

God's Word...The Power Of God

A Sermon By Pr. David Johnson

Why make the bed if you're going to just sleep in it again? Why comb your hair if it's only going to get messed up again? Why wash the car when it's going to get dirty the second you drive out of the carwash? Legitimate questions that have been asked for years, and which have a host of varying answers.

A young girl, after sweeping the family living room, went to the window shade and quickly pulled it down, saying, "It makes the room so dusty to have the sunshine coming in." She foolishly imagined that it was the sunshine which made the dust, rather than simply revealing where the dust already existed.

This is a classic commentary on our society. Our nation is filled with dirt of one sort or another, proverbial dust that needs cleaning from all our collective homes...even though the world will only get dirty again.

Ironically, many people and organizations seem intent on pulling the shades on the church...on God's Word...on Christ. They foolishly think, as did the girl, that it's the Light of Christ, shining through the Scriptures, that breeds the destructive forces in our culture. In actuality, it's the piercing light of God's Truth which directs us to the areas in need of cleaning. Have there been abuses? Sure. But that's the fault of people...not the Bible.

To shut out God's Word would be like attempting to live, shut away from the rays of the sun. It would only be a matter of time before we'd suffer great physical and emotional harm. As we know, the sun plays a critical role as a source of light, heat, growth, and emotional stability. In fact, there can be no life without the sun.

Today, both our Old Testament lesson and the Gospel speak of God's Word, the Bible. It is by the Word of God that our very salvation is obtained. (*i.e. Luke 8; Romans 1:16; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 4:12*). It is also through the Bible that our hearts are convicted by the *Law* of God, while at the same time captured by the *Grace* of God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are more than just ink on a page; they are literally and substantially a vehicle of the power and grace of God to us.

Dr. Henrietta Mears writes in, *What the Bible is All About*:

"The entire theme is God's love for man and for His redemption...the Bible is but one book, because God was its real author... 1) It has but one purpose, the salvation of men; 2) The character of God is the same; 3) The moral law is the same; and 4) It contains the development of one great scheme of salvation."

We must revere the Bible, accepting its authority, and acknowledging its integrity; for it is our only reliable source for teaching about the ways, will, and character of God. Preachers, commentaries, and study Bibles are great aids in our study times. But it is only through the pages of this inerrant, holy text that we are able to glimpse into the heart of our Lord, and in turn, receive the richness of His presence and truth. It is a book that relays some of the

deepest philosophies and mysteries of ourselves and the universe around us, but it is written in such a way that the simplest child can grasp its truth. After all, it is truth - inerrant and infallible truth.

1. How was the Bible given to mankind?

2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

We believe that the entirety of Scripture was inspired (*God-breathed*) via the Holy Spirit into each of the individual prophets and apostles. God sometimes even instructed His servants to literally write down His messages as He revealed it them. (*i.e. Ex. 34:27; Jer. 30:2 Ezek. 43:11; Rev. 1:19*) 2 Peter 1 tells us that God was so careful about the proclamation of His word that He "moved" the very words of His prophets by the direction of the Holy Spirit.

2 Pet 1:20-21 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is [a matter] of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

God wants His Word to be available and protected for future generations. Antagonists charge that the Bible is only a bunch of stories handed down for centuries before someone finally decided to record these "ancient myths." However, from the beginning, the Bible came from the mind of God - penned by faithful human servants.

2. The enduring and extensive nature of Scripture

Is 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

Is 55:10-11b "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth..."

Is 59:21b "...My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring," says the LORD, "from now and forever." (also Deut. 6:4-12)

Repeatedly, the Bible declares God's care and concern for the protection of His Word. And this applies to both the proclamation of the message, and His people's adherence to it. Our heavenly Father railed against both the false/compromising teachers as well as the hard-hearted listeners who disregarded His Word. They had been taught, but refusing to live by what they learned. This foundation of the church, and our faith, stands firm and remains forever.

God never intended His Word to be simply a wonderful story with a catchy moral at the end. It was to be taught, studied, and obeyed throughout life. The Scriptures were to permeate every home, every thought, and every human pursuit (*i.e. phylacteries and mezuzoth*). Reading God's Word can even be an emotionally moving experience when we allow it to impact us authentically (*Ps. 19:9ff; Jer. 15:16; 23:9*).

3. The Word of God: the Power of God

Gen 1:2-3 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. (also John 1:1ff)

Is 55:11b ...It (God's Word) will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding {in the matter} for which I sent it.

1 Cor 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (see Rom. 1:16-17)

Rom 10:17 So faith {comes} from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

The Word of God is not merely ink on paper, or words on a page. It is in the Bible that we see and experience the very person of Jesus Christ, the living Word of God. Therefore, we believe that the Scriptures have the same limitless power as the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ Himself. As our Lutheran Catechism states, "I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith..."

1 Pet 1:23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, {that is,} through the living and enduring word of God.

"The Word of God does not merely teach man the way of salvation and show him the means by which he may attain it; but by its truly divine power it actually converts, regenerates, and renews him. This unique efficacy is possessed by no other book; for the divine efficacy of Scripture is nothing else than God's power in the Word." - Mueller

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

"... we do not believe that the Bible's power is due to its 'logical demonstration,' appealing to reason, nor through rhetorical eloquence, appealing to the emotions, but in a supernatural manner." - Mueller

1 Cor 2:2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified....4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. (see 1 Thess 1:5)

Though we believe that God's Word is uniquely powerful and complete within itself for the transforming of human hearts, we don't however, think that the Scriptures are irresistible. God's Word remains eternally powerful, though the human heart rebels against it.

Acts 7:51 "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.

2 Tim 4:3-4 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. (see Matt. 23:37ff)

4. Does the Bible ever claim to be "reasonable" or fully understandable to the human mind? No!

Is 55:8-9 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts." (see Habakkuk and Job)

God's thoughts and ways are infinitely above our own limited human perspectives and understanding. He sends His Word, at just the right season, to accomplish its appointed task in each person's life and circumstances. To approach God's Word as a science project, to be observed and dissected for proof of its validity, is to act as judge over it. This is neither wise nor respectful, and will only result in confusion and disappointment. The truth of God's Word is understood only through the eyes of faith, for Jesus Himself said that God will "hide these things from {the} wise and intelligent and revealed them to infants." (Matt. 11:25; 1 Cor. 1:18ff)

5. So what is the ultimate purpose for the Bible?

John 5:39-40 "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

John 20:31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

These passages explain that God's Word is intended to:

- Reveal and Draw people to Christ, for Salvation
- Establish Doctrine – basic teachings of Faith
- Bring Reproof – Show us our sin
- Apply Correction – Give us direction
- Instruct in Righteousness – Show us how to act and live
- Equip for every good work – Work in us a productive spiritual maturity