



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORD

Introduction

1. Napoleon once said, "The Bible is no mere book, but a Living Creature, with a power that conquers all that oppose it."
2. The phenomenal American patriot and lover of freedom, Robert E. Lee said, "In my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength."
3. Horace Greeley wrote, that "It is impossible to enslave mentally or socially a Bible-reading people. The principles of the Bible are the groundwork of human freedom."
4. Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher who lived from 1724-1804, wrote, "The existence of the Bible, as a book for the people, is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced. Every attempt to belittle it is a crime against humanity."

Body

1. The Bible is the mind of Christ, i.e., His thoughts on every subject. In 1 Corinthians 2:16, Paul said, "For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."
2. God places the highest priority on His Word, and has magnified it above everything else known to man. The RSV of Psalm 138:2 say's, "I bow down toward Thy holy temple and give thanks to Thy name for Thy steadfast love and Thy faithfulness; for Thou hast exalted above everything Thy name and Thy Word."
3. The Word existed, in the form of wisdom, before human history.
 - A. King Solomon, writing in Proverbs 8:22-30 as wisdom personified, said, "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old [/ farthest time of antiquity]. From everlasting I was established [Heb. 'olam here means- eternity past], from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills I was

brought forth; while He had not yet made the earth and the fields, nor the first dust of the world. When He established the heavens, I was there, when He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, when He made firm the skies above, when the springs of the deep became fixed, when He set for the sea its boundary, so that the water should not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth; then I was beside Him, {as} a master workman; and I was daily {His} delight, rejoicing always before Him.”

B. Some scholars have viewed these words as belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ. I.e., they see Him in this personification of wisdom in the Proverbs, as the OT counterpart and predecessor to the Logos of John in the NT.

A Greek philosopher named Heraclitus first used the term Logos around 600 BC to designate the divine reason or plan which coordinates a changing universe. This word was well suited to John’s definition of Jesus Christ as the personal wisdom and power in union with God, His Executor in the creation and government of the universe, and the cause of all the world’s life, both physical and spiritual.

4. The Bible surpasses all human intellectual achievement.

A. The Apostle Paul discusses the wisdom of the world and its relation to the Word of God in 1 Corinthians 1:17-31. Cf. passage.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the German poet and dramatist, who lived from 1749-1842, said, “Let mental culture go on advancing, let the natural sciences progress in ever greater extent and depth, and the human mind widen itself as much as it desires; beyond the elevation and moral culture of Christianity, as it shines forth in the Gospels, it will not go.”

B. The Apostle Peter wrote, in 2 Peter 1:19-21, that “...we have the prophetic word [OT] {made} more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. 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.”

1) When Peter say’s, “we have the prophetic word [OT] {made} more sure,” he’s speaking in the light of what he just said in v. 16-18, that “...we were eyewitnesses of” Christ’s “majesty,” and that “...when He received honor and glory from God the Father,” who said, ““This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased,’ ...we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven...”

What better way of substantiating the truth than to say, “We saw it with our own eyes and we heard it with our own ears.”? What can be more real than seeing and hearing? Peter tells us that the Word of God should be more real to us than anything else in life!

a. In this passage, Peter documents the experience of the Transfiguration which he had shared with James and John on Mt. Hermon in Caesarea Philippi. They had seen Jesus Christ in all His glory, as He would appear at the 2nd Advent. They had witnessed the inward reality of His true nature as eternal Deity shining through. They heard the Father's voice speak from Heaven; and yet Peter wrote with utmost conviction-- "we have the prophetic word {made} more sure, to which you do well to pay attention..."

b. He says that the prophetic word is an even surer confirmation than what he saw at the Transfiguration; that the testimony of the OT is more convincing than even the voice of God which he heard that day.

c. The phrase "more sure" is from the comparative of *be/baios* (*bebaios*). *Bebaios* means- permanent, certain, secure. It speaks of something that is firm, stable, something that can be relied upon and trusted in. The idea is that the Word of God which we possess is an even more reliable foundation than the signs and wonders which Peter and the other apostles had witnessed firsthand.

2) To this Word, Peter says, you would "do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place." One might ask the question, in ignorance, "Why place such a profound importance on the Scriptures?" Because the Word of God is what leads us out of spiritual darkness.

a. The writer of Psalm 119 says to God in v. 105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path."

b. David wrote, "For You are my lamp, O LORD; and the LORD illumines my darkness," 2 Samuel 22:29.

c. Solomon said to Rehoboam in Proverbs 6:20-23, "My son, observe the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother [divine viewpoint instilled by / parents]; bind them continually on your heart [right lobe of your soul]; tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life."

3) The question is, "How long are we to single-mindedly devote our thoughts, our efforts, and our energy to the Word of God?" The answer-- "until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts."

a. The dawning of the "day" here is the Day of Christ-- the Rapture of the Church.

b. The “morning star arising in your hearts” signifies the ultimate decoration in eternity-- the order of the Morning Star. The “morning star” is described as a category of eternal reward in Revelation 2:26-28.

These three vv. are found in the context of a passage addressed “to the angel [/ pastor] of the church in Thyatira,” from the “Son of God” Himself. Thyatira was a church characterized by great spiritual service. In v. 19 Jesus said, “I know... that your deeds of late are greater than at first,” a statement that implies spiritual growth in the body. Their spiritual growth had resulted in “love and faith and service and perseverance.” Yet, in the midst of their spiritual growth, and their Christ-like attitude of service in the cause of the Gospel, they were tolerating a self-appointed “prophetess” by the name of Jezebel who was teaching false doctrine and leading weaker believers astray into sexual immorality and idol worship.

Nevertheless, our Lord said, that “...he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received {authority} from My Father; and I will give him the morning star,” vv. 26-28.

The “morning star” is a decoration awarded to those few who have become so conformed to Christ in this earthly life that they will reflect the glory of Christ in heaven. There could be no more tremendous honor-- no greater privilege than to exchange at the Bema Seat this uniform of honor, worn in the soul, for that uniform of glory.

4) When Peter writes to these persecuted believers, he doesn't say, “But know this first of all.” What he says is, “keep on knowing this.”

a. The word Peter uses is a pres. act. part. which speaks of a perception and understanding which is uninterrupted, continually taking place. The active voice brings out the principle of personal responsibility in the application of the doctrine they were being taught.

b. He uses the phrase “keep on knowing this” to refer back to the words “to which you do well to pay attention.” That is, as these believers gave their attention to the OT prophecies and the OT Scriptures, they were to keep in mind what followed in the next two vv.

5) In one short sentence Peter lays down the most important hermeneutical principle you and I will ever learn-- “that no prophecy of Scripture is {a matter} of one's own interpretation.”

a. The Greek *idios* (idios) means- one's own private, exclusive possession. I.e., what he's saying is the Word of God is not subject to the mind of man; it's not a ball of metaphorical clay that even the most brilliant human mind can mold

and shape into the form and fashion it desires, nor is it subject to rationalism and empiricism.

b. It is, however, the exclusive possession of the Spirit of God, and therefore, to assimilate the Word, to metabolize the Word, and to interpret it accurately requires the exercise of faith in the power of the Spirit. Allow me, if you will, to illustrate this for you from 1 Corinthians 2.

c. In 1 Corinthians 2:11 Paul told the believers in Corinth that no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. He went on to say in v. 12, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world [human viewpoint-- / wisdom and rationale of / CS], but the Spirit who is from God [HS], that [hina- 'in order that;'] it begins a final purpose clause, i.e., it is used by Paul to point out / principal reason for our having been given the HS at salvation] we might know [with a clear and absolute knowledge; subj. mood of oida means that volitionally, / choice to learn and apply / Word is entirely up to you and I] the things freely given to us by God ['freely given' comes from / verb charizomai- 'give in grace;'] those 'things given to us by the grace of God' are spiritual truths in / form of Bible doctrine]." --Back to 2 Peter.

6) The word "for" in v. 21 is the causal particle gar, and it means- for this reason. Why is it that "no prophecy of Scripture is of one's own interpretation"? For this simple reason, because "no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will."

a. Lit, what this say's is, "no prophecy was ever given by the will and desire of man," by his choice and his inclination. Therefore, divine truth is not relegated to the sphere of human intellect, or to the subjectivity of emotion. That belongs to cults, like the Mormons, with their completely subjective 'test of faith' known as the "burning in the bosom."

b. We cannot say, as many, many a Sunday School class can testify, "Well, this is what I think it means." That's precisely the type of 'pooled ignorance' that leads to mass confusion and spiritual blindness.

7) Peter begins his last statement with "but." The Greek word is alla, the strongest conjunction of contrast possible. In perfect contrast to the finite intellect of man, "men moved by the HS spoke from God."

a. Phero means- 'be carried or borne along.' It signifies that the prophets of old were impelled by the power of the Spirit, that He controlled and superintended them so that what they wrote was the exact message He wanted written.

They didn't simply write what they felt like writing, they were "carried along" by the HS. Neither can we simply interpret the Word according to what we feel it

means, or what we feel it ought to mean. We must let the writer speak for himself, without putting our thoughts in his head.

b. The verb *lale/w* (*laleo*) here means- use words in order to declare one's mind and disclose one's thoughts. Without waiving the human authors personality, literary style, IQ, vocabulary or frame of reference, G / HS inspired these men to declare and disclose to the human race, in the language and vernacular of their own day, the mind and thoughts of God-- the divine viewpoint infallibly expressed in human terms.

8) So, we have seen, without a shadow of a doubt, that the Bible far surpasses any human intellectual achievement.

C. Sir William Herschel said, that "All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming more and more strongly the truths contained in the Sacred Scriptures."

D. "The grand old Book still stands; and this old earth, the more its leaves are turned and pondered, the more it will sustain and illustrate the pages of the Sacred Word."-- Charles E. Dana

5. The Bible is our most important provision for daily life. In Matthew 4:4 Jesus answered the temptation and testing of Satan with the words, "...Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

Consider the narrative of Luke in 10:38-42 of his gospel. "Now as they were traveling along, He [Jesus] entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home [Jn. 11:1-5 tells us that Martha was / sister of Mary and Lazarus, all of whom were close friends of our Lord, friends He loved unconditionally]. And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet."

The Greek word *akouo* is used here, not only for Mary's hearing, but for her comprehension and understanding of what was being taught. "But [now we see / contrast between Mary's hunger and desire for / Word of God, and Martha's preoccupation with details] Martha was distracted with all her preparations [verb Luke uses, *perispao*, means- 'be driven about mentally, over-occupied with something;'] we would say, 'she was stressed out']; and she came up {to Him,} and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? [notice she doesn't wait for an answer, instead she answers for Him] Then tell her to help me.'"

That's just like a woman, isn't it? Martha assumed, without actually knowing, that our Lord didn't care about her being left to do all the serving alone, but in reality, what He didn't care about was that she was distracted by temporal details while

He was breaking the Bread of Life. So, he turns her attention back to the real issue, back from the temporal to the eternal.

In v. 41 it says, "...the Lord answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried [anxious] and bothered [word means- to be troubled, disturbed, and confused] about so many things; but {only} a few things are necessary, really {only} one [/ one necessary thing in life, / one absolute, / one thing you cannot live without, is / Word of God], for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'

There's no mistake here, the word Jesus uses for "good" is from agathos- 'divine good.' What our Lord said was, "Mary has chosen that part which is of eternal value and eternal consequence, as opposed to the merely temporal." The "good part" which Jesus spoke of was to listen and to learn at the feet of the Master.

6. Our response to the Word of God determines whether we will receive God's blessing or cursing in time.

In Proverbs 8:33-36, wise old Solomon told his son Rehoboam, to "Heed instruction and be wise [(amf\$ shama' is / Heb. equivalent of / Greek akouo; it means- hear and obey, which leads us where?-- to / path of wisdom], and do not neglect {it [instruction; and from where does instruction come?-- from / Word of God; cf. pr.].} Blessed is the man who listens to me [who listens to wisdom and instruction], watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts. For he who finds me finds life [LXX translates this word by zoe- 'abundant life'], and obtains favor from the LORD [ratson is one of / Heb. words for 'grace']. But [in contrast to / wise man who listens and learns from instruction] he who sins against me injures himself [this is / self-induced misery of negative volition]; [Solomon finishes this brief discourse with a principle that stands firm throughout every dispensation] all those who hate me [teaching of / Word] love death [temporal and operational]."

Principle: The man who hears and obeys instruction from the Word is a wise man.

7. Our response to the Word of God is the basis for our eternal reward.

A. I want to look at two passages in the book of James-- 1:25; and 2:12-13.

1) In 1:25, James tells us, that "...one who looks intently at the perfect law, the {law} of liberty [of freedom-- Word of God], and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does."

a. "Looking intently" refers to diligent study, to concentration on the Word. It comes from the verb paraku/ptw (parakupto)- inspect curiously, look at very carefully.

Parakupto pictures someone leaning over a railing, or stooping down in order to get a closer look at something. It was also used in the ancient world of people standing outside of someplace straining to see what was going on inside.

b. When James speaks of the believer who “abides by” the law of freedom, he uses parameno, which means- ‘remain beside, continue near or in something.’ It speaks of the believer’s steadfast continuance, his perseverance in the Word of Truth, and therefore, in the plan of grace.

Parameno was a military term in the Classical Greek and was used by both Homer and Thucydides for an army at war that ‘stands its ground’. The first part of v. 25 could be translated-- “one who diligently studies with curious inspection, the perfect law of freedom, the Word of God, and by it stands his ground.”

c. “A forgetful hearer” is one who hears the Word taught but never makes the leap of faith into application.

d. “An effectual doer” is one who applies the principles, promises, and truths from the storehouse of doctrine in his own soul.

e. James say’s, “this man shall be blessed in what he does.” Why? Because he made the decision to take the Word out of his soul and bring it into the realm of experience.

2) In James 2:12-13, he writes, “So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged [evaluated, at / Bema Seat] by {the} law of liberty [Word of God; what James is saying is that our spiritual lives will be assessed in / light of / divine standard found in / ‘law of freedom’]. For judgment [at / Bema Seat] {will be} merciless to one who has shown no mercy [James recognizes that because of our arrogance, our inability and our insufficiency, what we need more than anything else, standing in / presence of / omniscient Judge, is mercy, i.e., / fullest possible measure of compassion]; mercy triumphs over judgment [not only will mercy triumph at / Day of Christ, mercy is victorious right now; mercy triumphs over arrogance, mercy triumphs over hypocrisy, mercy triumphs over self-righteousness and a judgmental attitude; 2 principles of mercy from vv. 12-13].”

a. Because God has shown us great mercy, we are to show mercy to others.

b. The standard of mercy that you measure out to others is the standard by which you yourself will be measured.

In Matthew 7:1-2 Jesus told his fellow Jews, “Do not judge lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”

The question then is: How do you judge others? With mercy and grace, or without? Because this is the divine standard of judgment, whether with mercy and grace, or without, it's measured back to us.

B. The Apostle John, in 2 John 8, exhorts these believers, to “watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.”

1) The word for “watch” here is a mental word in the Greek. It means-consider, contemplate, direct your thoughts and attention toward something.

2) John penned these very words in recognition of the “...many deceivers” who had “gone out into the world.” He describes them in v. 7, as “those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh [those who did not acknowledge / humanity of Christ were / Docetic Gnostics that John labeled as deceivers and antichrists].”

3) What was it about themselves that John was commanding these believers to keep a watchful eye on, to direct their thoughts and attention toward. It was their dedication to the one and only thing that would give them discernment against false teaching, the one thing that would enable them to identify the deceivers and antichrists-- the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

C. Hebrews 10:35-36, say's, “Therefore [or consequently, in light of your having endured / ‘great conflict of suffering,’ described in vv. 33-34, he say's], do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward [their confidence, which came about as a result of their understanding / Word of God, rested in an eternal, omnipotent and immutable God]. For you have need of endurance, [now he gives us / reason for our desperate need of divine endurance] so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised [blessing in time and reward in eternity].”

D. Let's look, for a moment, at those links which God designed in eternity past for the Spiritual Chain of the Church Age. There are at least eight links in this chain.

1) The Spiritual Chain begins with communication*, the root from which all spiritual fruit is borne.

2) Communication of the Word must be heard before faith can be exercised, thus accentuating the importance of Bible class and personal study-- “faith {comes} from hearing*, and hearing by the word of Christ,” Romans 10:17.

3) Faith* must be exercised, ‘inhale faith,’ before application can take place, for the simple fact that you cannot apply what you do not know.

4) Full knowledge, knowledge* to which faith has been applied, is a reality only when we believe what has been perceived and understood through the illumination of the HS, through His teaching ministry.

5) Once we possess epignosis, full knowledge, in the heart-- the right lobe of the mentality-- now we can move into the realm of application*. We call this 'exhale faith.'

6) From application of the Word in the power of the Spirit comes character*. Christian character means virtue, and eventually, integrity. Integrity is consistency of character.

7) From spiritual character comes true spiritual service*, ministry to the Body of Christ. Here's the principle: Character is a result of spiritual growth; service is a result of character.

8) With that service comes a finality in our personal sense of destiny-- joy, peace, contentment, and a sense of completion and fulfillment* unequaled and unparalleled by anything the world has to offer!

Principle: Inner tranquility and contentment come from learning how to rest in the arms of God's matchless grace.

a. The personal sense of destiny, the joy of spiritual service, the fulfillment and contentment which come from ministry to the Body of Christ, are all a part of the believer's blessing in time which will be parlayed into reward in eternity.

b. So, what we have here is basically a four-fold breakdown in the execution of God's Protocol Plan-- growth leading to character, character leading to service, and service leading eventually to reward.

8. Nations stand or fall based on their attitude to God's Word.

A. The great American hero and President, Andrew Jackson, once said, "That book, sir, is the rock on which our Republic rests." Cf. Hosea 4:1-14.

B. "If there is anything in my thoughts or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me an early love of the Scriptures. If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity."-- Daniel Webster

In Conclusion

“The vigor of our spiritual life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts. I solemnly state this from the experience of fifty-four years. The first three years after conversion I neglected the Word of God. Since I began to search it diligently the blessing has been wonderful. Great has been the blessing from consecutive, diligent, daily study. I look upon it as a lost day when I have not had a good time over the Word of God.”-- George Muller