

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 150

THE SCRIPTURE

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God,
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof,
for correction, for instruction in
righteousness.*

2 Timothy 3:16

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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150

Contents

Of the Holy Scriptures	1
<i>From the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689</i>	
A Presumption in Favor of the Bible	4
<i>A. W. Pink (1886-1952)</i>	
Unity of the Bible Attests Divine Authorship	8
<i>A. W. Pink (1886-1952)</i>	
Other Scripture Proofs of Divine Origin.....	12
<i>Thomas Boston (1676-1732)</i>	
Our Need of Scripture.....	14
<i>J. I. Packer</i>	
God's Word to Be Revered.....	17
<i>John Jewel (1522-1571)</i>	
God's Claim to Be Heard	19
<i>Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)</i>	
The Scriptures Our Counselors.....	23
<i>Charles Bridges (1794-1869)</i>	
Meditating on the Word of God.....	27
<i>I. C. Herendeen (1883-1992)</i>	
The Scriptures More Precious Than Gold	30
<i>Charles Bridges (1794-1869)</i>	
Trembling at the Word of the Lord.....	33
<i>Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)</i>	
Exposition Must Have Application.....	35
<i>A. W. Tozer (1897-1963)</i>	

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OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

From the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

THE Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience (2Ti 3:15-17; Isa 8:20; Luk 16:29, 31; Eph 2:20). Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable, yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary unto salvation (Rom 1:19-21; 2:14-15; Psa 19:1-3). Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church (Heb 1:1); and afterward, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth—and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world—to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God’s revealing His will unto His people being now ceased (Pro 22:19-21; Rom 15:4; 2Pe 1:19-20).

2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament, which are these:

Of the Old Testament

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

Of the New Testament

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, The Acts of the Apostles, Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, The Epistle to the Hebrews, The Epistle of James, The first and second Epistles of Peter, The first, second, and third Epistles of John, the Epistle of Jude, the Revelation.

All of which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life (2Ti 3:16).

3. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon or rule of the Scripture, and therefore are of no authority to the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings (Luk 24:27, 44; Rom 3:2).

4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (Who is truth itself), the author thereof; therefore, it is to be received because it is the Word of God (2Pe 1:19-21; 2Ti 3:16; 2Th 2:13; 1Jo 5:9).

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church of God to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, and many other incomparable excellencies and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts (Joh 16:13-14; 1Co 2:10-12; 1Jo 2:20, 27).

6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture—unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit or traditions of men (2Ti 3:15-17; Gal 1:8-9).

Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word (Joh 6:45; 1Co 2:9-12), and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church[es] common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed (1Co 11:13-14; 14:26, 40).

7. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all (2Pe 3:16); yet those things that are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly pro-

pounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned in a due use of ordinary means,¹ may attain to a sufficient understanding of them (Psa 19:7; 119:130).

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old, Rom 3:2) and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal to them (Isa 8:20). But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God—who have a right unto and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read (Act 13:16) and search them (Joh 5:39)—therefore, they are to be translated into the vulgar² language of every nation unto which they come (1Co 14:6, 9, 11-12, 24, 28) that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope (Rom 15:4).

9. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold,³ but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly (2Pe 1:20-21; Act 15:15-16).

10. The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit; into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved (Mat 22:29, 31-32; Eph 2:20; Act 28:23).

From *The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*; available from Chapel Library.

London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689): Doctrinal standard of many Baptist churches from its inception. Mostly identical to the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) except in the sections on baptism and church government. First published in 1677 and adopted in 1689, it is known by many simply as the “1689.”



¹ **means** – methods by which something is accomplished, such as Bible reading and prayer.

² **vulgar** – common, of the ordinary people.

³ **manifold** – of many kinds, numerous and varied.

A PRESUMPTION IN FAVOR OF THE BIBLE

A. W. Pink (1886-1952)

THIS argument may be simply and tersely stated thus: Man needed a divine revelation that was committed to writing, a revelation couched in human language. God had previously given man a revelation of Himself in His created works, which men please to term “nature”—but this revelation was inadequate. Though the creation bears unmistakable testimony to the existence of its Creator, and though sufficient is revealed of God through it to render all men “without excuse” (Rom 1:20), yet creation does not present a complete unveiling of God’s character. Creation reveals God’s wisdom and power, but it gives us a very imperfect presentation of His mercy and love. Creation is now under the curse. It is imperfect because it has been marred by sin. Therefore, an imperfect creation cannot be a perfect medium for revealing God; and hence, also, the testimony of creation is contradictory.

In the spring of the year—when nature puts on her loveliest robes, and we see the beautiful foliage of the countryside and listen to the happy songs of the birds—we have no difficulty in inferring that a gracious God is ruling over our world. But what of the wintertime, when the countryside is desolate and the trees are leafless and forlorn, when a pall of death seems to be resting on everything? When we stood by the seashore and watched the setting sun crimsoning the placid waters on a quiet eve, we had no hesitation in ascribing the picture to the hand of the divine Artist. But when we stand upon the same seashore on a stormy night—listening to the roaring of the breakers and the howling wind, and watching the boats battling with the angry waves, having to helplessly listen to the heartrending cries of seamen as they go down into a watery grave—then we are tempted to wonder if, after all, a merciful God is at the helm. As one walks through the Grand Canyon¹ or stands before the Niagara Falls,² the hand and power of God seem very evident; but, as one witnesses the

¹ **Grand Canyon** – immense canyon of the Colorado River in northwestern Arizona, USA.

² **Niagara Falls** – breathtaking large waterfall at the Niagara River on the border between the state of New York, USA, and Canada.

desolations of the San Francisco earthquake³ or the death-dealing effects of the volcanic eruptions of Mount Vesuvius,⁴ he is again perplexed and puzzled. In a word, then, the testimony of nature is conflicting; and, as we have said, this is due to the fact that sin has come in and marred God's handiwork. Creation displays God's natural attributes, but it tells us little or nothing of His moral perfections. Nature knows no forgiveness and shows no mercy, and if we had no other source of information, we should never discover the fact that God pardons sinners. Man then needs a written revelation from God.

Our limitations and our ignorance reveal our need. Man is in darkness concerning God. Blot the Bible out of existence and what should we know about His character, His moral attributes, His attitude toward us, or His demands upon us? As we have seen, nature is but an imperfect medium for revealing God. The ancients had the same nature before them as we have, but what did they discover of His character? To what knowledge of the one true God did they attain? The seventeenth chapter of the book of Acts answers that question. When the Apostle Paul was in the famous city of Athens, famous for its learning and philosophical culture, he discovered an altar on which were inscribed the words, "To the unknown God" (Act 17:23). The same condition prevails today. Visit those lands that have not been illumined by the light of the Holy Scriptures, and it will be found that their peoples know no more about the character of the living God than did the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians.

Man is in darkness concerning himself. From whence am I? What am I? Am I anything more than a reasoning animal? Have I an immortal soul, or am I nothing more than a sentient⁵ being? What is the purpose of my existence? Why am I here in this world at all? What is the end and aim of life? How shall I employ my time and talents? Shall I live only for today; eat, drink, and be merry? What after death? Do I perish like the beasts of the field, or is the grave the portal into another world? If so, whither am I bound? Do these questions appear senseless and irrelevant? Annihilate the Scripture, eliminate all the light they have shed upon these problems, and whither shall

³ **San Francisco earthquake** – major earthquake and fire in 1906 in San Francisco, California, USA, which killed 3,000 people and destroyed 80% of the city.

⁴ **Mount Vesuvius** – only remaining active volcano in Europe, near Naples, Italy, with many eruptions over the centuries, most notably in A.D. 79, destroying the city of Pompeii, and in 1906, with the most lava flow from it ever recorded.

⁵ **sentient** – that which feels; having the power of perception by the senses.

we turn for a solution? If the Bible had never been written, how many of these questions could have been satisfactorily answered?

A very striking testimony to man's need of a divine revelation was given by the celebrated but skeptical historian Gibbon.⁶ He remarked, "Since, therefore, the most sublime efforts of philosophy can extend no farther than feebly to point out the desire, the hope, or, at most, the probability of a future state, there is nothing except a divine revelation that can ascertain the existence and describe the condition of the invisible country which is destined to receive the souls of men after their separation from the body."

Our experiences reveal our need. There are problems to be faced that our wisdom is incapable of solving; there are obstacles in our path that we have no means of surmounting; there are enemies to be met that we are unable to vanquish. We are in dire need of counsel, strength, and courage. There are trials and tribulations that come to us, testing the hearts of the bravest and stoutest, and we need comfort and cheer. There are sorrows and bereavements that crush our spirits, and we need the hope of immortality and resurrection.

Our corporate⁷ life reveals our need. What is to govern and regulate our dealings one with the other? Shall each do that which is right in his own eyes (Jdg 17:6)? That would destroy all law and order. Shall we draw up some moral code, some ethical standard? But who shall [make] it? Opinions vary. We need some final court of appeal; if we had no Bible, where should we find it?

Man, then, needs a divine revelation. God is able to supply that need; therefore, is it not reasonable to suppose He will do so? Surely God will not mock our ignorance and leave us to grope in the dark! If it is harder to believe that the universe had no Creator than it is to believe that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen 1:1); if it is a greater tax upon our faith to suppose that Christianity, with all its glorious triumphs, is without a divine Founder, than it is to believe that it rests upon the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ—then does it not also make a greater demand upon human credulity⁸ to imagine that God would leave mankind without an intelligible communication from Himself, than it does to believe that the Bible is a revelation from the Creator to His fallen and erring creatures?

⁶ **Edward Gibbon (1737-1794)** – English historian, writer, and Member of Parliament. His most important work was *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, published in six volumes between 1776 and 1788.

⁷ **corporate** – pertaining to a group of persons.

⁸ **credulity** – readiness to believe something.

If there is a personal God (and none but a “fool” will deny His existence, Psa 14:1) and if we are the works of His hands, then He surely would not leave us in doubt concerning the great problems that have to do with our temporal, spiritual, and eternal welfare. If an earthly parent advises his sons and daughters in their problems and perplexities, warns them of the perils and pitfalls of life that menace their well-being, counsels them with regard to their daily welfare, and makes known to them his plans and purposes concerning their future, surely it is incredible to suppose that our Heavenly Father would do less for His children!

We are often uncertain as to which is the right course to pursue; we are frequently in doubt as to the real path of duty. We are constantly surrounded by the hosts of wickedness that seek to accomplish our downfall, and we are daily confronted with experiences that make us sad and sorrowful. The wisest among us need guidance that our own wisdom fails to supply; the best of humanity need grace that the human heart is powerless to bestow; the most refined among the sons of men need deliverance from temptations that they cannot overcome. Will God mock us then in our need? Will God leave us alone in the hour of our weakness? Will God refuse to provide for us a Refuge from our enemies? Man needs a Counselor, a Comforter, a Deliverer. The very fact that God has a father’s regard for His children necessitates that He should give them a written revelation which communicates His mind and will concerning them, and that points them to the One Who is willing and able to supply all their need.

To sum up this argument, man needs a divine revelation. God is able to supply one. Is it not, therefore, reasonable to suppose He will do so? There is then a presumption in favor of the Bible. Is it not more reasonable to believe that He Whose name and nature is Love (1Jo 4:16) shall provide us with a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Psa 119:105), than to believe that He has left us to grope our way amid the darkness of a fallen and ruined world?

From *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*.

A. W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, writer, and itinerate Bible teacher; born in Nottingham, England; immigrated to the U.S.; and later returned to his homeland in 1934. Voluminous author of *The Studies in the Scriptures* and many books, including his well-known *The Sovereignty of God*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



UNITY OF THE BIBLE ATTESTS DIVINE AUTHORSHIP

A. W. Pink (1886-1952)

THE manner in which the Bible has been produced argues against its unity. The Bible was penned on two continents, written in three languages, and its composition and compilation extended through the slow progress of sixteen centuries. The various parts of the Bible were written at different times and under the most varying circumstances. Parts of it were written in tents, deserts, cities, palaces, and dungeons; some parts in times of imminent danger and others in seasons of ecstatic joy. Among its writers were judges, kings, priests, prophets, patriarchs, prime ministers, herdsmen, scribes, soldiers, physicians, and fishermen. Yet despite these varying circumstances, conditions, and workmen, the Bible is one Book; behind its many parts there is an unmistakable organic¹ unity. It contains one system of doctrine, one code of ethics, one plan of salvation, and one rule of faith.

Now if forty different men were selected today from such varying stations and callings of life, as to include clerks, rulers, politicians, judges, clergy, doctors, farm laborers, and fishermen; and each was asked to contribute a chapter for some book on theology or church government—when their several contributions were collected and bound together, would there be any unity about them? Could that book truly be said to be one book, or would not their different productions vary so much in literary value, diction, and matter as to be merely a heterogeneous² mass, a miscellaneous collection? Yet we do not find this to be the case in connection with God's Book. Although the Bible is a volume of sixty-six books, written by forty different men, dealing with such a large variety of themes as to cover nearly the whole range of human inquiry, we find it is one Book, the Book (not the "books"), the Bible.

Furthermore, if we were to select specimens of literature from the third, fifth, tenth, fifteenth and twentieth centuries of the Christian era, and were to bind them together, what unity and harmony should

¹ **organic** – pertaining to the constitution or structure of a thing; constitutional; structural.

² **heterogeneous** – consisting of dissimilar parts that are unlike each other.

we find in such a collection? Human writers reflect the spirit of their own day and generation, and the compositions of men living amid widely differing influences, and separated by centuries of time, have little or nothing in common with each other. Yet, although the earliest portions of the Sacred Canon date back to at least the fifteenth century B.C., while the writings of John were not completed till the close of the first century A.D., nevertheless, we find a perfect harmony throughout the Scriptures from the first verse in Genesis to the last verse in Revelation. The great ethical and spiritual lessons presented in the Bible, by whomever taught, agree.

The more one really studies the Bible, the more one is convinced that behind the many human mouths there is one overruling, controlling Mind. Imagine forty persons of different nationalities, possessing various degrees of musical culture, visiting the organ of some cathedral, and at long intervals of time, and without any collusion whatever, striking sixty-six different notes, which when combined yielded the theme of the grandest oratorio ever heard! Would it not show that behind these forty different men there was one presiding mind, one great Tone Master? As we listen to some great orchestra, with its immense variety of instruments playing their different parts, but producing melody and harmony, we realize that at the back of these many musicians there is the personality and genius of the composer. And when we enter the halls of the Divine Academy and listen to the heavenly choirs singing the Song of Redemption, all in perfect accord and unison, we know that it is God Himself Who has written the music and put this song into their mouths.

We now submit two illustrations that demonstrate the unity of the Holy Scriptures. Certain grand conceptions run through the entire Bible like a cord on which are strung so many precious pearls. *First* and foremost among them is the divine plan of redemption. Just as the scarlet thread runs through all the cordage of the British Navy, so a crimson aura surrounds every page of God's Word.

In the Scriptures, the plan of redemption is central and fundamental. In Genesis, we have recorded the Creation and the Fall of man to show that he has the capacity for and is in need of redemption. Next we find the promise of the Redeemer, for man requires to have before him the hope and expectation of a Savior. Then follows an elaborate system of sacrifices and offerings, and these represent pictorially the nature of redemption and the condition under which salvation is realized. At the commencement of the New Testament, we have the four Gospels, and they set forth the basis of redemption, namely, the in-

carnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of the Redeemer. Next comes the book of the Acts, which illustrates again and again the power of redemption, showing that it is adequate to work its great results in the salvation of both Jew and Gentile. Finally, in the Revelation, we are shown the ultimate triumphs of redemption, the goal of salvation: the redeemed dwelling with God in perfect union and communion. Thus we see that though a large number of human media were employed in the writing of the Bible, yet their productions are not independent of each other, but are complementary and supplementary parts of one great whole. We see that one sublime truth is common to them all, namely, man's need of redemption and God's provision of a Redeemer. And the only explanation of this fact is that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2Ti 3:16).

Secondly, among all the many personalities presented in the Bible, we find that one stands out above all others, not merely prominent but preeminent. Just as in the scene unveiled in the fifth chapter of The Revelation we find the Lamb in the center of the heavenly throngs, so we find that in the Scriptures also the Lord Jesus Christ is accorded the place that alone befits His unique person. Considered from one standpoint, the Scriptures are really the biography of the Son of God.

In the Old Testament, we have the promise of our Lord's incarnation and mediatorial³ work. In the Gospels, we have the proclamation of His mission and the proofs of His messianic claims and authority. In the Acts, we have a demonstration of His saving power and the execution of His missionary program. In the Epistles, we find an exposition and amplification of His precepts for the education of His people. And in the Apocalypse,⁴ we behold the unveiling or presentation of His Person and the preparation of the earth for His presence. The Bible is therefore seen to be peculiarly the Book of Jesus Christ. Christ not only testified to the Scriptures, but each section of the Scriptures testify of Him. Every page of the Holy Book has stamped upon it His photograph and every chapter bears His autograph. He is its one great theme, and the only explanation of this fact is that the Holy Spirit superintended the work of each and every writer of the Scriptures.

³ **mediatorial** – referring to a go-between, intervening between two parties to bring reconciliation man. See FGB 183 *Christ the Mediator*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁴ **Apocalypse** – transliteration of Greek word for revelation; the book of The Revelation.

The unity of the Scriptures is further to be seen in the fact that they are entirely free from any real contradictions. Though different writers often described the same incidents—as, for example, the four evangelists recording the facts relating to our Lord’s ministry and redemptive work—and though there is considerable variety in the narrations of these, yet there are no real discrepancies. The harmony existing between them does not appear on the surface, but, often, is discovered only by protracted study, though it is there nevertheless.

Moreover, there is perfect agreement of doctrine among all the writers in the Bible. The teachings of the prophets and the teachings of the apostles on the great truths of God’s righteousness, the demands of His holiness, the utter ruin of man, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the way of salvation are entirely harmonious. This might appear a thing easily effected. But those who are acquainted with human nature and have read widely the writings of men, will acknowledge that nothing but the inspiration of the writers can explain this fact. Nowhere can we find two uninspired writers, however similar they may have been in their religious sentiments, who agree in all points of doctrine. Nay, entire consistency of sentiment is not to be found even in the writings of the same author at different periods. In his later years Spurgeon’s statements of some doctrines were much more modified than the utterances of his earlier days. Increasing knowledge causes men to change their views upon many subjects. But among the writers of Scripture, there is the most perfect harmony, because they obtained their knowledge of truth and duty not by the efforts of study, but from inspiration by the Holy Spirit of God.

When, therefore, we find that in the productions of forty different men there is perfect accord and concord, unison and unity, harmony in all their teachings, and the same conceptions pervading all their writings, the conclusion is irresistible that behind these men—superintending their work, controlling their minds, and guiding their hands—there was the mastermind of God Himself. Does not the unity of the Bible illustrate the divine inspiration of the Bible, and demonstrate the truth of its own assertion that “God...at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” (Heb 1:1)?

From *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*.

A. W. Pink (1886-1952): One of the finest expositors of the twentieth century.



OTHER SCRIPTURE PROOFS OF DIVINE ORIGIN

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

CHRISt is God's personal Word, but the Scriptures are His written Word (Hos 1:2). The Scriptures appear to be the Word of God if we consider,

1. The *antiquity* of some parts of them, which are more ancient than any human writings and give us such an history as none but God Himself could do, viz. the creation of the world—for how could men tell what was done before man had a being?

2. The *preservation* of it to this day, notwithstanding the malice of devils and wicked men against it. If it had not been of God, it could not have continued till now, considering the attempts that have been made to destroy it.

3. The candor and *sincerity of the penmen* of these sacred writings, who honestly declare [that] what they delivered was received from God, plainly tell their own faults as well as those of others, and every way write as men over-ruled by the Spirit of God (2Pe 1:21).

4. The exact performance of Scripture *prophecies*. Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus should deliver the Jews from the Babylonian captivity...more than an hundred years before that prince was born (Isa 44:28)! Jeremiah foretold [that captivity] should last seventy years (Jer 25:11)—and that was the precise duration of it. How remarkably have all the prophecies relating to the fall of [four] monarchies been fulfilled (Dan 2:35, 45)! And what an exact accomplishment has there been of the several prophecies relating to the birth and death of Christ!¹ The Scripture contains many other prophecies that time has shown exactly performed, and many that are yet to be fulfilled.

5. The blood of many *martyrs* hath confirmed the divinity of this book, while they joyfully laid down their lives for the truth—in which it is evident they were carried above what human power could do.

6. The Scriptures have been confirmed by incontrovertible² *miracles*. All miracles are wrought by God Himself [through] Moses,

¹ See Prophecies and Fulfillments concerning the Messiah; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

² **incontrovertible** – indisputable; beyond doubt.

Christ, His apostles, [and others]. If, then, these miracles were done by them, the doctrine they taught was true.

Now, we have all rational grounds to suppose that these miracles were really wrought...If it be supposed a cheat that such things were done, then that cheat took place either among those who were said to have seen them and were witnesses to them, or else among those who lived after that generation which is said to have seen them was dead and gone. But neither of these two can be said here. Not the first, for two reasons: a) because these miracles were such things as men's outward senses (their eyes and ears) could be judges of. b) They are said to be done, not in a corner, but in the face of the world.

Therefore it was impossible that that generation could be imposed upon. If a man should say that yesterday he divided the river Tweed in presence of us all, and brought us all through on dry land, it would be impossible for him to make us believe it, for we saw no such thing nor waded so through that river...

Neither could any in after generations invent such a story and impose the cheat upon others, a) because there are some things done in memory of these miracles. b) Such observances did commence from the time that such things were done, as circumcision, the Passover, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. If then the forger would impose it on others, he must make them believe that these observances have been constantly in use since that time, which, if they were not, could not be believed, because...it would be impossible to make a nation believe that they were all circumcised or baptized, when there was no such thing; and especially that such things were done to them in memory of such a thing as they never heard of.

7. The Scriptures must either be from God, or the creature. They cannot be from the creature; for if so, they must be from angels or men...From good angels they cannot be...for angels imposing such a cheat on the world could no more be looked on as good, but as evil...Evil angels it cannot be either, in regard the Scripture doth natively tend to overturn the devils' kingdom, pronounce their doom, and bring men out of their service...The same way, may we reason concerning good or bad men being the principal authors of the Scriptures. And you know what torment the Scripture assigns to liars. It remains then that the Scripture is of divine inspiration.

From *The Divine Authority of the Scriptures*.

OUR NEED OF SCRIPTURE

J. I. Packer

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.—Psalm 119:105

SEE the psalmist's picture. He has to travel—Scripture regularly pictures life as a journey. He was in the dark, unable to see the way to go, and bound to get lost and hurt if he advanced blindly. This pictures our natural ignorance of God's will for our lives, our inability to guess it, and the certainty in practice of our missing it. But a lamp (think of a flashlight) has been handed to him. Now he can pick out the path before him, step by step, and stick to it, though darkness still surrounds him. This pictures what God's Word does for us, showing us how to live. The psalmist's cry is one of praise, thanks, admonition, testimony, and confidence—*praise* that God glorifies His grace by giving men so precious a gift as His Word; *thanks* because he knows how much he himself needed it and how lost he was without it; *admonition* to himself and any who might read his psalm, always to value God's Word at its true worth, and to make full use of it for the purpose for which it was given; *testimony* to the fact that already in his experience it had proved its power; and *confidence* that this would continue.

The psalmist would have committed to memory the Pentateuch, the Law of Moses in its narrative context, and in his meditations would be working from that. We are privileged to have the entire Bible available to us in printed form—How well do we know it? How much do we love it? Happy are we if we have learned, in defiance of modern skepticism, to make the psalmist's words and meaning our own.

Some 170 of the psalm's 176 verses celebrate the ministry of God's revealed Word in the godly man's life as his source of guidance, hope, strength, correction, humility, purity, and joy. Psalm 19:7-14 and 2 Timothy 3:15-17 more briefly do the same thing. Do we know anything of what Paul and the psalmists knew of the power of Scripture to reshape, redirect, and renew disordered lives?

Why does contact with God's scriptural Word transform some people, while leaving others cold? First, some let the written Word lead them to the living Word, Jesus Christ, to Whom it constantly points us; others don't. Second, not all come to the Bible hungry and ex-

pectant, conscious of daily need to hear God speak. “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it,” says God (Psa 81:10). The open mouth is a gesture of hunger and dependence: “I opened my mouth, and panted: for I long for thy commandments,” says the psalmist (Psa 119:131). Desire for God, springing from a sense of our need of Him, is the factor that decides how much or how little impact Scripture will make upon us. Bible reader, check your heart!

What Bishop J. C. Ryle¹ wrote in a tract over a century ago remains wholly relevant:

“You live in a world where your soul is in constant danger. Enemies are round you on every side. Your own heart is deceitful. Bad examples are numerous. Satan is always laboring to lead you astray. Above all, false doctrine and false teachers of every kind abound. This is your great danger.

To be safe you must be well-armed. You must provide yourself with the weapons that God has given you for your help. You must store your mind with Holy Scripture. This is to be well-armed.

“Arm yourself with a thorough knowledge of the written Word of God. Read your Bible regularly. Become familiar with your Bible...Neglect your Bible and nothing that I know of can prevent you from error if a plausible advocate of false teaching shall happen to meet you. Make it a rule to believe nothing except it can be proved from Scripture. The Bible alone is infallible...Do you really use your Bible as much as you ought?

“There are many today, who believe the Bible, yet read it very little. Does your conscience tell you that you are one of these persons? If so, you are the man that is likely to get little help from the Bible in time of need. Trial is a sifting experience...Your store of Bible consolations may one day run very low.

“If so, you are the man that is unlikely to become established in the truth. I shall not be surprised to hear that you are troubled with doubts and questions about assurance, grace, faith, perseverance, etc. The devil is an old and cunning enemy; he can quote Scripture readily enough when he pleases. Now you are not sufficiently ready with your weapons to fight a good fight with him...Your sword is held loosely in your hand.

¹ **J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)** – Bishop of the Anglican Church. Revered author of *Holiness*, *Knots Untied*, *Old Paths*, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, and many others. Born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England. Many titles available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

“If so, you are the man that is likely to make mistakes in life. I shall not wonder if I am told that you have problems in your marriage, problems with your children, problems about the conduct of your family and about the company you keep. The world you steer through is full of rocks, shoals, and sandbanks. You are not sufficiently familiar either with lighthouses or charts.

“If so, you are the man who is likely to be carried away by some false teacher for a time. It will not surprise me if I hear that one of these clever, eloquent men, who can make a convincing presentation, is leading you into error. You are in need of ballast² (truth); no wonder if you are tossed to and fro like a cork on the waves.

“All these are uncomfortable situations. I want you to escape them all. Take the advice I offer you today. Do not merely read your Bible a little—but read it a great deal...Remember your many enemies. Be armed!”

From God’s Words: Studies of Key Bible Themes.

J. I. Packer: Anglican theologian; born in Gloucestershire, England.

✎ Chapel Library deeply appreciates Dr. Packer’s early writings for their sound Biblical content, their Christ-centered focus, and the encouragement they have been to God’s people. However, our readers must understand that our using this article is in no way an endorsement of Dr. Packer’s involvement with Evangelicals and Catholics Together. We pray that Dr. Packer will rethink his position, repent of his involvement with ECT, and defend the gospel that he ably proclaims in this article. ✎



Now as to that which was a complete revelation, it is blasphemous to suppose that there can be any more revealed than has been made known in the Person and work of Jesus Christ the Son of God!

Philip was a searcher after Christ in the place where Christ loves to be: in the pages of Scripture—and you must be the same if you desire to find Jesus!

The open volume of the Word of God is
our open evidence of salvation!

—C. H. Spurgeon

² **ballast** – weight at the bottom of a ship that serves to hold it steady in a storm.

GOD'S WORD TO BE REVERED

John Jewel (1522-1571)

NOW let us consider with what fear and reverence we ought to come to the hearing or reading of the Word of God. “The angel of the Lord appeared unto [Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush” (Exo 3:2). When Moses turned aside to see, God said unto him, “Draw not hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (vs. 5).

Again, when God had appointed to speak unto the people from Mount Sinai, He said to Moses, “Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai” (Exo 19:10-11).

The word of the Lord is the bush, out of which issueth a flame of fire. The Scriptures of God are the mount, from which the Lord of Hosts doth shew Himself. In them God speaketh to us; in them we hear the words of everlasting life. We must be sanctified, wash our garments, and be ready to hear the Lord. We must strip off all our affections; we must fall down before Him with fear; we must know Who it is that speaketh—even God the maker of heaven and earth, God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, God that shall judge the quick and the dead, before Whom all flesh shall appear.

This Word is holy. Let us take heed into what hearts we bestow it. Whosoever abuseth it, shall be found guilty of high trespass against the Lord. We may not receive it to blow up our hearts and wax proud with our knowledge; we may not use it to maintain debate and contention; we may not use it to vaunt ourselves, or to make show of our cunning.

The Word of God teacheth lowliness of mind; it teacheth us to know ourselves. If we learn not humility, we learn nothing. Although we seem to know somewhat, yet know we not in such sort as we ought to know.

The Scriptures are the mysteries of God—let us not be curious; let us not seek to know more than God hath revealed by them. They are the sea of God—let us take heed we be not drowned in them. They are the fire of God—let us take comfort by their heat, and warily take

heed they burn us not. They that gaze over-hardly upon the sun, take blemish in their eyesight.

When the people Israel saw the manna in the desert, they said, “Man Hu?” what is this? So they reasoned of it when they took it up in their hands and beheld it. They asked one another what good it would do. The Scriptures are manna, given to us from heaven, to feed us in the desert of this world. Let us take them, behold them, reason of them, and learn one of another what profit may come to us by them. Let us know that they are written for our sake and for our learning, “that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15:4). They are given us to instruct us in faith, to strengthen us in hope, to open our eyes, and to direct our going.

If we withhold the truth in unrighteousness, if we know our master’s will and do it not, if the name of God be ill spoken of through us, the Word of God shall be taken away from us, and given to a nation that shall bring forth the fruits thereof. God shall send us strong delusions that we shall believe lies (2Th 2:11). Our own hearts shall condemn us, and we shall be beaten with many stripes (Luk 12:47).

Therefore we ought diligently to give heed to those things that we hear; we must consider of them, we must chew the cud. “Every beast” that “cheweth [not] the cud...are unclean” (Lev 11:26), and not fit for the sacrifice. Let us be poor in spirit and meek in heart (Mat 5:3, 5). Let us be gentle, as becometh the lambs of Christ; and as His sheep, let us hear His voice and follow Him (Joh 10:27). Let us be of a contrite spirit, and tremble at the words of God (Isa 66:2). Let us, when we know God, glorify Him as God.

So shall God look upon us. So shall the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, and the fear of God rest upon us. So shall we be made perfect to all good works. So shall we rejoice in His salvation and with one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From Introduction to Puritan Theology: A Reader.

John Jewel (1522-1571): Born in Devonshire, educated at Oxford, Bishop of Salisbury in the Church of England, one of the leaders of the Reforming party.



GOD'S CLAIM TO BE HEARD

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.—Isaiah 1:20

WHAT Isaiah said was, therefore, spoken by Jehovah. It was audibly the utterance of a man; but, really, it was the utterance of the Lord Himself. The lips that delivered the words were those of Isaiah, but yet it was the very truth that “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” All Scripture, being inspired of the Spirit, is spoken by the mouth of God. However this sacred Book may be treated nowadays, it was not treated contemptuously, nor negligently, nor questioningly by the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master and Lord.

It is noteworthy how [Jesus Christ] revered the written Word. The Spirit of God rested upon Him personally, without measure, and He could speak out of His own mind the revelation of God—and yet He continually quoted the Law, the prophets, and the Psalms. Always He treated the sacred writings with intense reverence, strongly in contrast with the irreverence of “modern thought.” I am sure, brethren, we cannot be wrong in imitating the example of our divine Lord in our reverence for that Scripture which cannot be broken. I say, if He, the anointed of the Spirit and able to speak Himself as God’s mouth, yet quoted the sacred writings and used the holy Book in His teachings, how much more should we—who have no spirit of prophecy resting upon us, and are not able to speak new revelations—come back to the Law and to the testimony (Isa 8:20), and value every single word that “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken”?

The like valuation of the Word of the Lord is seen in our Lord’s apostles, for they treated the ancient Scriptures as supreme in authority, and supported their statements with passages from Holy Writ. The utmost degree of deference and homage is paid to the Old Testament by the writers of the New. We never find an apostle raising a question about the degree of inspiration in this book or that. No disciple of Jesus questions the authority of the books of Moses or of the prophets. If you want to cavil¹ or suspect, you find no sympathy in the teaching of Jesus or any one of His apostles. The New Testament writers sit reverently down before the Old Testament and receive

¹ **cavil** – raise trivial objections; to find fault without good reason or cause.

God's words as such, without any question whatever. You and I belong to a school that will continue to do the same, let others adopt what behavior they please. As for us and for our house, this priceless Book shall remain the standard of our faith and the ground of our hope so long as we live. Others may choose what gods they will and follow what authorities they prefer; but as for us, the glorious Jehovah is our God, and we believe concerning each doctrine of the entire Bible that "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

"The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." This is the claim of God's Word upon your attention! Every word that God has given us in this Book claims our attention because of the infinite majesty of Him that spake it. I see before me a parliament of kings and princes, sages and senators. I hear one after another of the gifted Chrysostoms² pour forth eloquence like the "Golden-mouthed." They speak, and they speak well. Suddenly, there is a solemn hush. What a stillness! Who is now to speak? They are silent because God the Lord is about to lift up His voice. Is it not right that they should be so? Doth He not say, "Keep silence before me, O islands" (Isa 41:1)? What voice is like His voice? "The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon...The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh" (Psa 29:4-5, 8).

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh" (Heb 12:25). O my hearer, let it not be said of you that you went through this life, God speaking to you in His Book and you refusing to hear! It matters very little whether you listen to me or not, but it matters a very great deal whether you listen to God or not. It is He that made you; in His hands your breath is; and if He speaks, I implore you: Open your ear and be not rebellious.

There is an infinite majesty about every line of Scripture, but especially about that part of Scripture in which the Lord reveals Himself and His glorious plan of saving grace in the person of His dear Son Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ hath a great claim upon you. Hear what Jesus preaches from the tree: He says, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live" (Isa 55:3).

² **John Chrysostom (c. 347-407)** – Bishop of Constantinople, an important Early Church Father. He is known for his eloquence in preaching and public speaking, and his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders. (Greek: "golden mouthed.")

God's claim to be heard lies, also, in the condescension that has led Him to speak to us. It was something for God to have made the world and bid us look at the work of His hands. Creation is a picture-book for children. But for God to speak in the language of mortal men is still more marvelous, if you come to think of it. I wonder that God spoke by the prophets; but I admire still more that He should have written down His Word in black and white, in unmistakable language that can be translated into all tongues, so that we may all see and read for ourselves what God the Lord has spoken to us—and what, indeed, He continues to speak, for what He has spoken He still speaks to us, as freshly as if He spake it for the first time.

O glorious Jehovah, dost Thou speak to mortal man? Can there be any that neglect to hear Thee? If Thou art so full of lovingkindness and tenderness that Thou wilt stoop out of heaven to converse with Thy sinful creatures, none but those who are more brutal³ than the ox and the ass will turn a deaf ear to Thee!

God's Word has a claim, then, upon your attention because of its majesty and its condescension; but yet, further, it should win your ear because of its intrinsic importance. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"—then it is no trifle. God never speaks vanity. No line of His writing treats of the frivolous themes of a day. That which may be forgotten in an hour is for mortal man and not for the eternal God. When the Lord speaks, His speech is God-like, and its themes are worthy of One Whose dwelling is infinity and eternity. God does not play with thee, man; wilt thou trifle with Him? Wilt thou treat Him as if He were altogether such a one as thyself? God is in earnest when He speaks to thee; wilt thou not in earnest listen? He speaks to thee of great things that have to do with thy soul and its destiny. "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" (Deu 32:47). Thy eternal existence, thy happiness or thy misery, hang on thy treatment of that which "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken." Concerning eternal realities He speaks to thee; I pray thee, be not so unwise as to turn away thine ear. Act not as if the Lord and His truth were nothing to you. Treat not the Word of the Lord as a secondary thing, which might wait thy leisure and receive attention when no other work was before thee. Put all else aside, but hearken to thy God.

Depend upon it, if "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," there is an urgent, pressing necessity. God breaks not silence to say that which might as well have remained unsaid. His voice indicates great

³ **brutal** – like a brute, dumb beast.

urgency. “To day, if ye will hear his voice,” hear it (Heb 4:7), for He demands immediate attention. God does not speak without abundant reason; and, O my hearer, if He speaks to thee by His Word, I beseech thee, believe that there must be overwhelming cause for it!

I know what Satan says: he tells thee that thou canst do very well without listening to God’s Word. I know what thy carnal heart whispers: it says, “Listen to the voice of business and pleasure, but listen not to God.” But, oh! if the Holy Spirit shall teach thy reason to be reasonable, and put thy mind in mind of true wisdom, thou wilt acknowledge that the first thing thou hast to do is to heed thy Maker. Thou canst hear the voices of others another time; but thine ear must hear God first, since He is first, and that which He speaks must be of first importance. Without delay do thou make haste to keep His commandments. Without reserve answer to His call, and say, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth” (1Sa 3:9).

When I stand in this pulpit to preach the gospel, I never feel that I may calmly invite you to attend to a subject that is one among many, and may very properly be let alone for a time should your minds be already occupied. No; you may be dead before I again speak with you, and so I beg for immediate attention. I do not fear that I may be taking you off from other important business by entreating you to attend to that which “the mouth of the Lord hath spoken”—for no business has any importance in it compared with this; this is the master theme of all. It is your soul, your own soul, your ever-existing soul that is concerned, and it is your God that is speaking to you. Do hear Him, I beseech you.

I am not asking a favor of you when I request you to hear the Word of the Lord; it is a debt to your Maker that you are bound to pay. Yea, it is, moreover, kindness to your own self. Even from a selfish point of view, I urge you to hear what “the mouth of the Lord hath spoken,” for in His Word lies salvation. Hearken diligently to what your Maker, your Savior, your best friend, has to say to you. “Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation” (Heb 3:15); but “incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live” (Isa 55:3). “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17).

From sermon No. 2013, delivered on March 11, 1888, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, London; available as *The Infallible Word of God* from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist minister.

THE SCRIPTURES OUR COUNSELORS

Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.—Psalm 119:24

WHAT could we want more in a time of difficulty than comfort and direction? David had both these blessings. As the fruit of his “meditation in the Lord’s statutes,” in his distress they were his “delight”; in his perplexity they were his “counselors.” He would not have exchanged his delight for the best joys of earth (Psa 119:14, 97, 103, 127; Psa 4:7). And so wisely did his counselors direct his course that, though “princes sought to find occasion against him,” they “could find none occasion nor fault” (Dan 6:4-5; cf. 1Sa 18:14; Psa 101:2). The testimonies of God were truly “the men of his counsel” (margin¹). He guided his own conduct by the rules laid before him in the Book of God, as if he were having recourse to the most experienced counselors, or rather as if the prophets of his God were giving the word from His mouth (cf. 2Sa 7:4-5; also 16:23). Thus the subject, as well as the sovereign, had His counsel. One side was Saul and his counselors (vs. 23); on the other side, David and the testimonies of his God. Which, think we, was better furnished with that “wisdom which is profitable to direct”? Subsequently as a king, David was constrained to make the “testimonies” of his God his “counsellors” (Psa 119:24; cf. Deu 17:18-20). And, probably, to his constant regard to their voice he owed much of his earthly prosperity.

In such a dark world as this, beset with temptation at every turn, we pre-eminently need sound and wise counsel. But all of us carry an evil counselor within us, and it is our folly to listen to his voice (Pro 28:26). God has given us His Word as a sure counselor, and “he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise” (Pro 12:15).

Now, do we value the privilege of this heavenly counsel? Every improvement² must increase our delight in it; a heartless interest shuts out this blessing, but those who make the Word their delight will always find it their counselor. Yet a mere cursory reading will never realize to us its holy delight or counsel. It must be brought home to

¹ In early editions of the King James Version, the translators gave alternate readings in marginal notes.

² **improvement** – profitable use.

our own experience, and consulted on those trivial occasions of every day, when, unconscious of our need of divine direction, we are too often inclined to lean to our own counsel. The Christian is a man of faith, every step of his way. And this habitual use and daily familiarity with the testimonies of God will show him the pillar and the cloud (Num 9:15-23), in all the dark turns of his heavenly road. The Word will be to him as the “Thummim” and “Urim” (Deu 33:8; Num 27:21)—an infallible counselor.

Sometimes, however, perplexity arises from the conflict, not between conscience and sinful indulgence (in which case Christian sincerity would always determine the path), but between duty and duty. When acknowledged obligations seem to interfere with each other, the counsel of the Word will mark their relative importance, connection, and dependence: the present path in providence, the guidance that has been vouchsafed to the Lord’s people in similar emergencies, and the light that the daily life of our Great Exemplar³ exhibits before us. The great concern, however, is to cultivate the habit of mind that falls in most naturally with the counsel of the Word. “Walking in the fear of the Lord” (Act 9:31; *see* Psa 25:12, 14), in a simple spirit of dependence (Psa 25:4-5, 9; 143:8), and torn away from the idolatry of taking counsel from our own hearts, we cannot materially err; because there is here a suitableness between the disposition and the promise—a watchfulness against the impetuous bias of the flesh, a paramount regard to the glory of God, and meek submission to His gracious appointment.

If the counsel, however, should not prove infallible, the fault is not in the Word, but in the indistinctness of our own perception. We want⁴ not a clearer rule, or a surer guide, but a more single eye. And if, after all, it may not mark every precise act of duty (for to do this, “even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written,” Joh 21:25), yet it determines the standard to which the most minute⁵ acting of the mind should be brought (1Co 10:31; Col 3:17); and the disposition that will reflect the light of the will of God upon our path (Mat 6:22-23).

But, let it be remembered that any want of sincerity in the heart (1Sa 28:6; Eze 14:2-4), any allowance of self-dependence (Pro 3:5-6), will always close the avenues of this divine light and counsel. We are

³ **Exemplar** – someone serving as an excellent example; in this case, Jesus Christ.

⁴ **want** – lack.

⁵ **minute** – extremely small

often unconsciously walking “in the light of [our own] fire, and in the sparks that [we] have kindled” (Isa 50:11). Perhaps we sought, as we conceived, the guidance of the Lord’s counsel, and supposed that we were walking in it. But, in the act of seeking and as the preparation for seeking, did we subject our motives and inclinations to a strict, cautious, self-suspecting scrutiny? Was the heart schooled to the discipline of the cross? Was “every thought” brought into captivity “to the obedience of Christ” (2Co 10:5)? Or was not our heart possessed with the object *before* counsel was sought at the mouth of God (Jer 42)? Oh! how careful should we be to walk warily in those uncertain marks of heavenly counsel that fall in with the bias of our own inclination! How many false steps in the record of past experience may be traced to the counsel of our own hearts, sought and followed to the neglect of counsel of God (Jos 9:14; Isa 30:1-3); while no circumstance of perplexity can befall us in the spirit of humility, simplicity, and sanctity when the counsel of the Lord will fail!

An undue dependence upon human counsel (Isa 2:22), whether of the living or the dead, greatly hinders the full influence of the counsel of the Word. However valuable such counsel may be, and however closely it may agree with the Word, we must not forget that it is not the Word, that it is fallible⁶ and therefore must never be resorted to in the first place, or followed with that full reliance which we are warranted to place on the revelation of God.

On the other hand, what is it to have God’s Word as our “Counselor”? Is it not to have Himself, “the only wise God” (1Ti 1:17)? When our Bibles, in seasons of difficulty, are searched in a humble, prayerful, teachable spirit, we are as much depending upon the Lord Himself for counsel, as if we were listening to an immediate revelation from heaven. We want not a new revelation, or a sensible voice from above, for every fresh emergency. It is enough that our Father has given us this blessed Word as “a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (vs. 105; cf. Pro 6:23).

Let me then inquire: What is the counsel of God that speaks directly to myself? If I am an unawakened sinner, it warns me to turn from sin (Pro 1:24-31; Eze 33:11); it invites me to the Savior (Isa 55:1; Joh 7:37); it directs me to wait upon God (Hos 12:6). If I am a professor,⁷ slumbering in the form of godliness, it shows me my real condition (Rev 3:17). It instructs me in the all-sufficiency of Christ (Rev 3:18),

⁶ **fallible** – capable of error.

⁷ **professor** – one who professes to believe in the Christian faith.

and cautions me of the danger of hypocrisy (Luk 12:1). If through grace I am made a child of God, still do I need my Father's counsel to recover me from perpetual backsliding (Jer 3:12-13), to excite me to increased watchfulness (1Th 5:6; Rev 3:2), and to strengthen my confidence in the fullness of His grace (Isa 26:4) and the faithfulness of His love (Heb 12:5-6). Ever shall I have reason for the grateful acknowledgment, "I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel" (Psa 16:7). And every step of my way would I advance, glorifying my God and Father, by confiding in His counsel unto the end: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psa 73:24).

From *Psalm 119: An Exposition*.

Charles Bridges (1794-1869): One of the leaders of the Evangelical party in the Church of England in the mid-1800s. He was vicar of Old Newton, Suffolk, from 1823 to 1849, and later of Weymouth and Hinton Martell in Dorset. Although *The Christian Ministry* is Bridges' best-known literary work, his expositions are highly valued, which include *Ecclesiastes* and *Proverbs* as well as *Psalm 119*. Excerpts from *Proverbs* available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



God is now recalling humanity to the Book which was written for it. By the very attacks made on it by enemies, as well as by the studies of its friends, He is bringing us back to this one volume as the light shining in a dark place. That we may know the past, the present, and the future, He is bidding us betake ourselves to it. Let us read it, let us study it, let us love it, let us reverence it. It will guide, it will cheer, it will enlighten, it will make wise, it will purify.

It will lead us into all truth. It will deliver us from the fermenting errors of the day. It will save us from the intellectual dreams of a vain philosophy, from the vitiated taste of a sensational literature, from the specious novelties of spiritual mysticism, from the pretentious sentimentalisms of men who soar above all creeds and abhor the name of "law," from Broad Church-ism, and High Church-ism, and no Church-ism. It will lead us into light and love, into liberty and unity, imparting strength and gladness.

That He should speak in words of His own choosing is what we should above all things desire, for then we should know that His thoughts were really presented to us. That He should speak in words of man's choosing (if such a thing could be), is altogether undesirable and unlikely, for then we should not know whether the language and the thought were in the least coincident; nay, we should feel that we had gotten an incorrect and untrustworthy volume, that we had been cheated and betrayed, that instead of bread we had got a stone, and instead of an egg we had got a scorpion.

—*Horatius Bonar*

MEDITATING ON THE WORD OF GOD

I. C. Herendeen (1883-1992)

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.—Joshua 1:8

GOD was not here giving Joshua mere good advice, which he would be free to heed or not as he might desire; but instead He was giving him a commandment that he was to “obey”—and that “day and night,” i.e., constantly. And this commandment was not for Joshua alone; but for you and me and every other servant and follower of the Lord as well, for “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” and obedience (Rom 15:4). God told Jeremiah in 7:23, “Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.” God expects and demands that we shall be an obedient people, keeping (observing and practicing) whatsoever He has commanded us. We profess to have received Him as our “Lord and Saviour,” and therefore we are to look to Him, at all times and in all things, for His directions as to what He would have us do or refrain from doing. We are not our own, we “have been bought with a price” and are therefore to “glorify God” (1Co 6:19-20). As our Creator and Lord, He has the right to command us what He will, and it is ours to obey His will gladly and cheerfully.

Joshua, great commander of Israel that he was, was to be guided and governed wholly by “this book of the law” (Jos 1:8). He had received his orders from God through “this book,” and he was to regulate his conduct by it. “The LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua” (Exo 17:14). From this we see that the book was prepared for Joshua, and now he is to fulfill its words. This Book of the Law was to have absolute supremacy; all Joshua’s actions were to be regulated by it. It is the “book of the law,” and as binding on us as on Joshua. It is more than good advice, for it is a law clothed with divine authority, a rule for us to walk by.

Once every seven years the whole Book of the Law was to be read in the hearing of the entire congregation of Israel: “that they may hear,

and that they may learn, and fear the LORD [their] God, and observe to do all the words of this law” (Deu 31:10-13). This was the Book that was to regulate Joshua’s actions. God warned him that “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth.” And this is God’s warning to us too, for no man is above the Law of God, be he clothed with great power and authority or one of the common people; all must be in subjection to the divine Law and regulated by what is “written,” if we would have the smile of God and prosper in whatsoever we do (Psa 1:3).

“Thou shalt *meditate* therein day and night.” Most important as it is, meditation is a lost art today with multitudes of professing Christians. It is one of the most important means of grace¹ and spiritual growth. It is not optional whether we obey or not, but obligatory—something that God has “commanded” us to do. How about you? Have you obeyed this divine “command”? Have you? How much time do you spend each day reading the Word of God, let alone meditating on it?

Alas, in so many homes of professing Christians, the Word of God receives scant attention, if indeed it be opened at all from day to day. At best many may hastily read a few verses of it after supper, then the Book is closed and laid on the table until the next night when perhaps a few more verses are thoughtlessly read. The usual excuse given by those who neglect it is that they are too busy with a multiplicity of duties and concerns of life for quiet and leisurely meditation. If this is your excuse, then be sure you are acting in the energy of the flesh and are little better than a slave to it. You may have burdens, but they are self-imposed ones if you have undertaken more than you ought to, so that the needs of your soul are crowded out to the neglect of your eternal interests.

If this is your case, you will do well to “Consider your ways” (Hag 1:5, 7). Christ’s “yoke is easy and [His] burden is light” (Mat 11:30). The real reason is the deceit of your evil heart. It is not lack of time, but lack of heart for the things of God. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mat 6:21). Remember this: what most occupies the heart will engage the mind, for our thoughts always follow our affections. Even the least things are tedious and burdensome if we have no delight in them. It is not for lack of opportunity, but lack of relish for the Word and of a desire [for] God, that is the root of your trouble.

¹ **means of grace** – the particular methods delineated in the Scriptures that God is pleased to use in order to minister His grace upon men: preaching, worship, prayer, reading, etc.

Meditation on the Word was not a task, but a joy to David, for he said “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psa 119:97).

It is useless to plead your numerous obligations and heavy responsibilities, for God will not accept them. If any might have had just reason to be excused from spending time in meditation, it was Joshua—but even he was not permitted to neglect the one thing needful. “We cannot expect the God of truth to be with us if we neglect the truth of God.”

Nor is reading the Word and hearing it preached sufficient, we must “meditate” on some portion of it, going over it again and again in our minds. That is what deepens the impression, fastens the truth in our memory, and sets us to work. Meditation is for the special purpose that we may “observe to do according to all that is written therein,” and it is to be our constant duty “day and night.” If we are really desirous of pleasing our blessed Lord and glorifying Him, then we will take pains to see to it that we familiarize ourselves with His Word, and habitually ponder its holy precepts. The psalmist said, “I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways” (Psa 119:15)...

What pleases God is made known in His statutes, and it is by meditating on them that we come to understand them, have our consciences impressed by them, and our wills moved to obey them. What moved David to have respect for God’s commandments was his love for them; and if we have a real love for them, we will endeavor constantly and earnestly to practice them.

We must not only approve God’s statutes, we must perform them. James 1:22 tells us we must be “doers of the word.” “For then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” Yes, “then” and only then. If we expect success in our spiritual warfare (Eph 6), we must walk in the path of God’s commandments as “obedient children.” How we need to meditate on the Word in order to bring our hearts to a greater detestation of sin and a greater care to please God! In closing, if we would prosper as Joshua did, we must *act* as he did.

I. C. Herendeen (1883-1992): Distributor of Christian books in Swengel, Pennsylvania. He was the first to publish Pink’s book, *The Sovereignty of God*, in 1918.



THE SCRIPTURES MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD

Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

*The law of thy mouth is better unto me than
thousands of gold and silver.—Psalm 119:72*

WELL might David acknowledge the benefit of affliction, since he had thus learned in God's statutes something that was better to him than thousands of gold and silver. This was indeed an enlightened judgment for one to form, who had so small a part of the Law of God's mouth, and so large a portion of this world's treasure. And yet, if we study only his book of Psalms to know the important uses and privileges of this Law, and his son's book of Ecclesiastes to discover the real value of paltry gold and silver (Ecc 5:9-20; 6:1-2), we shall, under divine teaching, be led to make the same estimate for ourselves. Yes, believer, with the same, or rather with far higher delight than the miser calculates his thousands of gold and silver, do you tell out the precious contents of the Law of your God?

After having endeavored in vain to count the thousands in your treasure, one single name sums up their value—"the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8). Would not the smallest spot of ground be estimated at thousands of gold and silver, were it known to conceal under its surface a mine of inexhaustible treasure? This it is that makes the Word so inestimable. It is the field of the "hidden treasure"; "The pearl of great price" (Mat 13:44-46) is known to be concealed here. You would not, therefore, part with one leaf of your Bible for all the thousands of gold and silver. You know yourself to be in possession of the substance—you have found all besides to be a shadow. "I lead," saith the Saviour, "in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures" (Pro 8:20-21).

The grand motive, therefore, in "searching the Scriptures," is because "they testify of Christ" (Joh 5:39). A sinner has but one want:¹ a Saviour. A believer has but one desire: to "know" and "win Christ" (Phi 3:8-10). With a "single eye," therefore, intent upon one point, he

¹ want – desire.

studies this blessed book. With unveiled face he beholds in this glass “the glory of the Lord” (2Co 3:18)—and no arithmetic can compute the price of that which is now unspeakably better to him than the treasures of the earth.

Christian, bear your testimony to your supreme delight in the book of God! You have here opened the surface of much intellectual interest and solid instruction. But it is the joy that you have found in the revelation of the Saviour, in His commands, in His promises, in His ways, that leads you to exclaim, “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold” (Psa 19:10)! Yes indeed, every promise, every declaration centering in Him is a pearl; and the Word of God is full of these precious pearls. If then they be the richest who have the best and the largest treasure, those who have most of the Word in their hearts—not those who have most of the world in their possession—are justly entitled to this pre-eminence. Let then “the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col 3:16)—for those who are rich in this heavenly treasure are men of substance indeed.

True, this is a correct estimate of the worth of God’s Law: better than this world’s treasure. But is it better to me? Is this *my* decided choice? How many will inconsiderately acknowledge its supreme value, while they yet hesitate to relinquish even a scanty morsel of earth for an interest in it! Do I then habitually prefer this Law of God’s mouth to every worldly advantage? Am I ready to forego every selfish consideration², if it may only be the means of uniting my heart more closely to the Book of God? If this be not my practical conviction, I fear I have not yet opened the mine. But if I can assent to this declaration of the man of God, I have made a far more glorious discovery than Archimedes;³ and therefore may take up his expression of joyful surprise: “*Eureka*. I have found it! I have found it!” What? That which the world could never have given me, that of which the world can never deprive me.

Yet how affecting is it to see men poor in the midst of great riches! Often in the world, we see the possessor of a large treasure without a

² A Jewish Rabbi, when induced by the prospect of a lucrative situation to fix his settlement in a place where there was no synagogue, is said to have resisted the temptation by the recollection of this verse (*Poli Synopsis*, in loco)—a reproof to Christians, who, in choosing “the bounds of their habitation” (Act 17:26), have not always eyed their Master’s rule (Mat 6:33).

³ **Archimedes** of Syracuse (c. 287-c. 212 B.C.) – Ancient Greek mathematician, physicist, engineer, inventor, and astronomer. Although few details of his life are known, he is regarded as one of the leading scientists in classical antiquity and one of the greatest mathematician of all time.

heart to enjoy it—virtually, therefore, a pauper. Oftener still in the church do we see professors (may it not be so with some of us?) with their Bibles in their hands, yet poor even with the external interest in its “unsearchable riches.” Often also do we observe a want⁴ of value for the whole Law or revelation of God’s mouth. Some parts are highly honoured to the depreciation of the rest. But let it be remembered that the whole of Scripture “is given by inspiration of God, and is [therefore] profitable” for its appointed end (2Ti 3:16-17).

Oh, beware of resting satisfied with a scanty treasure! Prayer and diligence will bring out not only things new, but the old also with a new and brighter glow (2Co 5:17). Scraping the surface is a barren exercise; digging into the bowels is a most enriching employ. No vein in this mine is yet exhausted. And rich indeed shall we be, if we gather only one atom of the gold each day in prayerful meditation. But as you value your progress and peace in the ways of God, as you have an eye to your Christian perfection, put away that ruinous thought—true as an encouragement to the weak (Zec 4:10), but false as an excuse to the slothful (Pro 13:4)—that a little knowledge is sufficient to carry us to heaven.

And, Lord, help me to prize the Law as coming from Thy mouth (1Th 2:13). Let it be for ever written upon my heart. Let me be daily exploring my hidden treasures. Let me be enriching myself and all around me with the present possession and interest in these heavenly blessings.

From *Psalms 119: An Exposition*.

Charles Bridges (1794-1869): A leader of the Evangelical party in the Church of England. Best known for *The Christian Ministry*, *Proverbs*, and *Psalms 119*.



“O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth?” (Jer 5:3). The word *truth* in Scripture refers both to doctrine and practice. It points both to the “error” and the “lie.” It classes both together. It condemns both. False speaking, whether in reference to teaching or witness-bearing, is declared to be abominable to God. His eyes are upon the truth. They watch over it to guard it and to maintain it.—*Horatius Bonar*

⁴ want – lack.

TREMBLING AT THE WORD OF THE LORD

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.—Isaiah 66:2

PORTRAIT painting is a great art. Many pretend to it, but the masters of the art are few. In the Word of God, we have a gallery of portraits so accurate, so striking, that only the hand of the Lord could have drawn them. Most of us have been startled to see our own portrait there. The best of all is that, at the bottom of each likeness, we have the Lord's judgment upon the character, so that we are able to form an estimate of what our true condition is before the Lord. Here you have a man drawn to the life: he is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at the Word of the Lord. Here, also, you have the Lord's estimate of him: "To this man will I look."

I hope to dwell chiefly upon the character described in the closing words, "*And trembleth at my word.*" Support the text by the fifth verse, "Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word." This trembling is, in God's esteem, an admirable trait in their character. The glorious Jehovah, from His throne in heaven, speaks of those contrite ones who tremble at His Word; and then the prophet takes up the strain and cries, "Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word." It is a very great mercy that there are descriptions of saints given in the Word of God which go very low, and reach the feeblest degrees of grace and the saddest frames of mind. We find the children of God sometimes upon very high places: their spiritual life is vigorous and their inward joy is abounding. When we give you descriptions of saints in that condition, many of the Little-faiths and Despondencies at once cry out, "Alas, I know nothing of this! Would God it were so with me! but indeed it is not." They are greatly discouraged by those very things that should raise their spirits and stimulate their desires; for surely if one believer is able to climb the Delectable Mountains,¹ there is all the more hope that another may do so.

¹ **Delectable Mountains** – place in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* where the travelers looked for rest and hope of the Celestial City to come; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Yet, we have to thank God that, in His priceless Scripture, He has painted for us portraits of the believer in his low estate. In the picture gallery of those saved by faith (Heb 11), we find Rahab as well as Sarah, erring Samson as well as holy Samuel. In the family register of the Lord, we have the names of believers who were weak, sad, and faulty. We have instances in the sacred record of undoubtedly gracious² men who were in very uncomfortable and undesirable conditions. Men are spoken of as the Lord's people when their souls are sick, when grace is at a very low ebb, and when joy is eclipsed. God's people are owned as such in Scripture when it is winter with their spirits, and grace lies dormant like sap stagnant in the tree. The Lord owns spiritual life in His own when there is small evidence of it, and that evidence is confused. The mention in the Scriptures of small but sure evidences is cheering to many...

That is a very choice evidence where God speaks of those that think upon His name: "A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name" (Mal 3:16). If our thoughts dwell lovingly upon the name of the Lord, this is a saving sign; and yet how small a thing it seems! Thoughts are like straws, but they show which way the wind blows...

That, again, is very comforting where the Lord says, "Your heart shall live that seek" Him (Psa 69:32). Even seekers shall live. Though as yet they are rather seekers than possessors, they have the Lord's promise of eternal life. Though they are only pursuing, and have become faint in the pursuit, yet the love that set them pursuing will keep them following on.

That is a blessed word indeed: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom 10:13). "I do call upon His name," said one, "I know I do. I am crying to Him in prayer. I do wish to have His name named upon me. I choose Him to be my God, and I dedicate myself to Him; and if that is calling upon God's name, then, truly, I am a child of God." This precious passage has been a special stay to my own heart in time of great heaviness of spirit. I know I call upon the name of the Lord, and I *shall* be saved.

From sermon Vol. 35 No. 2071, delivered in 1889 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, London; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



² **gracious** – of grace, i.e., regenerated, born again.

EXPOSITION MUST HAVE APPLICATION

A. W. Tozer (1897-1963)

THE Bible is, among other things, a book of revealed truth. That is, certain facts are revealed that could not be discovered by the most brilliant mind. These facts are of such a nature as to be past finding out. They were hidden behind a veil, and until certain men, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, took away that veil (2Pe 1:21), no mortal man could know them. This lifting of the veil of unknowing from undiscoverable things, we call divine revelation.

The Bible, however, is more than a volume of hitherto unknown facts about God, man, and the universe. It is a book of exhortation based upon those facts. By far the greater portion of the Book is devoted to an urgent effort to persuade people to alter their ways, and bring their lives into harmony with the will of God as set forth in its pages.

No man is better for knowing that God in the beginning created the heavens and the earth. The devil knows that, and so did Ahab and Judas Iscariot. No man is better for knowing that God so loved the world of men that He gave His only begotten Son to die for their redemption (Joh 3:16). In hell there are millions that know that. Theological truth is useless until it is *obeyed*. The purpose behind all doctrine is to secure moral action.

What is generally overlooked is that truth as set forth in the Christian Scriptures is a moral thing; it is not addressed to the intellect only, but to the will also. It addresses itself to the total man; its obligations cannot be discharged by grasping it mentally. Truth engages the citadel¹ of the human heart and is not satisfied until it has conquered everything there. The will must come forth and surrender its sword. It must stand at attention to receive orders, and those orders it must *joyfully* obey. Short of this, any knowledge of Christian truth is inadequate and unavailing.

¹ **citadel** – fortress.

Bible exposition without moral application raises no opposition. It is only when the hearer is made to understand that truth is in conflict with his heart that resistance sets in. As long as people can hear orthodox² truth divorced from life, they will attend and support churches and institutions without objection. The truth is a lovely song become sweet by long and tender association; and [when] it asks nothing but a few dollars—and offers good music, pleasant friendships, and a comfortable sense of well-being—it meets with no resistance from the faithful. Much that passes for New Testament Christianity is little more than objective truth sweetened with song and made palatable³ by religious entertainment.

One reason for the divorce between truth and life may be the lack of the Spirit's illumination. Another surely is the teacher's unwillingness to get himself into trouble. Any man with fair pulpit gifts can get on with the average congregation if he just "feeds" them and lets them alone. Give them plenty of objective truth and never hint that they are wrong and should be set right, and they will be content.

On the other hand, the man who preaches truth and applies it to the lives of his hearers will feel the nails and the thorns. He will lead a hard life, but a glorious one. May God raise up many such prophets; the Church needs them badly.

From Of God and Man.

Aiden Wilson Tozer (1897-1963): American pastor, preacher, author, magazine editor, and Bible conference speaker. He was known for deep personal piety and worship. He often challenged the modern Church to repent of shallowness and compromise with the world.



Some people imagine that if they read so many chapters of the Bible every day, it will be much to their profit; but it is not so if the reading is a mere mechanical exercise. It will be far better to read a tenth as much and weigh it, and let it take possession of brain and heart."—*C. H. Spurgeon*

² **orthodox** – literally, "right belief." Orthodoxy generally means the body of doctrines that are essential to the Christian faith; this implies consistency in belief and worship with the revelation of Holy Scripture.

³ **palatable** – "tasteful" and therefore acceptable.