

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Law of harmony

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Lawyers at work have dominated the national scene lately. We have seen lawyers look at the same law from different viewpoints as they try to help their clients prevail. Judges have listened to the respective arguments and have ruled in favor of the view that is consistent with legislated law.

One talking head on television recently paralleled the fact, that people can interpret the same law in different and even contradictory ways, with the different interpretations he has heard from preachers concerning the same passage of Scripture. He did not give any specifics but said he had recently attended services at his mother's home church and heard the preacher comment on a verse and give an interpretation that was different from that which he had recently heard from a different preacher.

This is not a new experience. Many believe you can look at the Bible, and interpret it in different and contradictory ways. Proceeding from this experience one concludes that one's interpretation is as valid as another's. After all, who is going to presume to

be Omniscient as God and tell you which interpretation is correct?

One rule or law that should help us in interpreting the Bible is the one of *Harmony*. It stands upon the principle that Truth does not contradict itself. Therefore, if we come up with an interpretation of a passage that contradicts a clear meaning found in another passage of Truth, we know at least one interpretation is not valid. We must then find the interpretation that brings both passages into *harmony* with one another. Isaiah B. Grubbs, in his book, *Exegetical Analysis with Notes on Epistles*, defines this hermeneutical principle as that which “...requires such interpretation and application of a given passage as is consistent with other undoubted Scripture teaching” (p. 6).

Jesus applied this principle of using Scripture when the Devil quoted Scripture to Him. Satan, trying to move Jesus to jump off of the pinnacle of the temple to prove that Jesus is the Son of God, quoted from Psalm 91:11-12. He said, “...for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and on their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Matthew

4:5-6). Jesus responded by saying, “*Again it is written, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God*” (Matthew 4:7).

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16 to show that the Devil was applying Psalm 91:11-12 in an invalid way. Scripture must harmonize. For Jesus to deliberately jump off the pinnacle, plunging quickly to the ground, was to unnecessarily test God's faithfulness demanding that He miraculously intervene immediately and defy gravity.

Paul teaches man is justified “without works” in Romans 4:5. Yet, James reveals that man is justified “by works” (James 2:22). Luther spoke of the book of James as being “an epistle of straw.” He did so until he later realized that James is using “works” with a different contextual meaning from Paul's use of the same term. Paul is speaking of “works” by which “faith” is “made void” (Rom. 4:14), and James is speaking of “works” by which faith is “made perfect”. James is speaking of works of obedience, while Paul is speaking of works of Law. Let Scripture harmonize with itself to produce the correct interpretation.