

**The Hill (B.A.S.I.C. Training)**

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**Summer 2011**

Thank you for your prayers and encouragement; for in our opinion, the best days of ministry are ahead of us. In fact, I am writing an advanced version of the Romans 1-8 series which I will teach beginning Tuesday, August 16, 2011, here on The Hill. It will be taught on a weekly basis until completed, and is open to all who would like to attend. The study will also be posted on our website for those living outside the area. Many of you have taken the introductory version of the Romans 1-8 series, but you should study this advanced series as well. The subject matter is covered in much greater depth, a necessity considering the theological shift that has occurred within Christendom since the introductory version was published some twenty years ago. New subjects are addressed as well; so if you are interested, welcome aboard.

Last semester, I finished the series titled *God's Heart*, which is in its final edit. The edit has taken longer than expected; you will be notified of its completion. I will write nothing during the span of my lifetime more significant than that work. Thank you for your patience; but the wait should be worth your time. Yes, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man can be reconciled void of contradiction, and I say that with more conviction today than at any time in the past. Subjects such as predestination and election are easily understood when taken through all the Scriptures rather than a select few.

Rick and Donna Underhill continue to amaze us with their willingness to serve. What a blessing they have been to Kim, Benjamin, and me, as well as to all whom God sends our way. We recently experienced our best summer camp ever, with youth (ages 13-18) attending from at least seven different states. Rick and Donna organized the camp from beginning to end, and our counselors were wonderful. Kim and the kitchen staff cooked three meals a day for over 150 people—for a solid week. The youth not only received (and enjoyed) five hours of Bible instruction each day, but worked an additional two hours performing a variety of tasks. We were extremely blessed by the counselors, parents, students, and all who volunteered to make the week a success.

### **Thoughts from the Hill**

Your intense interest in *The Law of the Circles*, addressed in our previous newsletter, helped birth this edition of *Thoughts from the Hill*. Thank you for your very encouraging input.

No doubt, something major has gone awry in our land. Is God shocked? Has He panicked and fled for the hills? Of course not, for He has observed the events of our day throughout eternity past! In fact, everything that transpires from eternity past through eternity future is constantly before Him. This is made possible through His foreknowledge, for He is the omniscient One, the all-knowing One, the One who foresees all events, past and future alike, without causing them. He is the eternal present tense who is never shocked or caught off guard by the choices of man.

Due to His foreknowledge, God is capable of stating specifics regarding future events; and He does so in His inerrant Word. As a result, we can watch God at work in the present, even though most remain disinterested due to sin. One fact is undeniable: Obeying God is not required for

truth to prevail, for truth wins whether applied or totally disregarded. The questions that must be answered, therefore, are: “Do we know truth? Have we invested ample time in God’s Word to sort through the inconsistencies of our day?” Only those who answer “yes” are privileged to observe the Creator’s influence amid the confusion, for truth reveals what to expect when truth is upheld. It also divulges what to anticipate when truth is ignored. Only God’s Word, anointed by His Spirit, allows one to trade an obstructed view of a confused world for a front row seat at the most exciting event of all—observing our holy and flawless God honor and fulfill His indestructible truth. What an adventure this life of faith!

Because Jesus is the source of truth (John 14:6), we can live in hope, optimism, and anticipation, knowing that God is in charge. Even so, there is no guarantee that the listener will believe our message. I have been teaching God’s Word for almost forty years and have found that only a minority, even within “Christian” circles, desire the deeper things of God. Most have become complacent, and the consequence has been astounding. In fact, a highly polished message, presented by a passionate voice, is many times classified as the final say as to who God is—even if the message is doctrinally unreliable. Why so? In many circles, doctrine has given way to pragmatism; for doctrine reproves and corrects (2Timothy 3:15), causing the marginal believer to normally flee. Pragmatism, on the other hand, portrays God according to the whims of the masses, even if how they portray Him proves doctrinally incorrect. Doctrine, therefore, is unwelcome in several entertainment-driven, “seeker friendly” circles of the present generation of believers. For sure, it is too volatile for the teacher who cares more about being liked than being right.

Pastors and teachers have been gifted for the purpose of equipping God’s people with God’s Word. When such does not occur, believers are at the mercy of every teacher they hear. This explains Paul’s words to Timothy, his son in the faith, whom he had placed in charge of the church at Ephesus:

*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. (2Timothy 4:3-4)*

The “teachers” addressed in 2Timothy 4:3-4 lacked the courage to stand for the absolutes of the faith. Platform, acceptance, and notoriety were considered more valuable than God’s will. They taught what appeased the listener, meaning that both teacher and student were impaired in the end. The same is happening today, and not just in isolated instances. A teacher worth his salt will never exchange the truth of God for the praise of man. In fact, he is totally candid while discussing his beliefs; for to use stealth or deceit to win over a people is not only unfair, but an indictment against the God they claim to proclaim. Yet it is used on a frequent basis! Real men of God, who teach truth for the right reasons, should welcome your inquiries regarding their beliefs; in fact, they should thank you for being interested enough to ask the hard questions. Therefore, beware of those who refuse to openly and honestly divulge their views regarding the controversial doctrines of our day.

Paul confirms that God’s spokesmen are God’s “overseers” who are to “guard...the flock...of God”:

*"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Acts 20:28)*

Ezekiel verifies that God's spokesmen are also God's watchmen:

*'But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman's hand.'* (Ezekiel 33:6)

A "watchman" blows "the trumpet" to warn of impending danger. If so, trumpets should be blaring forth on several fronts; for when sheer heresy can unsettle the hearts of God's people to the degree that we are presently witnessing, it is time to evaluate where we stand as a people. The heresy recently promoted is universal salvation, the idea that God saves everyone in the end, and yet it has brought confusion to many who claim to believe. Universal salvation is taught nowhere in the Scriptures, being refuted by 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and a wealth of similar passages.

What we hear greatly impacts what we believe. Therefore, who has your ear? Who are you allowing to speak into your life? What do they believe, and why? Do your instructors (pastors, Sunday school teachers, Bible study leaders, mentors and etc.) speak freely and openly regarding their doctrinal positions, especially in regard to salvation, baptism, predestination, election, forgiveness, glorification, sanctification, the identity of the believer, and other highly debated theological issues? It is extremely important that they be able to explain what they believe, and in turn, answer your hard questions. And by the way, a man whose heart is in the right place will have no problem discussing such matters. The issue with many believers is that their lack of understanding of the Scriptures prevents them from framing proper questions. On the other hand, a mature believer knows what questions to ask if the teacher's theology appears questionable. Many in the body of Christ don't know what to listen for, so they accept almost everything as fact. Unfortunately, there are teachers who use this lack of discernment to their advantage, influencing their listeners, little by little, until the students are hooked on their brand of theology—without having heard the details of what their teachers actually believe. This is nothing more than manipulation by means of stealth, and is grossly unacceptable. If you are an instructor, who is diligently seeking God's best for you and your listeners, the responsibility is tremendous; but your commitment to truth will be greatly rewarded. Yes, a trumpet must be sounded!

God's Word has withstood the scrutiny of man since its inception. If man, with unwavering passion, has held God accountable for what He has stated in the Scriptures, man should be held accountable (by man) for what man teaches (or writes) regarding the Scriptures. I should be held accountable; you should be held accountable; in fact, all instructors should be held accountable for what they communicate concerning God's inerrant Word. Obviously, God holds America accountable for its mishandling of the truth. Let's take a moment to consider only a fraction of the cost of compromise in our land:

God teaches that "*the borrower becomes the lender's slave*" (Proverbs 22:7). Would you say that God is right or wrong considering our present economic state of affairs?

When a nation loses its way by abandoning truth, God raises up weak leaders, as validated on numerous occasions in His Word. He is doing the same in our day by allowing an unwise nation to vote into office unwise leadership. Yes, truth always wins because God always wins, God being truth! Man will never outsmart God, no matter how much political power he may possess.

According to Romans 1, horrendous consequences occur when a society rejects God, for God, loving man enough to grant him a free will, gives man over to man's desires. In fact, Romans 1:18-32 describes the downward spiral that results when God's truth is exchanged for a lie. Man

first desires sexual relationships outside of marriage. When this no longer satisfies, men desire to marry men and women desire to marry women. The last state is a reprobate people who have totally lost their way. No doubt, our land has trodden this dreadful path. The fact that Paul penned these words some two thousand years ago confirms that truth is not only unchanging and fixed, but applicable to any society in any season of time. Yes, truth is eternal and impossible to alter, regardless of how man perceives it in this present age. Note: God loves the adulterer and homosexual, for He accepts them with open arms when they repent and exercise faith while depraved. Their sinful actions break His heart, however. After all, marriage communicates that God alone is enough; adultery communicates that God alone is not enough; homosexuality communicates that God is not needed at all.

When a people cease listening to truth, due to the error of misguided watchmen, severe consequences result. This calls for watchmen and spokesmen who are willing to risk all for what is right. Jeremiah was one of these spokesmen, and the price of his calling is addressed in Jeremiah 15:19—...*And if you extract the precious from the worthless, You will become My spokesman....* The “*precious*” is extracted from the “*worthless*” through one means only—by taking God’s words inscribed on the printed page and interpreting them based on the context in which they are written. More is involved than passively reading the Scriptures. Hours alone with the Creator are required. Proper understanding demands that everything concluded lines up with every word, of every phrase, of all the verses in God’s Word. Such is the goal of the “*spokesman*” that God uses on His behalf. Many claim to proclaim the truth, but only a “*spokesman*” can “*extract the precious from the worthless.*” Remember this as your mind is exposed to the countless voices of Christendom.

We love you and hope you can visit soon.

### **Events to Consider Attending on the Hill**

<u>August 5-6, 2011</u>	Annual Romans Retreat
<u>August 16, 2011</u>	Tuesday night Bible study (7:00 pm). An advanced study of Romans 1-8
<u>September 2-3, 2011</u>	Discipleship Retreat
<u>October 14-16, 2011</u>	Annual Fall Retreat for couples and singles
<u>January 13-15, 2012</u>	Annual Winter Youth Retreat
<u>April 26-29, 2012</u>	Annual Men’s Retreat for fathers, their sons, and single men of all ages.
<u>July 8-14, 2012</u>	Annual Summer Camp for youth (ages 13-18)