commandments can stand. Any society which disobeys these divine decrees will fall - however buttressed with wealth or military might.

A few years ago, amid the pomp and circumstance of the coronation of the present Queen Elizabeth of England, there was a pause in the ceremony. Then her Majesty was presented with a copy of the Bible and these words: This is the greatest treasure that earth affords. How true!

The blessed Word of the living God is more than a book of texts. It is also a textbook. The Bible is the only textbook which has charted the whole pathway for every man who has his back to the City of Destruction and his face to the City of God.

The Christian's pilgrimage is uphill all the way, and the staff upon which he leans is the Word of the Lord. The child of God must bear the burden and heat of the day, and the well of comfort from which he drinks continually is the Word of God. The Christian's way is dark, and the Word alone can be a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path.

All life has its hazards. Wild beasts of the forest devour each other; cats pounce on mice; dogs kill cats; men kill dogs. Even the silent trees have their enemies. To all "life" there is the ever-present danger of a greater power.

The socialist says his enemy is undisturbed wealth. The school teacher seeks to destroy ignorance. Medical science battles with disease. Some wage war with untiring zeal against class distinctions and race-color barriers. The Christian life has more hazards than them all.

The Christian knows that to antagonize him and assail his march to heaven there are at least three great powers: the world, the flesh, and the devil. To combat these mighty foes, a merciful God has given us yet three greater powers: the blood of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God. Just now I am thinking particularly of only the third power, the Word of God.

A Christian's muscles and sinews will strain under the loads which the Spirit will give. To insure spiritual stamina, each believing burden-bearer must eat the strong meat of the Word.

Satan, the enemy of souls, snipes pilgrims from behind some innocent-looking bush. A return volley must be given with the same weapon that the conquering Christ used -- "It is written." We overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. The sword of the Spirit must be ours too.

There is an inner reading of the Word of the Lord. In order to have this, the Holy Spirit, the Author of the Word,

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comes to indwell the believer and interpret the Word. Jesus said that man cannot live by bread alone.

But mankind does not even try to live by bread alone. He drinks at forbidden springs, steals forbidden fruit, and tries to slake his soul-thirst with forbidden stimulants.

Yet he who has embraced God-made prohibitions is glad that the Spirit himself, the Teacher, the Eternal Wisdom, condescends to take of the things of Jesus and reveal them to US.

The only problem in Christianity is living it. The best Christian is not necessarily a theologian with a mind as keen as a razor. To live the life that God honors, we must first read the Word, then we must obey it. This means that we must practice the Word, that knowledge must be transferred into action. "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only," said our great Teacher.

Therefore, in this coming year, let us read the Bible to be wise, let us practice the Bible to be holy, and let us obey the Bible to be blessed!

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