

## A DANGEROUS RULE.

Says a contemporary: – "Accept the truth as it is set forth in the Bible as a whole, and let isolated passages wait to be reconciled to this truth, until further study, experience and light from heaven. There are a number of doctrines which I firmly hold to the joy and rejoicing of my heart, because I believe that the Bible as a whole fully supports them, and yet there are some passages that I cannot satisfactorily to myself harmonize with those doctrines. I do not think it is possible to lay too much emphasis on this point. Draw your conclusions from a consideration of the teachings of the entire Word upon any given subject, and then **hold to these CONCLUSIONS, notwithstanding** your inability to harmonize single passages therewith."

This is a common and dangerous rule; so common that it scarcely needs an advocate, yet so dangerous that few public teachers would dare advocate it. Briefly stated, it is, select a theory for yourself regarding the general teaching of the Bible and "**firmly hold**" on to it. If any meet you with a passage of Scripture contradicting your theory, still **hold firmly** to your theory with joy and rejoicing of heart, and tell them their quotations are "isolated passages." This is the very course pursued for centuries by all the various religious sects, and it has kept them separate – each member rejoicing in, and holding firmly to the theory of presumed Bible doctrine which circumstances and education have led him to regard as the "general teaching of the Bible." And thus each withstands the truth; and growth is impossible by reason of the common defence: "You quote only an isolated passage."

The Bible, when rightly understood, is one harmonious whole, and in proportion as these "isolated passages" are ignored, the theory built is sure to be erroneous: hence the danger of the rule quoted above. And the more closely such a rule is followed, the more surely will error be firmly held and truth firmly rejected and ignored. If this common

dangerous rule were not followed, many false and pernicious theories would fall. The special effort of the journal referred to, seems to be to overthrow faith in the Bible doctrine of the ransom. It claims that God IN JUSTICE OWES mankind a restitution, and hence that we were not bought, redeemed, with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, notwithstanding the statements of Paul and Peter (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:19.) It holds to an opposite view, "with joy and rejoicing of heart." It claims that Jesus did not give himself a *ransom* [*antilutron*, a corresponding price] for all (1 Tim. 2:6), and that he was not a propitiation [*hilasmos*, satisfaction] for our sins. (1 John 2:2.) Its readers have probably been asking how these and a hundred more of the most pointed passages in the Scriptures, including the sacrifices typical and real, can be explained away. These our contemporary frankly acknowledges it cannot explain away, but would have its readers ignore as "isolated passages," and accept its claim of being supported by the Bible as a whole.

"The Bible as a whole," and "the general teaching of the Bible," are very common expressions among many whose theories are very far from "the general teaching of the Bible as a whole." The Bible as a whole, never teaches that which any portion of it contradicts. The general teaching of the Bible on any subject, can only be obtained by a careful comparison of all that is written concerning it. And we should never conclude that we have the truth on any subject of divine revelation, so long as there is a single passage that contradicts, or is out of harmony with what we conceive to be the general teaching. The perfect harmony of every statement of Scripture with reference to any subject is the only proof of the correctness of our interpretation.

And while our contemporary deems this error of ignoring any passages of Scripture which contradict or oppose its theories, as a principle of primary importance, and thinks it cannot lay too much stress upon it, we would warn the children of God to beware of any such counsel. It is the snare of the adversary which will lead any who are so listless and careless as to be drawn into it, away from the truth,

and possibly to entire shipwreck of faith. Guided by this false principle, the journal referred to has drifted away from the rock foundation of faith, the ransom. Upon no other principle than this pernicious error, upon which it lays special stress, can any other plan of salvation claim Scriptural support. This dangerous rule is followed, though not generally so boldly stated, by every journal that advocates salvation without a ransom.

If in all the Bible there is one doctrine more than any other which can be denominated, the teaching of the Bible *as a whole*, it is the doctrine of a ransom for all – of a price paid by Jesus for us, on account of our sins, on account of, or through which, present access to God, and future blessings upon all depend. It is the scarlet thread running all through the Scriptures. It attests both the heinousness of sin, and the love of God in providing the way of salvation, as well as the love of Jesus Christ our Lord in carrying out that plan for our redemption and restoration to favor.

The sacrifices of forty centuries commanded and acknowledged of God as types of the true sin-offering, the words of Jesus himself, the fact of his death, and the many expressions and elaborate arguments in the writings of the Apostles, attest the fact that according to God's arrangement, "Without the shedding of blood" there could be "no remission of sins," no "reconciliation for iniquity," no "access to God," no "life;" hence no restitution. All these attest also, that not the blood of bulls and goats, nor the service of the typical priests, could "take away sin" and open up the way of life, but the blood, the life of Christ, *as* the "Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world;" and that "He put away [our] sins by the sacrifice of himself." – Heb. 9:26; John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:19.

Against this very general as well as very particular teaching of the Bible, not one solitary passage offers contradiction. Shall we ignore this testimony, and call these texts isolated passages, and accept and rejoice in any theory to the contrary?

We suggest a more correct and safe rule for the study of Bible doctrine, which is the very reverse of the one given by our contemporary, viz: –

Confess the ignorance of yourself and your friends regarding God's plans except as revealed by him in the Bible. Come to its study free from prejudice, ready to receive its teachings and to reason from its standpoint. Whatever theories may present themselves either from your own mind, or from others, prove all by a rigid examination in the light of every statement of Scripture bearing upon it; and while there are passages which you "cannot satisfactorily harmonize," DO NOT HOLD your theory very *firmly*.

There are picture puzzles made which will illustrate this principle. The block of wood bearing the picture is cut into all sorts of shapes, some of them much like others in size but all bearing different portions of the one picture. After these pieces are disarranged, the puzzle is to get each into its proper place again and thus produce again the original picture. Those who have tried it, know that the larger blocks bearing larger portions of the picture are most easily located, and if rightly placed facilitate the placing of the smaller pieces very greatly; but if one of these larger pieces be misplaced, it produces utter confusion in the placing of the smaller pieces, and though none can feel *sure* that he has it worked out correctly until the last piece is fitted in place properly, his assurance must be in proportion as the harmony of the picture progresses and the number of unplaced pieces decreases.

So it is in the study of the Plan of God; it is given to us complete but dislocated in the Bible. The largest piece of all – the centre to which all others must be matched and fitted is the doctrine of salvation through the ransom. To it all other features of the plan must be fitted *perfectly*, and our assurance and the firmness with which we hold to any theory regarding God's plan should be in proportion only as the unfitted portions diminish.

To put together a picture and leave out the center piece, hoping that when we had made a picture of our own of the smaller and less important and distinct pieces, we should be able perhaps to have it complete without the main center piece, would be to follow the rule our contemporary suggests. You might make a sort of a picture thus, but it would give but a distorted and imperfect view at best. The grandeur and perfection and strength of the complete and finished view can only be had when all the parts are harmoniously fitted to the grand central truth of redemption through a ransom – a corresponding price.

Let each bear in mind that the Bible as a whole does not teach that which any portion of it contradicts. Hence we denominate a dangerous rule the one first given, though the editor of that journal professes to seek in *this way* for the Spirit of the Word.

