

# It Is Written

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## Microwave Religion

*by Craig Thomas*

Undoubtedly today's world has many "conveniences": cell phones, instant pudding, remote controls, drive through restaurants, and microwave ovens. There's nothing inherently evil about conveniences, but living in such a world can lead us to develop unhealthy spiritual attitudes. Below are some examples that if practiced, lead to "microwave religion."

**Salvation without sacrifice.** Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luke 9:23) But about the only thing that differentiates most "Christians" from people of the world is that their name is on a church roll somewhere and they show up once in a while for a worship service (maybe!). You can't have salvation without sacrifice! Jesus asks for our sacrifice, not occasionally, but "daily"!

**Remission without repentance.** Repentance is perhaps God's hardest command. Repentance is more than saying you're sorry (2 Cor. 7:10). It requires us to change our mind and our behavior (Matt. 3:8). Repentance is an absolute requirement! "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3; cf. Acts 17:30). "God...now commands all men everywhere to repent," that's you, that's me, that's everyone! (Acts 17:30)

**Righteousness without obedience.** Many people excuse themselves of obeying God, "I'm just human!" they cry. But the Bible says, "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (1 John 2:3) Claiming to know God without keeping His commands makes us a liar! (1 John 2:4) Jesus is "the author of eternal salvation" to "all who obey Him" (Heb. 5:9) and His commands are not "burdensome"! (1 John 5:3)

**Morality without self-denial.** We live in a society without self-denial. But it is impossible to live a moral life without self-denial (Titus 2:11-12). Even Paul said he had to "discipline" his "body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." (1 Cor. 9:27) Are we greater than the humble apostle? Nay, we must practice the same!

**Growth without diligence.** Unfortunately, most Christians remain spiritual "babies" (Heb. 5:12-14). Peter said we must "give all diligence" to "add" certain things to our faith (see 2 Pet. 1:5-7). If we fail to do so, he said we are "shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins." (2 Pet. 1:9) Are you growing or forgetting?

**Knowledge without study.** The amount of Bible knowledge possessed by most Christians is truly pitiful! Evidently, they don't realize God said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hos. 4:6) We need to be diligent students of God's word (2 Tim. 2:15). Otherwise we'll fall too! (Eph. 4:11-14) How are your Bible study habits?

**Truth without controversy.** By its very nature truth is controversial. But in our "politically correct" world few are willing to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). Does the truth make you squeamish? Remember, "Good preaching sounds reveille, not taps." What about your religion? Is it true to God's book? Is it the religion taught by Jesus and the apostles? Is it sacrificial, obedient, and self-denying? Or, is it a religion of convenience, a "microwave religion"?

"SPEAK AS THE ORACLES OF GOD"

*by R.J. Evans*

"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11).

The importance of faithfully and completely preaching the word of God manifests itself in many passages throughout the Bible. The scriptures warn against adding to, or taking away from, the word of God (See Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19). In the days of King Jehoiakim, God sent the prophet Jeremiah to reveal His message to the people. God commanded Jeremiah to "speak to them-do not diminish a word" (Jer. 26:2). While it may have been tempting for Jeremiah to leave off parts of God's message that would have stirred the anger of the people, Jeremiah faithfully preached the word of God. The importance of delivering all of God's message to the people is seen in the very beginning of Jeremiah's work as a prophet- "But the Lord said to me: 'Do not say, 'I am a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak'" (Jer. 1:7).

In Ezekiel 33, the Lord explained why the Lord's servants must always preach God's complete message. "When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die! And you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul'" (Ezek. 33:8-9).

Now we can better understand why it was so important for Paul to tell the elders of Ephesus- "I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27). This always concerned Paul because when the Jews at Corinth rejected his message- "Jesus is the Christ," we are told, "when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles'" (Acts 18:6).

We have two letters written by Paul to the young evangelist, Timothy. Please observe what Paul charged Timothy: "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2). If we faithfully preach God's word, we will find ourselves at times rebuking people for their wrongs or reprimanding them for their sins. This is not an easy task. But whether it involves encouraging or rebuking, we must still preach the word with "longsuffering" and "in love" (2 Tim. 4:2; Eph. 4:15). We live in a time much the same as described by Paul when he said, "because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). However, the Bible is God's word, and since we are commanded to "preach the word," we should ever strive to be faithful to declare God's revealed will. By so doing, it is the only way that we can truly join in with Paul and say- "I am innocent of the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26). Thus, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11).

## Romans 14:23

*by Jarrod Jacobs*

"And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Romans fourteen reminds the strong Christian of his responsibilities toward the weak and toward God (v. 1-6, 15:1, 7). At the same time, there are responsibilities the weak have toward the strong and toward God. All are reminded that "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Rom. 14:7). Also, "every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God .... every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (v. 11-12). In all things, Christians need to make sure that what they are doing is of "faith." In this case, Paul speaks of personal faith, one's conviction on a matter, as opposed to the objective body of truth, i.e., "the" faith that cannot be changed (Eph. 4:5; Jude 3)

Each Christian's faith must be his own. While there is a need for fellowship and togetherness as Christians (Gal. 6:2; Heb. 10:22-25), at the same time, the study (II Tim. 2:15), reading (Eph. 3:4) and obedience (Rev. 22:14) one does is the responsibility of the individual. We will stand before the Lord as individuals, and thus our faith needs to be our own. How much conviction do you have?