

MBC – 3/21/2021 Pastor Doug Thompson preaching
 2 TIMOTHY – THE LAST WORDS OF PAUL
“The Word That Does God’s Work”
 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Psalm 19:7-14

- 2 Timothy 3:10–17 ¹⁰You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. ¹²Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

I read a quote this week that explains exactly my task every Sunday morning as we open God’s Word together. Listen: “The preacher’s task is to declare what God has said, explain the meaning, and establish the implications so that no one will mistake its relevance.” And your task is to follow the words of our Lord Jesus: “He who has an ear, let Him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

So let’s pray:

Last Lord’s Day we focused on the phrase, “All Scripture is breathed out by God.” Every word of every book in your Bible originated with God. It is a revelation of His character and His will, and it reveals and reflects His perfections on every page. It is, like its Author, perfectly truthful and accurate. It is inerrant (without error in the original manuscripts), and infallible. It claims to be the living Word of the living God, and it is. And this means that in the Bible, God not only spoke, but He continues to speak every time it is read, heard, or preached.

You can go to the bank on that: “What the Bible says, God says!” And because all of Scripture is breathed out by God, then *all* of Scripture, every book, every word, “*is – profitable:*” – the word means useful, practical, beneficial, helpful. Think with me: God didn’t speak this Word to angels, He spoke it to people, created in His own image, so that we might know His will for us – how practical is that? It is the Owner’s Manual for life, given to us by the Manufacturer!

And Paul says, “All Scripture is profitable,” there isn’t one wasted word—

- It explains why we are here: to glorify God, to rule and reign over His creation and enjoy Him forever – then it explains how sin destroyed our fellowship with God and killed us, body and soul – and the main message of this Book is how God moved through all of human history to send His own Son to rescue those who would believe, give them eternal life, and one day restore the Paradise they lost in a new heaven and new earth.

And how to walk with God, day by day, while were waiting for that day. Look at—

- “¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” But I’m jumping ahead.

So after Paul established its origin and authority, he wants Timothy to know how practical and relevant Scripture is for all he will face in his life and ministry. And that's just as true for us. It is practical, relevant, and profitable—

- for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

It does God's work. I'm going to cover these quickly, they are easy to understand—

I. The work of God's work in His people.

1.) Teaching.

Doctrine, instruction. This is the complete body of *truth* necessary for life and godliness. I'll say more about this in a minute.

2.) Reproof.

Scripture confronts us with our sins. It convicts us and shows us where we are wrong, where we are unloving, ungodly, and self-centered. Heb.4:12 says that it "exposes the thoughts and intentions of our heart." Expect this when you open your Bible! And if you don't find yourself saying, "Ouch" often, you just aren't concentrating! But then, it always gives us the—

3.) Correction.

The Gk. word was used for setting upright something that had fallen. Restoring something that was broken. Beloved, God's reproof is never an end in itself, it's always meant to lead us to repentance, obedience, and then, joy: "Stop doing this, start doing this – put off the old, put on the new," amen? Stop lying, start speaking the truth; stop stealing, start working with your hands. I love that passage out of—

- Hosea 6:1 ¹"Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us."

God only wounds us to give us more of Himself. And He does this through His Word. Then, Scripture gives us a course on—

4.) Training in righteousness.

The word here is *paideia* – the word for "parenting!" God is our Father, and we're like little children, right? We need constant discipline and training. If you are wise, and if you are walking with God, you don't avoid this training, you crave it. You search for it! David did—

- Psalm 86:11 ¹¹Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth;

And we know from the Psalms that he sought the Lord's way through His Word—

- Psalm 143:8–10 Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. ⁹Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD! I have fled to you for refuge. ¹⁰Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!

- Doesn't Ps.23:3 say, "He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake?"

And when you are going through the Scriptures, daily, you will find that it's like a divine GPS that steers you away from sin and foolishness and toward the destination of godliness, and Christlikeness. But don't expect that annoying woman's voice! Although a passage from Isa. came to mind—

- Isaiah 30:21 ²¹And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

But isn't that just what it's like sometimes when you are reading your Bible? You had some plan to go this or that direction, or maybe even plans to sin – and the Scriptures say, "Recalculating – this is the way, walk in it!"

Teaching, reproof, correction, and then training in righteousness – from God Himself! How we should treasure this Book! One of the first verses I memorized as a young Christian was—

- Joshua 1:8 ⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Do you believe that? Then read it and meditate on it day and night.

II. Six attributes of God's Word (Ps.19:7-9)

Now I want to take us to the passage we heard earlier this morning, because I believe it's the passage Paul had in mind when he wrote vv.16-17: Psalm 19:7-9. In this beautiful passage, God gives us—

- 1.) 6 titles for the Scriptures: law, testimony, precepts, commandment, fear of the Lord, and rules.
- 2.) 6 qualities of the Scriptures: It is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true. And,
- 3.) 6 effects of the God-breathed Scriptures on our lives: it revives the soul, it makes the simple wise, it rejoices the heart, it enlightens the eyes, it endures forever, and it is righteous altogether.

And it's no accident that it also says 6 times: "of the Lord, of the Lord, of the Lord" – because all of Scripture is God-breathed. It comes from God and perfectly reflects and reveals God. These 6 statements are like facets on a beautiful diamond, and I have prayed that it would transform the way you regard this Book from God—

1.) *⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;*

David calls the Scripture the law of the Lord = Heb. *torah*, which usually refers to the first 5 books of the Bible, but here he meant all of Scripture as God's instructions and directives for His covenant people. This is the manual sent from the manufacturer to explain how life works, and how God meant for us to live life to the fullest.

And this law is perfect, which means – perfect! Without blemish or defect or error. But it also means complete: Some of you know the Gk. word *teleion*, translated as *perfect* in the NT. It has the idea of wholeness or completeness – it reaches its goal – That's what this is saying: God's Word is sufficient to accomplish the task for which God sends it out. And what is that task? To "*revive the soul*," NASB says

“restore,” the KJV says, “*converting the soul!*” It transforms. The soul refers to our inner person, our spirit, so this means that *God’s Word alone can restore the life of God in the soul of man*. If that sounds like salvation, it is. Spurgeon said that “God’s Word restores us to the place from which sin had cast us.”

- *God’s Word isn’t just superficial self-help. We talked about the danger of moral reformation without spiritual transformation a few weeks ago. God’s Word does more than just make people nicer and more successful – it gives *new birth!*

I’ll never forget talking to a young seminary student who told me what Scripture God used to bring him to Christ. It was Dt.28: This chapter has 54 verses of curses on Israel if they disobey God: He will strike them with plagues, famine, wild beasts – it’s the most horrible chapter in the Bible – but it brought him to his knees to give his life to Christ! That’s the kind of power it has.

Some of you know the story of a young girl from Scotland who was broken and desperate. She happened to be walking one day and saw a Gideon Bible under a car tire – she picked it up and began reading, and God saved her. Beloved, it restores the soul!

*It has the power to do that this morning. If you’ve never come to Jesus Christ for salvation, listen—

- John 5:24 ²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

It happens when you hear and believe the Good News about Jesus—

- Romans 10:17 ¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Peter said that when you read or hear this Word, it’s like a seed that is sown in the soil of your heart, and germinates when it’s combined with faith—

- 1 Peter 1:23 . . .you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.

Jesus said that Satan wants to snatch away this seed, so I urge you to take Jesus up on His promise and trust Him right now. Don’t put it off! God promises you this—

- Romans 10:13 ¹³For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

And reviving the soul also means that God’s Word can bring you back to life if you have drifted. This is the same word David used in—

- Ps. 51.12 “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation!” Bring it back Lord! Revive me again!

Maybe this is why God has you here, or listening, this morning. Maybe You feel like that prodigal son; you’ve wandered away from Christ and you wonder if you can find your way back. Beloved, go to the Word of God—

*You’ve all had a plant that you’ve forgotten to water – the buds are drooping and the leaves are wilted. But you give it some water, and a few hours later, it’s back. That’s just what God’s Word does in our drooping, wilted souls. It is living water to revive our souls—meditate on it and you will be—

- Psalm 1:3 . . . like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

2.) the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

God's Word is His own testimony to Himself. He shows Himself on every page—

- I think of Leviticus with rule after rule for offering sacrifices – it teaches us that God is holy, we are not, so don't come near unless you come with a blood sacrifice. And that prepares for the Gospel of Jesus!
- Ezekiel is full of God judging His people and the nations – but it reveals that He punishes sin. D.A. Carson preached a series on Ezekiel and called it, "When God shoots to kill."
- Deuteronomy is God preparing His people to enter the Promised Land and it reveals that God wants His people to obey Him so that He might bless them!
- And then there is the book of Esther that doesn't even mention God, and yet we see His invisible hand of Providence so clearly guiding every detail of that story, and we see that God is sovereign over all.

And all of this testimony about the Lord is sure – 100% accurate and trustworthy. In our home groups we've been learning how crucial it is to know God! Literally, every thought, every word, every action is determined by what we believe about God, right or wrong – and A.W. Tozer said that "*We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God.*" I.e: *We become* like what worship! So we have to get God right – and Scripture does.

You could title your Bible: "Knowing God!" J.I. Packer's version is good, but God's version is "*sure!*"

And what does the testimony of the Lord do – what does it produce? It "makes wise the simple?" *Simple* doesn't mean humble – I thought it was a compliment to be *simple*. *Simple* is actually the Heb. word for an ignorant fool! *Simpleton* would be a better translation. It comes from a word meaning "*open door.*" That's because the simple person's mind is like a house with an open door - everything that goes in, goes back out again!

- G.K. Chesterton nailed it when he said: "An open mind is really a mark of foolishness, like an open mouth. Mouths and minds were made to shut . . . The object of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid." I.e., When you find absolute truth in God's Word, shut your mind! Keep it in, don't open your mind and let it out again!

Simple-minded people are like those silly women we learned about a couple weeks ago in 2 Timothy who are *always learning, but never coming to a knowledge of the truth.*

But the Word of God makes wise men and women out of fools. Some of the wisest people I've ever known had little education, but they knew God and they knew His Word—

- Psalm 119:98–100 ⁹⁸Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. ⁹⁹I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. ¹⁰⁰I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

- When I was a young Christian just starting Bible school, I lived in a house with 3 other guys, and one of them was Ted. Ted was one of the strangest guys you would ever meet. He had some sort of physical disorder – he never went through puberty, but he was in his 30's (no one really knew how old he was!). His voice never changed, so when he laughed in church it was like a shriek— and honestly, he looked like E.T. But he was one of the most Christlike people I've ever known. Every morning before he went to work he spent time in the Word. One day I saw that he had a big, thick notebook – must have been a couple hundred pages. He was writing in it. When I asked what it was he said, "I'm reading through the Bible and writing down everything it teaches me about God!" I said, how far are you? He said, "just starting Exodus!"
- He held no church office, had never been to college, but there was a steady stream of people in and out of our house, coming to see Ted – just to be in his presence – and to ask him for counsel about relationships, their future, every aspect of life. I was often in line myself, many times, because Ted had the beauty and wisdom of Christ about him! And it came from those mornings with God in His Word!

3.) ⁸the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

This God-breathed Word contains precepts – principles and propositions. Statements of truth. This is really important: the Bible isn't just some Precious Moments devotional. It contains *teaching* – just what we saw earlier: doctrines and dogma revealed as propositional statements to be believed.

- A couple weeks ago we saw that the Bible teaches us *anthropology* – not stuff about old skulls – but God's truth about man: that he bears the image of God, but that he is fallen, and he can be renewed and restored through faith in Jesus Christ. Wow – those are building blocks for your brain to think correctly about this world – amen?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 teaches us the doctrine of *bibliology* – what the Bible teaches about the Scriptures. The precepts of the Lord teach us about the triune Godhead, angels, sin, salvation, heaven and hell, even marriage and family, there is a doctrine of work in the Bible, and on and on – all that we need to be "*complete, equipped for every good work.*"

And all the precepts of the Lord are *right* – meaning, they send you in the right direction, they guide you on the right path. We sang this earlier, didn't we?—

- Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path – it's training in righteousness, right?

And when you know God's truth about this life and the afterlife, it's like having God's compass for navigating through this dark, confusing world – it rejoices your heart! Doesn't it? Jesus said in—

- Luke 11:28 "Blessed – happy . . . are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

God's people should never be negative or pessimistic when we have the truth of God in this Book to guide us through life and death. Our path is clear! We should all say with David—

- Psalm 119:97 ⁹⁷Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.

4.) the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

God's Word gives authoritative commands, not suggestions. God didn't give Moses "10 Helpful Life Hacks!" God is King, and He commands His subjects. And that's all of us – even unbelievers. And these commands of the Lord are pure – the Heb. word means clear, transparent. This is why Scripture enlightens the eyes.

- It lets in the light of God to show you who you are, who God is, and why you need a Savior – amen? It sheds light on the great questions of life: "What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."

The idea here is the *clarity* of Scripture. The rabbis made things so complicated – some teachers today do the same thing: "Well, unless you have studied Greek and Hebrew, like I have, you can't really understand the Scriptures!" I've got 5 grandsons. They can understand the Bible. People who say they can't understand the Bible generally just don't like what it says.

- Like Mark Twain famously said, "It's not the parts of the Bible I don't understand that bother me, it's the parts I *do* understand!"

Theologians have a word for the clarity of the Scriptures, it's *perspicuity*. Listen to what the Westminster Confession said 350 years ago—

- I.7 "All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all. Yet, those things that are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or another, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them." I.e. not everything in Scripture is easy to understand, but what we must understand in order to be saved is crystal clear.

God's Word opens our eyes and let's the light of God come in!

- Jesus gave us an illustration of this – every time He healed the blind in the Gospels. Now He did this to show that He was the Messiah – the OT predicted that when Messiah came He would heal the blind. That never happened in the OT, but when Jesus came, He did. He also did it to show His divine power and His compassion. But when Jesus gave sight to the blind, it was an illustration of what happens when a person is saved: "I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see!" 2 Cor.4:4 says that Satan has "*blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*" But when the Gospel breaks through – it's so clear! Blind eyes are opened to see "*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ!*" The Word of God makes the blind to see.

Isn't that just the way many of you would describe what happened to you? And beloved, stay in this Book – this world is so dark and complicated and confusing! Every day we need light – and every day you read it and hear it, it will give you more light. Didn't Jesus say, "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*" John 8:12

5.) ⁹the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;

Now this sounds out of place because "the fear of the Lord" isn't a name for God's Word, right? But the fear of the Lord is what the Word produces: reverence, awe – it produces true worship! You see, the fear of the Lord is when the proper Creature/Creator relationship is restored, and you have grasped the two great principles of the universe: 1.) There is a God. And 2.) You are not Him! What did Solomon say?—

- Proverbs 9:10 ¹⁰The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

You understand nothing until you tremble before the majesty and holiness of God! But when you do, you begin to understand everything. This is one of the reasons we began MCS 25 years ago, because there is no education apart from the fear of the Lord – God as sovereign King, over all His creation. Without that, all you have are random facts – like a bunch of puzzle pieces scattered on the floor. But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy one is insight. When you fear God, all the pieces start to fit together.

- Many of our MCS kids come from unchurched families, and I love to hear the stories of some kindergartner or first grader, finally getting it and shouting out in class “God made everything!” And then they go home and tell mom and dad! Praise God.

David says, “The fear of the Lord is clean, meaning it cleanses and purifies us from false, inadequate worship. To worship the right God in the wrong way is idolatry, but to worship the true God according to His self-revelation in Scripture is to be in synch with heaven – where God is constantly worshiped by the angels and His people who have gone before us – that’s why it “endures forever!”

The Word of God produces the fear of God which leads to pure worship of God – which will go on and on throughout eternity. Beloved, that is something to go home and meditate on!

6.) the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.

Your Bible might say the “*judgments of the Lord*,” God’s verdicts and decrees are absolutely true. What He says about life, death, heaven and hell, race, gender and sexuality, are absolutely true. In a world of lies, deception, and fake news, isn’t this exactly what you and I need?

- I just read an article about a father who was jailed in Canada – what is it with Canada? – *jailed* for the crime of “mis-gendering.” What is that? Well he referred to his transgender daughter as “she” and “her,” instead of “he” and “him” – I’m not kidding. This poor dad has tried to block hormone therapy for his poor confused daughter, but the courts are siding with the mom and his hands are tied. He said, “You can’t change your sex” – but that is the “*judgment of the Lord*” back in Genesis: “Male and female, He created them.”

And our own country has turned its back on the judgments of the Lord and that is why it is disintegrating before our eyes.

Beloved, if we Christians don’t stand on God’s Word, we will not be able to stand against the devil’s lies that are all around us, and overtaking our country. Too many Christians arm themselves with polls and pundits, statistics and studies, and “the findings of science,” – but those are the same weapons the world uses. And they know how to use them better! The weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but divinely powerful. And what is our sword? The Word of God.

I hope this helps you understand what God is saying to us when He says—

- 2 Timothy 3:16–17 ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

And your response will be the same as David's—

- Psalm 19:10–14 ¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

Precious. Indispensable. And you will deeply desire His Word to do its work in you—

- ¹¹Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. ¹²Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults (the ones I'm not aware of) ¹³Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins (the ones I'm very much aware of); let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

And this will be your prayer—

- ¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Bow heads to pray – read—

- Isaiah 55:6–11 ⁶“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
- Standing on the Promises of God