

The Bible is Clear

The Apostle Paul wrote, *“If a trumpet makes a sound that is uncertain, who will get ready for battle?”* (1 Cor. 14:8). Paul was encouraging the Corinthians to interpret their speaking in tongues, or it would not edify the church. In a similar way, if the Bible did not give a clear message, how could it present to us the terrible nature of our sin and the incomparably great message of our salvation in Jesus Christ? The Bible is clear in its message. The psalmist calls God’s Word *“a lamp to my feet and a light for my path”* (Psalm 119:105). Anyone who has walked the rocky ground or passed by the steep drop-offs of the wilderness of Judah in Israel knows the importance of being able to see where you are going. Any misstep could lead to serious injury or death. You need a lamp to light your way at night. God’s Word is our lamp for faith and life. It clearly teaches us what God expects of us and what He has done for our salvation.

In speaking of the clarity of the Bible, we distinguish between an outward and an inner clarity. The Bible is outwardly clear. Its language is capable of being understood by people who hear it. Even the rankest of unbelievers can understand the message contained in John 3:16. I have heard men speak who had an extraordinary knowledge of the Bible. However, they did not believe what it said. It is only the Holy Spirit who can work an inner clarity in the heart, which the Bible calls enlightenment (Eph. 1:18). Thus, the Bible is simple enough for a child to understand, but so deep that a theologian can puzzle over it.

The Bible is clear in what it says. This does not mean, however, that every statement will be understood by us. Peter related that some things in Paul’s writings were difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:16). Some statements in the book of Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation are difficult for us to understand. The overall message is clear, but we may not be able to comprehend every detail of a vision. For example, Martin Luther, in his commentary on Zechariah from 1527, wrote about chapter 14: *“Here, in this chapter, I give up. For I am not sure what the prophet is talking about... I want to add my thought too, even though it is not sufficiently certain either in many places, and ultimately I will yield the mastery to the Holy Spirit.”*

Where we face difficulties like this, the problem is not in the clarity of Scripture. The problem lies with our sin-clouded understanding of Scripture.