

TRUTH B-P CHURCH
Adult Sunday School

DOCTRINE OF THE VERBAL PLENARY PRESERVATION
OF GOD’S WORD IN THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGES

LESSON SIX: BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR VPP (PART 1)

I. INTRODUCTION

VPP is not a theory. It is definitely not a heresy. The providential preservation of the perfect Bible is a biblical doctrine. It is not founded by blind faith but logical faith. It is also not somewhere out there but don’t know where. We have God’s perfect Word in our hand today, period!

God gives to us the greatest comfort on our Christian faith because our faith is based upon the infallible, inerrant, inspired and preserved Scriptures today. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). This is God’s gift to all His beloved children. Do not let anyone undermine and rob your faith and confidence in the perfect God who has given us His perfect Bible.

For the next two lessons, we shall study on the biblical support (selected Bible verses) for VPP from both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

II. PSALM 12:6-7

“The words of the LORD *are* pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.”

God's Word is perfect. Perfect means without mistake and error. Every word is deliberately chosen to be part of the Bible which God is pleased to reveal Himself to us. The word of God is so pure that it is liken to silver tried in a furnace of earth and purified seven times. Seven is the number of perfection. What apt description of God's Word that is to be regarded as perfectly pure, with not a slightest of error or falsehood contain in it! Compared to men's words, God's Word shines the brightest due to its perfection and purity. As for men's words, they paled in comparison with God's Word as they are full of lies and hypocrisy.

Verse 7 must be understood together with verse 6. The relationship between these two verses is what we call the synthetic parallelism. It means the second verse adds or expands on the teaching mentioned in the first verse. In other words, not only God's word is perfectly pure, it is also perfectly preserved. The word “keep” means to guard. God will guard His Word from being tempered with or lost! The word “preserve” means also to guard, however in the original Hebrew language, this word in the action form is emphasized with an “energetic nun” (תִּצְרְפוּ), meaning to say God's Word will surely be guarded by God forever. And it is from the generation in the time of David onwards. God ensures that His Word will be perfect and preserved forever.

The above is our interpretation of Psalm 12:6-7. However, there are those who argued that the preservation in verse 7 refers to people and not the words. Can they be right? Let us be objective in our approach of the matter. It is always the immediate context that must be considered first, and not the distant context. In this case here, the immediate context of the word “them” has to be the words of God. After considering the immediate context, we apply the distant context and this is what we get: God’s perfect words prevailing over the evil words of the ungodly men. The source of comfort for every believer in Jesus Christ is always the word of God. And this word of God has been purified seven times to perfection and has been preserved perfectly to this day.

III. PSALM 119:89

“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.”

Psalm 119 is arranged into an acrostic pattern. Sometimes it is also known as the alphabetical psalm. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. And this psalm contains 22 groups of 8 verses each. Each group begins with a Hebrew letter from Aleph all the way to Tau. It is the longest psalm and hence, the importance of God’s word in a believer’s life cannot be overemphasized.

It is significant that the psalmist places the adverb “for ever” in the beginning of the verse. It is to indicate the indefiniteness of time. It is followed by “O LORD” in the vocative, together adding great emphasis of this indefiniteness of time that is being ordered by the LORD. The word “settled” means “to set up,” or “to establish.” It is a passive verb which means “to be set up” or “to be established.” That which is to be set up or establish is “thy word.” It is God’s word that will be established forever. It will not change. It will not be lost. It will be established forever.

Not only that, the psalmist also indicates the location of where the word of God will be established forever. It is “in heaven.” Heaven is the eternal dwelling place of the most high God. What is the significant of such a heavenly location? Heaven is contrast to the earth. The earth is changeable and continues to become worse in terms of both physical and spiritual conditions. But the word of God is forever settled in heaven. It means that the word of God will not be like the earth that is changeable. The word of God is unchangeable. It is permanently fixed and secured by God Himself. No man and angel will be able to destroy the word of God by their attacks.

The word of God must mean the written revelation of God in the holy Scriptures. It is the only way in which sinful man can gain the knowledge of God through which God is pleased to reveal unto him in a personal and intimate way with the illumination of the Holy Spirit. If the word of God can be destroyed either in whole or in part, then our faith in a perfect God who promises us perfect salvation according to His word will fall apart. But thank God this will never be the case! All because the word of God is forever settled in heaven!

IV. ISAIAH 40:8

“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”

Base on the context (see verses 6 to 8), the grass refers to men and flower refers to the fleeting glory of men. They do not last, in other words. It is comparing between the frailty of men and immutability of God’s word. The great theme here is God’s word that shall stand for ever. The word “stand” means “firm and unmoveable.” It shall never be destroyed. It emphasized on the indestructibility of God’s word. The followings testified to the verity of God’s word.

- A. The Roman emperor Diocletian (AD 245 – 313) decreed in AD 303 that every Bible should be destroyed. He had been told that if he could destroy the Bible he would destroy Christianity because ‘Christians are a people of the Book.’ Feeling he had succeeded, Diocletian raised a column with the inscription in Latin saying, ‘the name of Christian is extinguished.’ In AD 312, Constantine succeeded him and replaced all the pagan symbols with the symbol of the cross. This remarkable change took place in less than ten years.
- B. Fourteen hundred years after Constantine, the French atheist Voltaire (1694 – 1778) boasted, ‘One hundred years from my day there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian (one who study into relics of the past) curiosity seeker.’

Just twenty years after the death of Voltaire, the Geneva Bible Society purchased his house for printing the Bible. It later became the Paris headquarters for the British and Foreign Bible Society, which stored and distributed Bibles throughout Europe. “*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever*” (Isa 40:8).

- C. The indestructibility of the Bible was fulfilled in the copying of the manuscripts. Almost as soon as the original manuscripts (Autographs) were written, copies began to be made. Just as a well-loved and used copy of the Bible soon begins to deteriorate, so the original manuscripts did not last long because of constant handling. But God preserved His Word by the hands of dedicated copyists. These men had such a high regard for Scripture that they went to great lengths to ensure the accuracy of their copies. Minute regulations were laid down in the Talmud for their preparation. ‘A synagogue roll must be written on the skins of clean animals, prepared for the particular use of the synagogue by a Jew. These must be fastened together with strings taken from clean animals. Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the entire codex (manuscript). The length of each column must not extend over less than forty-eight, or more than sixty lines; and the breadth must consist of thirty letters. The whole copy must be first lined; and if three words be written in it without a line, it is worthless. The ink should be black, neither red, green, nor any colour, and be prepared according to a definite receipt (receipe). An authentic copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least to deviate. No word or letter, not even a yod, must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him... Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene; between every word the breadth of a narrow consonant; between every new parshiah, or section, the breadth of nine consonants; between every book, three lines. The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; but the rest need not do so. Besides this, the copyist must sit in Jewish dress, wash his whole body, not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink, and should a king address him while writing that name he must take no notice of him... The rolls in which these regulations are not observed are condemned to be buried in the ground or burn; or they are banished to the schools, to be used as reading-books.

Besides recording varieties of reading, traditions, or conjecture, the Masorettes (Old Testament copyists) undertook a number of calculations which do not enter into the ordinary sphere of texture criticism. They numbered the verses, words, and letters of every book. They calculated the middle word and the middle letter of each. They enumerated verses which contained all the letters of the alphabet, or a certain number of them; and so on. These trivialities, as we may rightly consider them, had yet the effect of securing minute attention to the precise transmission of the text; and they are but an excessive manifestation of a respect for the sacred Scriptures which itself deserves nothing but praise. The Masorettes were indeed anxious that not one jot nor tittle – not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter – of the Law should pass away or be lost’ – Sir Frederick Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), pp 38-43.

V. SUMMARY

Psalm 12:6-7, Psalm 119:89 and Isaiah 40:8 are just a few of the many biblical supports found in the Old Testament that prove the providential preservation of God’s word. If God did not perfectly preserve His word for us, what do we have? A Bible with mistakes? If so, how can we be sure of our salvation? It will cause us to cast doubt on God’s word in every part including His promises. But thank God this is not the case. For God has clearly promised the perfection of His Word through the ages.

Let Thomas Watson’s words be our summary: “The devil and his agents have been blowing at Scripture light, but could never blow it out; a clear sign that it was lighted from heaven... The letter of Scripture has been preserved, without any corruption, in the original tongue” (page 27 of his book ‘A Body of Divinity’). Amen.