

God's Word

Our Source of Life and Strength

Sunday, January 3, 2021



Last week the message was on Habakkuk and Job: their loss, their dark and desperate situations, and their determination to rejoice in the Lord, to be joyful in the God of their salvation!

Job and Habakkuk recognized God was their Sovereign Lord and in Him they would find their strength. In Habakkuk 3:19, Habakkuk reaffirms his trust in God. He compared his spiritual climb to a deer swiftly ascending to the mountaintops and gracefully gliding over them.

How do we build our trust in the Lord?

How do we grow in the Lord and remain surefooted as a deer?

4 Basic Spiritual Disciplines: (ways to grow)

1. Prayer
2. Reading & Studying God's Word
3. Worshipping the Lord
4. Fasting

Today, I want to focus on Reading and Studying the Word of God.

As we begin the new year, we are emphasizing Prayer and Fasting, with the fast that started yesterday and continues until the end of the day on the 22nd. During this time, we seek the Lord's direction for our Nation, our Church and Ministry, and our personal ministry. However, we must make reading and study of God's Word, a priority, in order to grow.

- Look at Nehemiah 8:1-12: This passage illustrates “a hunger and desire for the Word of God” and the “recommitment to God’s Word”.
- Unlike us, the post-captivity Jews in Judah did not own Bibles they could read. Not only that, most could not read, yet they hungered for the Word of God and had a strong desire to hear it read.
- For some of the people who gathered on this day at the Water Gate, it was the first time that they had ever heard the words of the Book of the Law.

- God is inviting His people to come back home again, to live in harmony with Him once again. God's Word inspires a nation to rebuild the city, to follow Nehemiah in his great construction project.
- These Words bring the people back into communion with God. They are an invitation to the hungry and the thirsty, to those yearning for home.
- When we have a hunger for the Word, and can read it, and hear it preached and taught, it can have a powerful, redemptive, life transforming effect on us.

- Centuries later, at the Festival of Shelters or Tabernacles, Jesus stands among the crowd and says, “...**Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink!...**” (John 7:37-38). NLT
- This time, God (Jesus) himself speaks the words of invitation to the hungry and thirsty, to those yearning for home.
- This practice of opening the “the Book of the Law” in the Temple square continued into Jesus’s time, and he often taught from the scriptures in this very place, (Luke 19:45-20:2).

Let's take a look at the Bible, the Book of Books:

- The Bible – a most *Extraordinary* Book
- It is the World's most *interesting* Book because of the story it has to tell.
- It is the World's most *wonderful* Book because of the transforming effect it has on those who read it.
- It is the World's most *unique* Book because it is the Word of God revealed to man.

- We call the Bible a book, but it is so much more than a book. It is a book of many books, 66 books to be exact.
- The Bible is very old, yet it is as up-to-date as today's newspaper.
- The Bible is contemporary to every age and generation.
- The Bible is so plain and simple that a child can understand it, yet so profound scholars find it inexhaustible.

The Bible Under Attack

- Because the Word of God is the Word of Christ and the world hated Him, wicked men hate the Word.
- For this reason the Bible has always been attacked, discredited, and abused.
- The Bible has been and is attacked in three ways:
 - Actual destruction – usually by burning
 - Denial of the Biblical record
 - Doubt of the genuineness in the name of Higher criticism.

- Burned by Tyrants: one of the most familiar efforts to destroy the Scriptures is recorded in the Bible itself – Jer.36:
 - Jehoiakim, the evil king of Judah, was angry with the prophecies of Jeremiah (covered 23 yrs) which he spoke by the command of the Lord and recorded by Baruch.
 - Angered and frightened, Jehoiakim ordered the book brought and read to him. The king then mutilated the scroll with a knife and burned it in the fire, thinking it would put an end to Jeremiah and his ministry.

- Yet, this did not stop Jeremiah. God directed His prophet to write the book anew adding the attempted destruction.
- Instead of destroying the Word, the fearful King only caused the Word to be increased.
- **On February 23, 303 AD the Roman Emperor Diocletian**, began the most determined and vicious attempt to wipe the Christian Faith and Scriptures from the face of the earth.
- He issued four edicts:
 1. Christian churches were to be burned;

2. All copies of the Bible, or any portions of it, were to be burned.
 3. Christians were to be deprived of all civil rights;
 4. All Christians must sacrifice to pagan gods or be put to death.
- Persecution swept through the Roman empire like a wild fire. Churches were demolished, every copy of the Bible that could be found was burned and the Christians were slaughtered.
 - This persecution went on for eight years, yet it could not destroy the Christian faith or the Bible.

- In 313 AD the next emperor Constantine the Great issued the Edict of Milan, granting freedom of worship to Christians.
- In 332 AD Constantine issued a call for Bibles to be placed in the churches of the new capital city Byzantium. Within 24 hours, fifty copies were delivered to him.
- The Word of God had survived the most savage attack ever unleashed against it.

- Denounced by Infidels: More often the Bible is assaulted by the ridicule of unbelievers.
 - The most notable of such enemies of the Bible is the Frenchman Voltaire. Along with his satire and ridicule of the Catholic Church he violently attacked the Holy Scriptures.
 - He predicted that within 100 years the Bible would pass from common use and only be found in Museums.
 - During the 100 years after his death in 1778, the number of Bibles in the world increased by 300,000,000 and his house was purchased by the Geneva Bible Society and stacked high with Bibles.

- Criticized by Liberalism:

In the name of scientific investigation into the authorship, dates, sources, and composition of the books of the Bible, many theologians and preachers discredit the Bible by denying its accuracy, rejecting its genuineness, and denouncing its divine inspiration.

The Bible - What it is:

- It is a Sacred Book: it is the collection of the sacred writings of the Christian faith.
- Actually it consists of the sacred writings of Judeo-Christianity, for both Jews and Christians accept the first part of the Bible, the Old Testament. Only Christianity accepts the second part, the New Testament.

- There are three characteristics that qualifies the Bible in the unique classification “Sacred”:
 - It is divine in its origin. The Scriptures came from God through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
 - It is holy in its purpose, to show the sovereignty and love of God toward us.
 - It is sacred in its message, which is to reveal Jesus Christ as the atonement by which we (fallen man) are restored to fellowship with God, the Father.

- The Bible is a living book: from Genesis where God created the earth and filled it with life, to Revelation, where God's people see and drink from the River of Life. The Bible concerns itself with Life.
- In Philippians 2:16, Paul calls the Bible the “**Word of Life**”.
- The Bible gives life, as Jesus said in John 6:63 “...**and the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life**”. NLT
- The Bible can bestow life because it is life and lives forever.

- 1 Peter 1:23 says, “For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God”.
NLT
- The Bible sustains life: The Bible is the Word of Life because it feeds and nourishes the lives of men and women, as Jesus said to Satan, “...**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God**” Luke 4:4 KJV.
- As 1 Peter 2:2 references, “As Milk”, the Word nourishes early life. “**Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment...**” NLT

- As Hebrews 5:14 references the Bible as “Solid food”, the Word nourishes mature life.
- The Bible is an Eternal Book: The Bible will never die. It’s commandments, its testimonies, its judgments, its precepts will live forever because it is the Word of Christ who is Eternal.
- Psalms 119:89 says, “Your eternal word, O Lord, stands firm in heaven”. NLT
- Psalms 119:160 says, “The very essence of your words is truth; all your just regulations will stand forever.” NLT

- Jesus said in Luke 21:33, “heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.” NLT
- The Bible is timeless. It is not bound by time and nor worn by time. It does not wear out but remains fresh and appropriate for all time and every generation.

The Bible speaks of itself using many symbols that are descriptive of its application to the needs of people:

- The Bible is the physical embodiment of the will and mind of God.
- Let's look at some of the Bible symbols:
 - A lamp or light: Ps. 119:105, 130 - Just as Christ the Word is the light of the World, so the written word is light in darkness. It brings us illumination, courage, hope and comfort; it lights our way to keep us from falling.

- A Sword: Heb.4:12, Eph. 6:17 - The Word of God is a weapon that destroys sin, a safeguard that protects us from sin. This means that the Bible is our surest offense and our strongest defense.
- A Fire: Jer. 20:9;23:29 - The Word brings warmth, power, and purification. *Yet it is our use of the fire that determines its effects in our lives.*
- A Hammer: Jer. 23:29 - Some of us are broken in repentance by the scriptures yet others reject the Word and are hardened.

– Seed: Luke 8:11;1 Peter 1:23 - The Word, like seed, brings life. A seed germinates and in season brings forth life. The Word, when planted, will bring forth life in the Human heart.

– Bread: Isa. 55:11 - Just as our body lives by bread so also does our soul and spirit live by the Word.

“It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to.”

NLT

– Milk: 1 Cor. 3:2 - The Word of God nourishes our spiritual lives when we are newborn babes in Christ.

- Meat: Heb. 5:12-13 - The Word builds our spiritual lives and makes us strong and vigorous followers of Christ.
- Honey: Ps. 119:103 - The sweetness of honey suggests to us the pleasures and delights that are found in the Scriptures. “How sweet your words taste to me; they are sweeter than Honey.” NLT

The Inspiration of the Bible:

- Though we cannot imagine life without the Bible (written Word), there was a time when it did not exist.
- However, there was never a time when God did not in some way reveal His will and His plans to man.
- Before the Bible (written Word) became God's instrument of revelation, He communicated with man usually by direct contact: either by angels, dreams or visions, but most often by His spoken Word.

- God's early covenants with man were established by spoken communication.
- All that is recorded in Genesis occurred before the Bible was written. So, from the time of Adam until Jacob and his family went into Egypt, divine revelation came to a few orally and then was passed from ear to ear and committed to memory generation after generation. Thus, God's will, God's laws, God's covenants with man were contained in an oral, not a written word.

- As Moses led the children of Israel to the Promised Land, the Word of God began to take a new form. Moses, by the inspiration of God, began to write down those things he received from God. This is the beginning of the Bible (written Word).
- As the population of man increased on the earth, man's need for a written revelation of God also increased. Out of this need, God provided man with the written Word.

- The Written Word is:
 - A record of God's revelation of Himself.
 - A record of God's covenant-relationships with man.
 - A revelation of eternal and divine truth.
 - Provides aid and direction for those who seek truth, or those who require confirmation of truth.
 - A reminder of the high estate and noble nature from which man has fallen.
 - Provides an authority by which the power of sin can be broken, and the strength by which we can hold ourselves above our former way.

- We believe that all of the Bible is inspired of God. It is His Word.
- The term “Inspiration” comes from the Greek word “theopneustos”, which means “God-Breathed”. We (WOWC and the Church of God) believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. This means that the Holy Spirit guided and directed the writing of the scriptures using the words from the writers’ own vocabularies and utilizing their individual styles.

- What does the Bible say about its own inspiration?
 - 2 Tim. 3:16 “All scripture” is inspired.
 - 2 Peter 1:20-21 “Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.” NLT”
 - Luke 1:70 ...”just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago.” NLT

- Acts 1:16 ...This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David.” NLT (the betrayal of Judas)
- Rev. 1:10-11 “It was the Lord’s Day, and I was worshipping in the Spirit. Suddenly, I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet blast. It said, Write in a book everything you see, and send it to the seven churches in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.”

- Rev. 21:5 “And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new! And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.”
- Rev. 22:18-19 “ And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the words of prophecy written in this book: If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. And if anyone removes any of the words from this book of prophecy, God will remove that person’s share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book.” NLT

- The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to equip himself for life and service by a diligent study of the Scriptures:
 - 2 Tim. 2:15 KJV says, “study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”
 - 2 Tim. 2:15 Amplified Bible says, “Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing (rightly handling and skillfully teaching) the Word of Truth.”

- Jesus even instructed the Pharisees to search the scriptures, John 5:39 says, “You search the scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!” NLT

- What do we take from this message?
 1. God desires to communicate with us through His written Word.
 2. The Bible is the only written Book that can change our lives, because it's author is Alive!
 3. The Bible must be read and studied.
 4. We must not be like the Pharisees who took great pride in their knowledge of the Scriptures. They habitually searched the scriptures and knew how many times each Hebrew letter occurred in the Law of Moses; they knew a vast amount of facts, BUT...

4. The Pharisees DID NOT KNOW THE SPIRIT AND MEANING OF THE WORD!
5. We can not admire the Word only, praising it is not enough.
6. We must read & study it and put it into practice, then we can experience its power in our lives.
7. Don't be haphazard in your reading but use a systematic approach so you gain the most from His revealed truth.

Here is how to Read the Scriptures:

1. Read carefully: Find a good and convenient time of day to read, a time when you are mentally alert.
2. Read prayerfully: Ask God through the Holy Spirit to make you responsive to truth and to illuminate what you read to gain understanding.
3. Read reflectively: Take time to think on the things you read. Reflect, meditate and contemplate, and journal it.

4. Read regularly: Read every day. It will keep your mind in the proper thought and attitude for the best understanding.
5. Read repeatedly: Don't rush, read the same books and passages over and over until they are familiar to you. The constant reviewing will fix in your mind the things you have read.
6. Read introspectively: Apply what you read to your own life. See how it can help you, cleanse you, and strengthen you. Don't just read words but a message to your heart.

What are Your experiences with the Word?

Do you have a testimony of how God's Word has blessed you?

How has God's Word changed your life?

What would you tell others regarding the benefits of knowing the Bible and the Author?

Has the Word challenged you to make changes in your life?

Have you been convicted by the Word?

If so, what was / is your response?

Share the camping story with no flashlights.

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