

The Pen Is Mightier than the Sword

My wife got me the most thoughtful birthday gift this summer. She ordered and had delivered a beautiful cherry wood pen case to store my favorite pens which are like collector's items to me. As I placed my pens in the case and carefully lowered the window, I immediately thought of how many of my friends have their guns in specialized cases. Whenever you visit a man who has a collection of guns encased, he shows you his weapons like prized possessions. Now I, too, have the availability to have my prized possessions, my ink pens, in a special display. In 1839, Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, an English novelist wrote, "Beneath the rule of men entirely great, the pen is mightier than the sword." Think of the battles and even wars that have been won and diverted through the writing with a pen.

John the beloved disciple was exasperated when coming to the end of his second epistle when he wrote, "*Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full*" (II John, verse 1:12). How important are words! Job 6:25 says, "*How forcible are right words!*" Words express our thoughts clearly and when written down there is far less danger of misquotations. Words have the power to live beyond our lifespans. Think of the impact of the written word! I agree with Bulwer-Lytton, "the pen is mightier than the sword."

I. Words in Literature have framed our thinking and our speech.

Time and space would fail us should we make an exhaustive list of how authors and poets from several centuries past have influenced us through their writings. Allow me to give you just a few quotes from one author, William Shakespeare. See if you recognize some of these writings that have expressed and even shaped our worldview:

To be, or not to be: that is the question. (*Hamlet*)

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts. (*As You Like it*)

Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. (*Twelfth Night*)

Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once. (*Julius Caesar*)

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child! (*King Lear*)

We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep. (*The Tempest*)

Beware the Ides of March. (*Julius Caesar*)

Get thee to a nunnery. (*Hamlet*)

What's in a name? A rose by any name would smell as sweet. (*Romeo and Juliet*)

To thine own self be true. (*Hamlet*)

All that glisters is not gold. (*The Merchant of Venice*)

What a piece of work is a man! (*Hamlet*)

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears: I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. (*Julius Caesar*)

Whoever loved that loved not at first sight? (*As You Like It*)

A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse! (*Richard III*)

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind; and therefore is winged Cupid painted blind. (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*)

The fault, dear Brutus, lies not within the stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings. (*Julius Caesar*)

Neither a borrower nor a lender be; for loan oft loses both itself and friend, and borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry. (*Hamlet*)

Off with his head! (*Richard III*)

Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown. (*Henry IV, Part 2*)

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; For he to-day that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother. (*Henry V*).

II. Words in History have changed the course of history.

As America was fighting for her independence, Thomas Paine wrote these encouraging words in our darkest hour and with them “rallied the troops” changing the course of history: “These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.”

In 1862 during the War Between the States, Abraham Lincoln was introduced to Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a book that depicted the evils of slavery. When he met her, he fondly commented, “So you are the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war.” Could a book be that powerful? President Lincoln definitely believed it contributed to being at least one of the “triggers” that turned a nation against itself for four arduous years.

In the Gettysburg Address President Lincoln said, “The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here....” Because of these few words written on the back of an envelope we shall never forget those words that closed with this noble thought: “...We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

In World War II, Britain was bombed to near smithereens. What kept them going in the midst of mayhem? One bright point of light were the speeches by her Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill. It is frustrating choosing which words from his speeches I should give you an example of; these are some of my favorite words he spoke: “Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fall, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared

for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth lasts for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour!"

The doors of history have turned on the hinges of life-changing words!

III. Words of Inspiration have changed our eternity.

The reformation pulled the world from the Dark Ages to an Age of Light with the Gospel. The Word of God was locked in the dark archives of the Church of Rome. One man that paid the ultimate price for his words was William Tyndale who died a martyr's death. John Foxe describes an argument with a "learned" but "blasphemous" clergyman, who had asserted to Tyndale that, "We had better be without God's laws than the Pope's." Tyndale responded: "I defy the Pope, and all his laws; and if God spares my life, ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost!"

The spearhead for the reformation was Martin Luther. At the Diet of Worms on April 18, 1521, he was ordered to recant his teachings. He addressed the emperor and his princes, "Since your majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by scripture and plain reason--I do not accept the authority of popes and councils for they have contradicted each other--my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me. Amen."

These inspiring words by heroes of the Church have meant much, but only one source holds the Words of Divine inspiration and that is the Bible. God created the universe by His Word: "*By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth*" (Psalm 33:6). God brings us salvation by His Word: "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17). And when men's words have been forgotten, God's Word will go on forever: "*For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven*" (Psalm 119:89).

In the final analysis, at the end of time, it is the Word of God that becomes the pen that is proven to be mightier than the sword: "*And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword...*" (Revelation 19: 13-15a). Until then we must never forget the Bible is "*...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" (Ephesians 6:17). To use the words of King David in reference to the sword that beheaded Goliath, we would say of the Bible, "*...There is none like that; give it me*" (I Samuel 21:9)!

-Pastor Pope-