

TRUST AND DUTY

Many years ago we loaned our well-used ice cream maker to friends. It had an outer wooden barrel that was decorative and an inner tub that held the ice slush. After many instances of salt brine being slopped over the edge, the barrel hoops picked this inopportune moment to rust completely through, letting the staves fall down flat like the walls of Jericho. Our friends were embarrassed that they had "broken" our ice cream maker and offered to replace it. They knew that trust implies duty.

If I borrow a truck to move something, I have a duty not to wreck the truck in the process. If I entrust my money to the bank, they have a duty to invest it wisely enough to produce a profit, both for the bank and for me.

In Romans 3 Paul addresses the false notion the Jews had that they were immune from God's judgment because they had His law. But this very law declares plainly that all men are under sin's power and condemnation. Paul quotes extensively from the Old Testament in verses 10-18 to make his point.

The Jews did have an advantage in having the word of God entrusted to them, but they evidently failed to recognize their duty in regard to it. They thought just having the Law was enough.

How easily we fall into the same trap! As those who live after the advent of Christ, we have even more revelation than the Jews of old had. Many people today, whether church-goers or not, have some knowledge of the Bible and may quote it when it serves their purposes, yet never really take to heart what it says.

The Apostle James wrote, "Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (Jas. 1:22). And Jesus Himself said, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more" (Luke 12:48). To have as much revelation as we do is a high privilege, and our responsibility to live out that revelation is all the greater for it.

The wooden barrel part of our ice cream maker was purely decorative. The machine functioned perfectly without it. We were actually happy when the barrel was gone because it took up less space in the closet without it. Even so, it was only with difficulty that we dissuaded our friends from replacing it.

The Word of God is not merely to be a decorative part of our lives. It is not something we can parade to make ourselves look better or persuade others to our point of view. Rather it is "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, or both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Neither will it ever fall flat around us due to corrosion. "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isa. 40:8).