



INFORMATIONAL NEWSLETTER

Novosibirsk Biblical Theological Seminary

Issue #6, Winter 2016

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The Bible and discipleship

E. A. Genrikh, NBTS President

Russian Evangelical Baptist Union has made a decision to proclaim 2016 the Year of the Bible because of the 140-year anniversary of Synodal Bible translation in Russia. And this encourages us to look at the role and meaning of the Bible, as the Word of God, in all the spheres of Christian life. And one important sphere is our spiritual maturity and spiritual growth in faith, and these things are influenced by the Christian discipleship. In the Bible there is a good example of discipleship and it is Timothy, Paul's co-worker, whom he encourages by such words: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from who you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2Timothy 3:14-17).

This text shows two elements of discipleship: God's Word and human example. Both of these things are necessary for the proper spiritual formation of Christ's disciples. Every believer, who has become Jesus Christ's disciple, should understand the role of the Scriptures in his life. And especially important is our attitude towards God's Word as the Word that was given by God Himself. Nowadays this fact is highly

doubted. But God's Word is a foundation of character of Christ's disciple. The Word brings light thanks to which a disciple can find some false convictions inside of him. By means of the Word which lives in him, Christ's disciple has a victory over sin and can see temptations in his everyday life. Holy Spirit acts in a special way in the lives of only those who honor God's Word. A real disciple of Christ takes responsibility for his own life and learns to compare it with the standards of God's Word. By God's grace he learns to stay away from the things that are unpleasant for the Lord. The Lord wants to give His grace to all His children but only humble ones can get it (1Peter 5:5). And faithfulness is a special demonstration of humility. And it's really important not only to be a believer but to be Christ's disciple who learns from Him and puts onto practice everything Christ teaches in His word.

Dear friends, it's time for believers to become disciples!

Church that is not interested in the everyday life of its believers and doesn't offer any practical steps for them to follow, can gather a lot of people on Sundays but such church will never be a New Testament church. And seminary that neglects discipleship is not a spiritual institution.

May the desire to study the Bible and willingness to become disciples become the most important characteristics of our students and professors!



Elijah knew it (2 Kings 2:1-18)

Gerhard Rehwald, NBTS Professor of Old Testament

Elijah knew it, Elisha knew it, even the sons of the prophets knew it, but no one dared to say: the time had come for Elijah's departure. The only one to be informed about it in advance is the reader of chapter two of the Second Book of Kings (verse 1). And he has to know, because the earlier events are so loaded with lively action. Elijah received a word from God and a cross country race starts. He runs uphill, downhill. And despite his request to Elisha, repeated three times, his servant keeps up with him and won't agree to leave him.

Three times Elijah moves on according to the word of the Lord, three times Elisha will not leave him and three times the sons of the prophets are present to observe the scene. Finally the actors in this triple act are standing on the banks of the Jordan River. Elijah takes his cloak and with a single stroke he divides the waters of the river. The power of Moses, the great leader of the Israelite nation, was present among them.

They walk over to the other side of the river, because they must now talk in private. Now Elijah no longer conceals the plan God has for him. He will be taken away. He wants to leave a farewell present for his servant Elisha (verse 9). And Elisha holds on to the same desire he pursued all the time: not to leave his master. If God's plan is to take Elijah away, then Elisha wants at least keep to his spirit with him. Therefore he asks for a double portion: one for himself and the second from Elijah – he doesn't want to leave his master, but wants his spirit to remain.

Throughout the whole story to this point we haven't been given any evaluation of what was going on. Was it right for Elisha to ignore the request of Elijah, was it good to follow behind him anyway? Is it now okay to continue on in the desire not to be left by his master and to express such a bold request? Even Elijah cannot answer this question; he leaves the appraisal up to God.

In a great miracle Elijah is taken up by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha is finally left alone, Elijah is no more to see. In a sign of anguish and grief he tears his garment. Then he takes up what is only remains of Elijah - his cloak. Elisha returns to the river and finally approaches the decisive moment. He strikes the water. Elijah is gone, who is left at the river bank? Is it only he and the sons of the prophet on the other side or more? "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" The water divides. While Elisha has departed, the Lord had not. God gives his approval to the prophet.

The sons of the prophet were eyewitness to these events and understood: "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha." But this acknowledgment does not prevent them from asking permission to look for the missing Elijah. Elisha refuses, but they pressure him and he relents. Their search for their former master comes to nothing. Elisha can only tell them that he told him so beforehand.

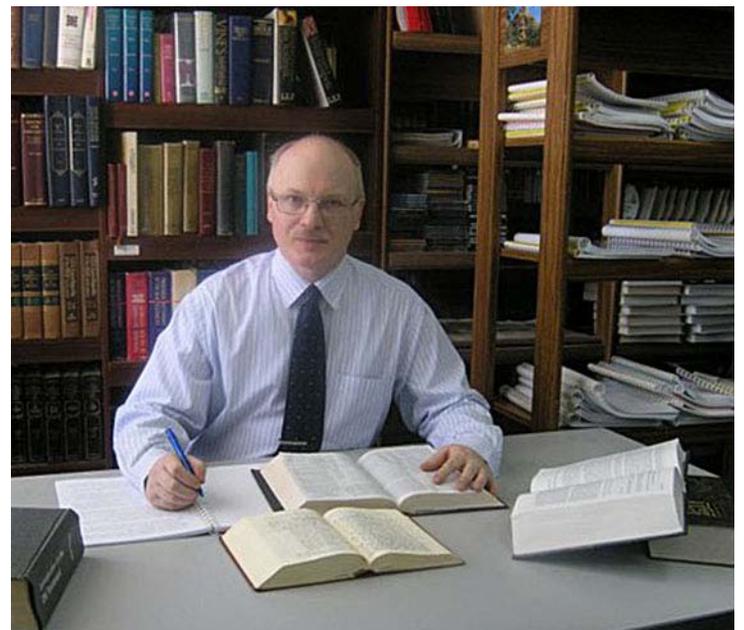
The request of the sons of the prophets comes as a surprise. They were the first to talk about the plan of God to remove Elijah. They stood there at the river and saw how Elijah's might was at work in Elisha as he divided the water. They even accepted the new leadership of Elisha, in their own words affirming that the spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha. And yet, they still don't obey his word. A new leader takes over, and this band of men is still looking for the old one. In fact, not really a surprise. More the fate of most of those in the footsteps of a successful leader. While they might have approval, the comparison will go on. The old times are gone, the hero leader of the past has been replaced. But things don't move forward; instead the new leader is witness to the on-going quest for yesterday's leaders.

Talking about leaders: this whole story features different leaders. But it is not about leading. It is about following. Elijah follows the command of God. Elisha follows Elijah - with devotion. Only the sons of the prophets are yet not ready to be followers with such dedication.

Today there are schools of leadership everywhere. We are training so many leaders, but who is going to follow them? Who prepares the followers? Everyone knows how to lead, but who really knows how to follow?

The story of these three groups, presented in three triplets of following, displays a priority of discipleship. The one who wants to lead has to learn how to follow. To follow the word of God, wherever it leads me. To follow with dedication, never falling back from the leader.

If we prepare followers instead of leaders, we can do a lot of good to the church and be more in line with the plan of God.



“Nowadays a church minister should be well-educated”

Interview with Aleksey Smirnov

Aleksey Smirnov, the president of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Russia, shared with the NBTS correspondent his opinion about spiritual condition of a modern church, ministry and Christianity in general.

- What do you think what are the most dangerous things for Christians nowadays?

Indifference and disobedience to God's will. We surrounded ourselves with religious events, we carry them out, we live that way, and we solve the problems imagined by ourselves. But Christ said: “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word”. It means that we should turn away from religious and formal life and come back to the real close relationships with God and obedience should become our lifestyle. We can all be trapped in a similar way - we can become just parishioners like some of the traditional believers who made a decision to visit the temple only once a year, once a month or once a week. It is wrong. It is not the kind of Christianity that Christ would want from us. There is also such thing as liberal Christianity, when people don't pursue sanctification and live a semi-worldly life. Therefore it is always important for us to control ourselves: where do we stand? How do our relationships with God look like? Do we obey Him?

- What are the ways for a modern church to grow a new generation of young ministers?

Each and every believer should help and teach other believers or his own relatives or his neighbors or his classmates. Each believer should come to a realization to not simply witness about God incidentally by the means of his life but to take responsibility for helping and edifying people around him, to get involved into discipleship. People that we witness to should become the real instruments in God's hands and not just visit the church building. Evangelical Christians should be different in a way that each Christian should teach his neighbor about faith and make him an active witness. And that's how every Christian should act throughout his whole life.

- What are some crucial characteristics that a modern pastor should possess?

A pastor should always be an adequate person meaning that he should meet the requirements of God and the requirements of the society. I don't mean that a pastor has to somehow change himself according to the tastes of the society, what I am saying is that he should react to the changes that occur. A pastor should be a modern person, the same time remaining faithful to the Scriptures and conservative in his relationships with God. A pastor should be open, clear and available person in the context of modern life. When we try to artificially return to the past century, we isolate ourselves from the society and we re-

strain the access to us for the society. Unfortunately, it's the way of the Russian Orthodox Church where the priest is isolated from the society by attributes, clothes, manners and old-fashioned language in the temple. And sometimes we as evangelical believers create artificial barriers for the ordinary people and we lose the opportunity to share the Gospel with them in a simple manner using simple language.

- Is there a need for the theological education for the pastors today?

Nowadays a church minister should be well-educated. Moreover he should be erudite. Erudition is not necessarily synonym to education, it is a wide specter of knowledge that a minister uses to adequately talk to a modern person. A minister should be able to speak with homeless people, with seniors and with modern youth using their language and understanding them. He should be able to talk to educated people explaining them the Gospel without the usage of archaic phrases. The author Alexander Solzhenitsyn in his writings mentioned that the Baptists are Christians who stood faithful to the Lord and Scriptures and who shared the Gospel using a simple language.

- What are the advantages that a theological education can give?

It is a fundamental thing. A minister should know theology and doctrines. Apostle Peter said that we should always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks for the reason for the hope that is in us. A minister not only should be able to explain the doctrine but also to teach the doctrines to his church so that the church members would be able to teach the people around them. Most arguments take place in the sphere of traditions and religious forms but we don't need to argue about that – our responsibility is to share God's truth about sinfulness of humanity, salvation through Christ alone and about godly righteous life with the help of Holy Spirit.



Graduate Testimony

Veniamyn Kozorezov (graduate'15)

I'm 26 years old. I was born and bred in a Christian family. My father is a minister. I asked God for forgiveness when I was 17 years old. When I turned 18 I got baptized in my native city, Nizhny Novgorod. In 2009 I got married and moved to my wife's town Klincy, that year I felt the desire to serve God and I started preaching in the church.

My elder brothers were already the NBTS students. During our meeting they told me: "If you want to serve God and not to waste your life, enter the seminary". By then I hadn't yet understood the importance of the seminary education for the further ministry but I listened to my brothers and entered the seminary in 2011.

I can tell with full assurance that years in the seminary gave direction to the rest of my life. Because of my study in the seminary I began to look at the Scriptures in a different way. In it I learnt to see God and His plans for the church and every Christian. I learnt to study God's Word by myself with the help of the instruments given here. All these things transform my life and my ministry. I looked at sermon at absolutely different angle. Besides knowledge I got an example of my professor's



dedication, I saw their attitude towards the students.

After the graduation I'm going to continue to preach in the church. With God's help I plan to organize Bible study groups in which all the church members could participate.

I am really grateful to all my professors and other NBTS staff for their priceless contribution to my whole life.

NEWS

2016 has officially come and for the students it means the beginning of a new semester. There are a lot of new things waiting ahead but let's remind ourselves of the most important events of 2015 in the NBTS.

- Graduation of the distant program learning students
- Entering exams for the distant learning program
- First session in Nizhny Novgorod
- Opening of the Christian counseling program
- Lectures of the professors from the USA



Entering exams



Graduation 2015 of the distant program



Session in Nizhny Novgorod

Please Support Us in Prayer

Dear beloved brothers and sisters, we are immeasurably thankful to you for your constant prayer support! God cares for the seminary and fulfills its needs according to His grace. A lot of events have happened in 2015 and we are truly thankful for each of them.

Please join us in prayer to our Lord for His work to be done not only in Siberia and Russia but all over the world.

We thank God

- For all the students who entered the seminary last year;
- For commitment of our students who are willing to grow in the word of God and to become His faithful ministers;
- For the ministry of our faculty members in the Seminary as well as out of its bounds; for the opportunity for them to raise the level of their skill thanks to training in the doctoral program;
- For the good work of our staff;
- For the opportunity to open a Christian counseling program;
- For sacrificial contributions of churches from all over the world for the Seminary's operation;
- For special care about the Seminary through SGA.

We ask God

- For the fruitful church ministry of the Seminary students and graduates;
- In behalf of families of students, faculty and staff workers of the Seminary;
- For understanding the need of theological education in ECB churches, for development of sound biblical theology and beneficent input of our seminary into this process;
- For the Lord to put headwinds to the spread in our brotherhood of false teachings which reject the authority of God's Word;
- For the building up of unity in our brotherhood based on sound biblical teaching and Christian love; for ministers' ability with God's wisdom to deal with various conceptions and theological dispute;
- For needed resources for further ministry of the Seminary;
- That seminary would be the place where His name is glorified; where life and ministry of students, faculty and staff serves as display of sound Christian teaching;
- For the effective beginning of the Christian counseling program;
- For the successful defense of the students dissertations;
- For the new enrollment to the seminary this year.

May the Lord bless you all in your prayer, ministry and walk before Him!



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