

THE ROLE OF SCRIPTURE  
IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

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December, 2006

The role of Scripture in the believer's life has long been a subject of debate. There are two major views on this issue: "Centralism" and "Peripheralism." These terms will not be found in any dictionary, but are the contribution of this author to aid in understanding the two opposing mindsets. In the "Centralist" view, the teachings and principles of Scripture are relevant to and should guide every decision in the believer's life. It is the "light" for the "path,"<sup>1</sup> "understanding to the simple,"<sup>2</sup> and equips believers "for every good work."<sup>3</sup> This view would point out that the Christian must "do" what the Bible says.<sup>4</sup> In the view of the "Peripheralist," the Bible has relevancy to certain issues of doctrine and beliefs, but as far as how to live a "good" life, there is not much relevance. It is an antiquated book which has some relevance but mostly sits on the peripheral of the believer's life to be referred to when needed. Christians who hold this view may point out that believer's "have the mind of Christ"<sup>5</sup> and that God's laws are in their "hearts" and "minds."<sup>6</sup> Some, may even say that they are guided by the Spirit of Christ and not the letter of the Law.

Unfortunately for the latter view, Paul also warns that there is a spiritual war going on in the body of the believer.<sup>7</sup> Believers must continually have their mind transformed by Word of God: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 119.105.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 119.130.

<sup>3</sup> II Tim. 3.15-17.

<sup>4</sup> Jam. 1.25.

<sup>5</sup> I Cor. 2.16.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. 8.10.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. 7.23-25.

so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."<sup>8</sup> Note that transformation is a process and not a one-time event!<sup>9</sup> The Christian is not purged of all sinfulness inclinations at conversion. It is a constant struggle between the thoughts of man, and the thoughts of the Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

A helpful reminder of where the ways of man lead is found in the book of Judges which repeats and even ends with the phrase, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes."<sup>11</sup> The nation of Israel, God's people, were no longer concerned about God's Law, but were governed by their own thoughts and inclinations. What was the result? They were continually experiencing God's judgment for disobeying His Law.

While it is true that the Christian life is not about abiding by a set of rules, this does not mean that the Christian life is devoid of obedience to rules. The Apostle John proclaims: "*The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*"<sup>12</sup> The Great Commission itself proclaims obedience to the commands of Christ.<sup>13</sup> Even before the institution of the church, the Law was never intended to simply be a set of rules to be externally followed, but an outward expression of an inward love for God. With the coming of Christ, the Mosaic Law as the organizing principle of

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<sup>8</sup> Rom. 12.2.

<sup>9</sup> II Cor. 3.18.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Rom. 7.22-25.

<sup>11</sup> Jdg. 21.25.

<sup>12</sup> I Jn. 2.4-6.

<sup>13</sup> Mat. 28.20.

God's dealing with His people was replaced by the law of Christ. Yet, the principles behind even the Mosaic Law are timeless. The task for believers today is to evaluate the entirety of Scripture through the work of Christ in order to determine how it applies to the church. That is, in large measure, what the writers of the New Testament were doing.

So, a plain reading of Scripture leaves the believer without question that it was intended to be the at the center of a believer's life, not relegated to the sidelines. Along with David, the believer must acknowledge the Word of God as the "light" which guides him/her on the pathway of righteousness.<sup>14</sup> It is the trainer which equips the man or woman of God for life.<sup>15</sup> It is the believer's guidebook to a righteous life. It is the Word of God!

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<sup>14</sup> Ps. 119.105.

<sup>15</sup> II Tim. 3.16-17.