

It Is Written

It Is Written

It Is Written
It Is Written



It
Is
W
R
I
T
T
E
N

By Barbara Buzzard



We have a wonderful carved wood version of these words on our mantelpiece. They stimulate me and challenge me. They serve as our best defense, our lifeline, our best next step and our only authority. They provide that rock solid foundation which we all seek, the nonnegotiable that truly is. You cannot starve if you are feeding on these words but will grow in grace and knowledge. And not only that, they allow us to “number our days that we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90:12). Hazard a guess as to how many times these words appear in Scripture. “*It is written*” occurs 76 times, 60 in the New Testament and 16 in the Hebrew Bible. They might be important. Along these same lines are the phrases: “You err by not knowing the Scriptures,” and “Have you not read?” If we combine all three we have dozens of texts which we must pay the strictest attention to, because Jesus did.

These words were Jesus’ answer to temptation in the wilderness, and I’m certain, many other times when he was under fire. It is very interesting to note that Jesus’ agonizing question on the cross, “My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?” is a direct quotation of Psalm 22:1 which he obviously knew well. He must have reflected and meditated long and hard on this as we know he did on the other Scriptures. Theologically, we know that God did not forsake him, and yet he *felt* forsaken.

These words are the answer to Francis Schaeffer’s brilliant question, “How do we then live?” These are the *source* of our Christian energy. Especially when disaster strikes, or great tragedy, we live by feeding on the words of Scripture, and *not* by feelings. Feelings cannot be trusted and Scripture can, *always*. I go against popular psychology in saying that it doesn’t *matter* how you feel; it matters what is *true*. In our world of anti-intellectualism we suffer from “thinking with our feelings” and the result is that we do not think well. (I don’t excuse myself.)

“Indeed, feelings are functional only when they are under intellectual control. When the opposite is the case, when feelings rule thought processes, irrational thinking and behavior are the inevitable outcome. Furthermore, when feelings rule, facts become irrelevant. Examples abound of widely held beliefs that have little if any basis in fact. To the believers in question, that makes no difference. They *feel*, and that’s good enough for them.”¹

¹ *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, John Rosemond, “Thoughts count, feelings don’t”

Quoting Scripture can kill temptation. Stop it dead. Destroy it. Addressing a temptation with the sword of the Scriptures can put out temptation much like quenching a raging fire. Scripture is our authority and not the temptation. *It is written*. But we have to be prepared. We have to know what is written. The Evil One would like to take us out. Preparation and determination can prevent that. This is the homework phase of “resisting the Devil.” And facts must rule.

One of our biggest problems is that we want to behave as though it *had not been written*. We want optional extras when there are none. We want negotiables when there are none. We *pretend* in the controversy over same sex marriage that there is no mandate. Is Romans 1:26-27 ever quoted by the news media? There is a mandate – our instructions and guidelines have been written. The fact of our not liking what is written does not give us license to erase it, or ignore it, or change it.

Feelings over fact is the end result, the outworking of a culture that is anti-intellectual, as ours has so sadly become. The feelings vs. facts issue is even hinted at in the film *The Iron Lady* when Margaret Thatcher (Meryl Streep) reprimands her doctor who has asked her how she is feeling: “People don’t ‘think’ any more. They ‘feel.’ ‘How are you feeling?’ ‘Oh, I don’t feel comfortable with that’...One of the great problems of our age is that we are governed by people who care more about feelings than thoughts or ideas.” Professor Stephen Prothero comments: “Evangelicals show scant interest in learning what Scripture has to say or wrestling with what it might mean.” Wrestling – sounds like hard work and would be completely unnecessary when we can just consult our feelings. What a quick fix that is, and how devastating.

Where did we go wrong? Jesus’ answer: “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God” (Mat. 22:29). As my age increases, so do my regard and respect for the Scriptures. Funny that. It must be like the proverbial “too soon oldt, and too late schmartd.” Or like the son who said that he never realized how smart his father was until he (the son) reached 30. One reason for this intensification of regard for the Scriptures is that they are *so* right on each occasion and with reference to *everyone*. They are so right about the nature of man and his proneness to doing wrong. They always get you. Spot on. They nail everyone. No one gets off scot free. Man is true to form, deceitful in all his ways. Also, as we “adult up,” more and more of what this world has to offer is exposed as a sham or a scam or just finally recognized as nothing but flimsy. Just don’t give me flimsy; I haven’t the time.

When we give vent to feelings and let them rule our thought processes we behave like teenagers, “clueless in the universe,” as described by Janie Cheaney in *World* magazine. Have we idolized adolescence to the point of denying that aptitude/intelligence/wisdom are required? Have we suppressed our own judgment in favor of wrongheaded thinking? We all now know that research has shown that the adolescent brain is not even fully mature until around age 24. We know that good judgment comes with maturity and experience. This is not a comparison of virtues or worth. These are givens, as is the fact that teenagers are 4 times more likely to be involved in a crash than are older drivers. One important factor here is that forty year olds can remember and understand what it is like to be twenty. The reverse is obviously impossible. We have done our youth no favors by idealizing them. We have done ourselves (and them) a great disservice in not going after wisdom and leading the way to this pearl of great price. Have we aided and abetted the clueless?! (A disclaimer here: I have actually “fallen in love” with 5 teenagers this year, all from different families. They have each displayed such character traits that one could not help but love them. I am not anti young people.)

I read recently an author's thanks to a friend for teaching him to love the truth. It made me stop and think; I readily understand that not everyone does love the truth. But it simply reinforces for me that in our day and age, this skill and virtue must be *taught*. We must speak of these things in season and out of season, "teach them diligently to your sons and talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:7). That would be application of the faith of which we speak, putting one's faith to work with the accompanying "I've got your back" approach so necessary to living a Christian life.

Psalm 119:29 is so very interesting along these lines. My New Living translation actually has "Keep me from lying to myself." And Proverbs 14:8 speaks of fools deceiving *themselves*. Feelings can be false whereas facts cannot. Feelings, rather like a false friend, can betray us. So by knowing Scripture we can not only prevent sin against God but against our own selves as well. Psalm 119:11: "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Emotions can be debilitating and even paralyzing if we give them power. Scripture, on the other hand, is emboldening and life altering. Consider these guarantees we have been given: The Promises, The Blessed Hope, Unfailing love. If you were to sketch out further thoughts as to what is written, the list would be long and varied. It would include His story, our heritage, how to cope, how then should we live, and so much more.

Romans 3:4: "Though everyone else in the world is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say, 'He will be proved right in what he says, and he will win his case in court.'"

Matthew 4:4: "The Scriptures say, 'People need more than bread for their life; they must feed on every word of God.'"

It is necessary; it is urgent; it is of the highest priority that we do as the people in Luke's narration of Jesus: "The people hung on every word he said" (Luke 19:48). I am hanging! Hang with me, please!

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Buzzard