

## YOU'VE GOT MAIL

Thousands of letters and packages are sent everyday bearing a descriptive label informing the carrier of some special request for handling. Labels reading, “this side up,” “keep dry,” “caution,” “do not stack,” “perishable,” and “do not bend” are just a few examples of what may be seen on any letter or package received through the mail. Such warnings and expressions prompted me to consider which would be the best mailing labels in regards to the Bible. After all, the Bible is the only means by which God communicates with man today.

The first sticker to be placed on this most precious of all correspondence is “**URGENT!**” Any piece of mail bearing this message is bound to grab our attention and is usually the first to do so. While much of the mail stamped, “urgent!,” is destined for the trash, it is an appropriate description of the content of God’s Word. Within the pages of the Bible, we are informed that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), our sins separate us from God (Isa. 59:1-2), and that “the wages of sin is [spiritual] death” (Rom. 6:23). This is indeed an alarming message that deserves our immediate consideration. Fortunately, we also read that God provides for us a remedy – a plan by which we can address this urgent need. Upon acknowledging sin and obeying a few conditions – faith (Heb. 11:6), repentance (Luke 13:3), confession (Rom. 10:9-10), and baptism (Mark 16:16) – one can have his sins totally washed away (Acts 22:16). God’s message is one that must not be taken lightly, received with procrastination, or totally ignored. It is an “**URGENT!**” matter.

God’s next request regarding transmission of His Word is “**HANDLE WITH CARE.**” We are commanded to “rightly” divide or handle “aright the Word of Truth” (2 Tim. 2:15, ASV 1901). We are also commanded to “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11); not “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:9). If not handled correctly, God’s Word can be perverted and can lead men away from “the grace of Christ” (Gal. 1:6-9). Jesus told the Pharisees and scribes, “full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition” (Mark 7:9). Many today have failed to obey the warning, “**HANDLE WITH CARE.**” False doctrines which teach that man is saved by “faith only” and that baptism is not necessary for salvation were produced by men failing to handle “aright the Word of Truth.” Seeing that God explicitly states, “ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **NOT** by faith only” (Jam. 2:24, emphasis B.G.) and “baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21), such carelessness is inexcusable.

It is of great import to note that though God’s Word is to be handled with care, the Bible is in no way “**FRAGILE.**” No such descriptive label need be placed on the greatest of all books. Though many men and nations have tried to destroy it from the face of the earth, they are gone and the Bible remains. Jehoiakim, king of Judah, had the word of God cut “and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire” (Jer. 36:23). It is untelling how many physical copies of the Bible have been burned since the first century. The Catholics burned copies of William Tyndale’s English translation of the Bible and Tyndale, himself, was “burned at the stake” after his translation was considered “heresy.” No matter how much power a man or organization may wield here on earth, they are all mortal (Heb. 9:27) and the word of God is eternal (Psa. 119:89).

The last sticker to be placed upon this perfect parcel should be “**R.S.V.P.**” This abbreviation comes from the French expression, “répondez s’il vous plaît,” which means “please respond.” Today, the expression also entails the connotation to not just respond, but do so, “as

soon as possible.” Any piece of mail containing the instruction to “R.S.V.P.” is usually an invitation to attend some future event. In regards to the Bible, an invitation has been made to all men to obey and to “enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Mat. 25:21). Jesus invites, “come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Mat. 11:28-30). The Lord entreats, “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). Jesus says, “the kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding” (Mat. 22:2-3). The parable continues, “and they would not come.” We all have the responsibility to respond to the Lord’s invitation. By simply obeying God’s conditions of salvation as recorded in the New Testament and being faithful to His Word, our R.S.V.P. is checked, “Yes.” If one refuses to obey God or ignores the invitation altogether, God understands the response to be, “No.”

God chose to communicate with us through the written word. We should consider God’s message to us with urgency, handle it with care, and respond faithfully as we are commanded.

- *Brad Green*