

Impact 3:16

Understanding Hard To Understand Writings (II Pt 3:14-18)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning,
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of lessons on 3:16 that impact our lives.
 - a. Last week we looked at “Blessings For Sufferings.”
 - i. **I Pt 3:13-16** “Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”
 - b. This week we are going to look at “Understanding Hard To Understand Writings.”
 - i. **II Pt 3:15-16** “And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.”
3. Background to our text.
 - a. Peter begins chapter 3 by showing that his purpose is to remind them of the Scriptures pertaining to Christ’s second coming.
 - i. **II Pt 3:1-2**
 - b. Peter continues chapter 3 by writing of the certainty of the return of Christ.
 - i. **II Pt 3:3-7**
 - c. Peter continues chapter 3 by telling the brethren why Christ has delayed coming back...His patience for us.
 - i. **II Pt 3:8-9**
 - d. Peter continues chapter 3 by telling of what will happen on that great day of Christ’s return.
 - i. **II Pt 3:10-13**
 - e. Peter continues chapter 3 by telling the brethren how they ought to be if they want to partake in the resurrection with Christ.
 - i. **II Pt 3:14-18**
4. It is here in this last section that we find our text.
 - a. In the midst of this section Peter writes concerning Paul’s writings.
 - i. Notice Peter was very acquainted with Paul his “beloved brother.”
 1. This was written “after” Ga 2:11ff.
 - ii. Notice Peter’s recipients were acquainted with Paul’s writings as well.
 1. Paul’s letters had obviously been circulated beyond their original recipients as well as was the intention of God.
 - b. Of Paul’s writings Peter mentions that “There are some things in them that are hard to understand.”
5. Let us this day look at how we can understand those hard to understand writings.

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I. Misunderstandings Concerning Paul's Writings

- A. All of Paul's writings are hard to understand
 - 1. Far too many people today think of Paul's writings as difficult and hard to understand.
 - i. This has led many to simply ignore his writings.
 - 2. However Peter never said all of Paul's writings were hard to understand only "some" of them.
 - i. To give up on the "inspired Word" is simply not acceptable.
- B. Some of Paul's writings are impossible to understand
 - 1. Some contend that Peter is implying that some of Paul's writings are impossible to understand.
 - i. This has led to two different results.
 - a. First it leads people to do what we just mentioned above and that is give up on certain teachings.
 - 1. Look at how many (in the brotherhood) ignore the book of Romans.
 - b. Second it leads people to twist them to their own desires.
 - 1. Look at what so many have done with the book of Romans and other passages of Paul's writings.
 - i. Luther add the word "only" to "justified by faith" to Paul's writings in Romans.
 - 2. Barclay wrote, "Paul's doctrine of grace was twisted into an excuse and even a reason for sin (Romans 6). Paul's doctrine of Christian freedom was twisted into an excuse for unchristian licence (Galatians 5:13). Paul's doctrine of faith was twisted into an argument that Christian action was unimportant, as we see in James..." (WVBS Notes on II Peter pg. 110)
 - 2. However Peter never once wrote that any of Paul's writings were impossible to understand in fact we know that is simply not true we can know and understand all of God's Word.
 - i. **Jn 8:32** "and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."¹
 - ii. **Jn 17:17** "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."
- C. All or some of Paul's writings need "someone specific" to interpret them
 - 1. This is a common ploy by denominational leaders to try and "pull the wool over" the eyes of the members where they are.
 - i. If members can only understand the meaning of Scripture if they are told the meaning then the leaders can "twist" the meaning however they choose.
 - a. Then the members are none the wiser because they think they cannot understand the Scriptures anyway!!!

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted. If other translations are used this is not necessarily an endorsement of the translation.

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2. However this could not be further from the truth and is not what Peter meant.
 - i. At no time does Peter suggest this here or in **II Pt 1:20**.
 - ii. God is clear that He expects everyone not just the “religious experts” to interpret Scripture and interpret it accurately.
 - a. **Ep 3:4** “When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ”
 - b. Coffman wrote, “After all, it was the "religious experts" who crucified Christ in the beginning, demonstrating once and finally that of all the people on earth most likely to miss it, it is the "religious experts." (from Coffman's Bible Commentary, Copyright © 1971-1993 by ACU Press, Abilene Christian University. All rights reserved.)

D. Thus...

1. Peter never intended for anyone to think Paul’s writings could not be understood.

II. Understanding The Hard Writings Of Scripture

A. First we must remove our ignorance

1. More Scripture is abused due to ignorance than anything else.
 - i. For example:
 - a. Think of all the billions of people that think the “sinners prayer” is in the Bible.
 - b. Think of all the billions of people that think the Bible doesn’t say baptism saves.
 - c. Think of all the billions of people that think “once saved always saved” can be found in the Bible.
 - d. Think of all the billions of people that think the Bible says you only have to meet on Sunday mornings to worship.
 - ii. As God put it...
 - a. **Ho 4:6** “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...”
 - iii. Removing ignorance of a hard writing means...
 - a. Knowing the content of the entire book the difficult text is found.
 - b. Knowing the context of the passage the difficult text is found.
 - c. Knowing the other clear passages concerning the subject of the difficult text.
2. Only “after” we remove our ignorance can we then continue on to understanding the more difficult passages.

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- B. Second we must recognize translation vs original
1. Difficult texts are often misunderstood because people have relied on translations as perfect and ignored the original.
 - i. There are a growing number of people that seem to hold on more to what the English translation says than the original language says.
 - a. I am not saying that there are not very good translations out there.
 1. The KJV, NKJV, ESV, ASV, NASV are among the great translations out there and everyone should have as their main study Bible one of these.
 - b. I am not saying everyone must learn the original language.
 - ii. Unless one is completely ignorant of what a translation is one cannot suggest that a translation is better than the original.
 - a. Example:
 1. **Ac 2:27** “Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” (KJV)
 - i. “For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” (NKJV)
 2. **I Co 7:15** “But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.” (NKJV)
 - i. “But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.” (ESV)
 3. **Mt 5:17** “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (ESV)
 - i. **Mt 5:17** “Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.” (ASV)
 - ii. **Ep 2:15** “by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace (ESV)
 2. Only after we recognize that translations are inferior to the original can we begin to properly understand the difficult passages in the Bible.

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- C. Third we must understand grammar counts
1. There have been many hard passages abused because people have simply ignored the grammar of the passage.
 - i. Example
 - a. Think of the billions that have heard that the Bible teaches a Christian that divorces a non-Christian can remarry because they are not bound after the divorce anymore to the non-Christian.
 1. Yet **I Co 5:15** clearly has the word “bound” or “enslaved” in the perfect tense.
 2. That is significant because the word bound therefore is dealing with the past to the present not the present to the future.
 - i. In other words Paul wrote that Christian has not ever been bound and continues to not be bound to a non-Christian.
 - ii. This word cannot be dealing with the marriage bond (**Ro 7:1-4**) then it must be a different bondage.
 - a. It is talking about slavery to another and thus a Christian is not enslaved to a non-Christian so they do not have to follow the non-Christian.
 - b. However they are enslaved to Christ (**I Co 7:21**).
 2. Only after we recognize the importance of grammar will we be able to properly determine the hard to understand passages.

D. Fourth we must be open to the answer

 1. Unfortunately many hard passages are made more difficult because people bring their preconceived ideas into the study.
 - i. Example:
 - a. Think of all the billions of people that have determined the book of Revelation is dealing with the false doctrine of Premillennialism.
 - ii. Being open to the answer is what allows God to speak and us to listen through His Word.
 - a. I’m not say ignore other passages on the subject (we already covered the need to use other passages) I’m saying to assume the answer before the study begins.
 1. Use the other passages to guide the study don’t use them ignore the facts of the study.
 2. Only after we recognize being open minded is vital to proper understanding can we begin to study the difficult passages and know what God wants us to know.

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- E. Fifth we must never think there is more than one interpretation of facts
1. The denominational world has worn off into the brotherhood in the area of “my interpretation is as good as yours.”
 - i. The denominational world has long said your interpretation and my interpretation can be different and that is ok because they can both be right.
 - a. Let me clarify right now that I am not saying that on every subject we must all come to the same conclusion as there are “subjects” in Scripture that are left to opinion.
 1. These subjects never have to do with salvational issues though.
 - b. However there can be no chance, even on opinion issues, that two differing conclusions can be right.
 1. God’s Word is truth and therefore has only one answer to the information.
 2. With “all Scripture” we are to come to the same mind and speak the same things concerning the facts no matter the subject opinion or salvational.
 - i. **I Co 1:10** “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” (NKJV)
 - ii. The only way to understand difficult passages is to understand there is no such thing as an interpretation as far as God is concerned.
 2. Only after we recognize there is no such thing as interpretation in God’s eyes can we begin to understand the hard writings of Scripture.

CONCLUSION

1. There can be no doubt that there are difficult passages in Scripture and Paul wrote some of those however it should never be seen as a deterrent but rather a challenge and chance to mature.
 - a. God put those there for us to study and if we ignore them we sin against God.
 - b. God put those there for us to study and if we simply just skim them we sin against God.
 - c. God put those there for us to study and the only way we can be pleasing to God is for us to put our full mental might into each study to better understand the Mind of God.
2. Question: Are you putting your full and complete mental might into studying the “whole counsel of God” and not just some of the counsel of God?
 - a. My hope and prayer is that you choose to put your full mental might into studying.
 - b. For those that have not done this make the choice now to change and be found right in the sight of God again as one concerned for His entire Word not just the parts you deemed relevant.

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3. Invitation

- a. For those that are Christians but are not living for Christ repent by confessing your sins to God that He may forgive you and dedicate your life/time back to Him.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7, 9** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- b. For those that are not Christians or for those that think they are Christians and want to know for sure notice what is required to become a child of God or Christian according to God and God only.
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Have Faith In Jesus **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**