

Those Oldies But Goodies

Introduction:

(show an old plug in wired phone)

How many know what this is? Yes, it is a phone, but not just any phone. Most of us have cell phones, or at least cordless phones so we are not tied to a cord anymore. See, this phone only lets me go so far...

But what happens when our cells phones run out of battery life? We cannot use them. And what happens to our cordless phones in the house when there is a power shortage? You cannot use them. But not so with these phones. Even when there is no power they still work. They do not need to be charged and they do not need a powered base to work. They simply need the little trickle of power that sends the signal through the wires and you still have your phone. That is why I kept this old phone in the closet – just in case there was a power outage and I needed to contact someone in an emergency.

You know many people would say this phone is old and useless. But I think I have just explained that this old phone actually has value.

Today many people look at old things and think they are worthless. They even look at older people and say they useless – so when they look for new employees they want someone young and fresh with new ideas. What they may forget is that experience is also a great asset.

Today's passage speaks about something old that Jesus says we must value, because no matter how old some things get, they are still important and useful. Jesus was not talking about telephones, or even people. Jesus was talking about the scriptures, which he sums up as the Law and the Prophets. These were two of the major divisions in the Old Testament of Jesus' day, and they stood for all of the scriptures God gave to His people. When Jesus lived, there was no New Testament, so we are sure he is referring to the Old Testament here.

You see, some people have a very negative view of the Old Testament. They do not think it should be in our Bibles...

First, some say it is difficult to understand.

Granted, some places are, but have you read the Old Testament? It is there we read about Creation, about Noah and the ark, about Abraham's faith, and Joseph in Egypt. It is in the Old Testament we read about the boy David who took down a nine-foot giant with a slingshot! It is there we read of Daniel and the lions den, and Elisha calling fire from heaven, Nehemiah building a wall while under attack, and Jeremiah thrown into a well and Isaiah seeing the glory of God. We could spend a lifetime studying these characters of the Old Testament and learn the lessons about faith and obedience they would teach us.

There may be some things hard to understand – like why there is so much killing, or why so many lists of names and so many chapters with instructions on how to make a tabernacle. But stick with what you can understand and you will have more than enough to study for years to come.

Second, some say it is too old – so it is not relevant.

Seriously – not relevant? The Old Testament describes what happens when people do not listen to God – both as individuals or as nations. It warns us that when we reject God it leads to wars, disease and death. Sound familiar?

It describes families that do not get along, or greedy people who plot evil just to get a piece of land. It tells of jealousy and gossip, murder and betrayal. These themes just never go away as long as there are people - and there is sin.

But more important, it tells how people are to come to God, and it tells of the Saviour who would come and rescue people from their sins at the cost of his own life. Yes, all those things are found in the Old Testament, and we know they were speaking about Jesus who would come hundreds of years after the texts were written. How could they know? It was God speaking through His Spirit who inspired these words.

Third, some want to say Jesus did away with the need for the Old Testament.

What does Jesus say about that? Look again at our text. Jesus says:

1. I did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them.

What does this mean? It means the Old Testament was written to point to Jesus. Every story, every commandment, every prophecy, every song was written to prepare the hearts of people for Jesus. When Peter preached about Jesus he only used the Old Testament. When Paul preached, he used the Old Testament to prove Jesus was the Messiah, the Saviour promised by God, and that we all should repent of our sin and come follow him. If you are not looking for Jesus when you read the Old Testament then you will miss the point of what is written there. But read it with faith in Jesus and you will discover why Jesus had to come and give his life for the salvation of all people. You will see God's plan.

2. Jesus also said: For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law **until everything is accomplished.**

Jesus says that God is revealing something in the Scripture that must not be changed. It is as true today as the day it was written, even if that was four thousand years ago. You see, the scriptures reveal first and foremost who God is – Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Saviour. From Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 God is being revealed to those who will read the scriptures by faith and pay attention to them.

But they also reveal that God has a plan, and His plan is to redeem, or save, everyone who will turn back to him by faith. We lost our relationship with God in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned. Sin always destroys relationships. We have been cursed with sin since that day. But God did not give up on us, and he revealed a plan that would lead us to Jesus, the only One who can deal with our sin problem. Every story, every commandment, every song was meant to reveal the God who loved the world so much he would send his one and only son, that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life.

So, is everyone a Christian? Has everyone repented of their sin and asked Jesus to forgive them, and come into their lives? Is the whole world serving Jesus as Lord? Far from it – and so we still need God’s Word, we need the Old and New Testaments to show us the way to salvation. Their task is not fulfilled yet...

Jesus gives a stern warning, that we cannot ignore the scriptures, Old and New Testaments, or “set aside” one of the least of God’s commandments. We must understand what they meant and how they point to Jesus. He is not saying we will earn our way to heaven by keeping the commandments. That is what the Pharisees tried, and they failed. Jesus says we must do far better than that. Not by keeping the law to earn God’s favour – hoping we are good enough to get to heaven. No we will look at the scriptures and see how they point us to Jesus and the salvation he offers us through faith, and what living by faith looks like.

How many children are starting to miss school? Do you miss being with your friends? Do you miss your favourite teachers who make learning interesting? I remember the year our son had a temporary teacher filling in for the regular English teacher. This teacher was very encouraging to Peter, and pointed out his strengths in writing. Soon he was enjoying writing and he was excited about the things he was learning. Unfortunately the regular teacher returned and he was not as good at inspiring Peter and soon the class was boring once again.

The Apostle Paul says the law, the Old Testament with its stories and rules and instructions acted like a teacher to point us to a better way – pointing us to Jesus. Paul writes, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” (Galatians 3:24)

What if you could have the perfect teacher who could teach you in such a way that you loved school, loved learning and you excelled? What if you had a teacher who taught you all that was really important and you were set for the rest of your life – you were equipped to live a happy and productive life. Wouldn’t you like a teacher like that?

This is what Paul was saying in Galatians the Bible is like – yes, even the Old Testament. And this is what Jesus was getting at in our text for today. We read the Bible so we can know more about Jesus. We learn why he came to earth, and how he helps people who are in need. We discover the reason why he went to the cross of Calvary and died there. We discover that it was because you and I are sinners, and we deserved punishment and death. But he took our punishment, he died in our place, so we could be forgiven and have eternal life. So if we

confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Jesus wants all of us to be with him in heaven. He could be coming back to earth soon, so he wants you and me to know how we can be forgiven of our sin and have eternal life. He says the Law and the Prophets, the scriptures will show us the way to Jesus.

Don't get caught up in keeping rules as the way to earn your way to God. God gave us the rules to protect us and make our lives happier and safer. But what really pleases God?

Jesus put it this way: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and all your strength. And love your neighbour as you love yourself. Do this and you will fulfill all the law. (cf. Mark 12:30-31)

Love God, the God revealed throughout scripture, the God who came to earth as Jesus, the God who will come again to take us to our heavenly home.

The scriptures may be old – some very old, but they are very good. Value them, treasure them because they will lead you to Jesus. Their purpose and fulfilment is found when we discover Jesus as our personal Lord and Saviour. Are they fulfilling their purpose in you?

Yes, sometimes the oldies are the goodies...

And speaking of oldies, let me recite the words of an old hymn:

Tell me the old, old story,
Of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory,
Of Jesus and His love;
Tell me the story simply,
As to a little child,
For I am weak and weary,
And helpless and defiled.

Tell me the old, old story,
Tell me the old, old story,
Tell me the old, old story,
Of Jesus and His love.