

27.06.2020 LIVING BY THE WORD OF GOD

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. James 1:22

'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' Matthew 4:4

Our theme for this week is devotional Bible study. The main purpose of Bible study is to know God and do His will. Devotional Bible study is most important form of Bible study; it means reading and studying the Word of God so that we can hear God's voice and know how to do His will, to *'grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ'* 2 Peter 3:18.

The Living Word of God and the Holy Spirit

If the Biblical authors spoke from God, not on their own impulse but as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21), it is the Holy Spirit who can interpret what He caused them to speak. The best interpreter of every book is its author, since he alone knows what he intended to say. So God's book can be interpreted by God's Spirit alone.

1. The Holy Spirit enlightens the Christian i.e. one who is born-again – see 1 Corinthians 2:14
2. The Holy Spirit enlightens the humble – Matthew 11:25, 26, Psalm 119:18, Ephesians 1:17-19
3. The Holy Spirit enlightens the obedient – John 7:17
4. The Holy Spirit enlightens those who communicate what they have learnt – Mark 4:21-25

The Christian's own personal Bible study in dependence on the Holy Spirit

As the Spirit enlightens us we are to use our reason/mind to study God's word conscientiously and regularly.

God is not pleased with ignorance due to lack of industry or using our common sense – see Luke 12:57, 1 Corinthians 10:1; 12:1.

God wants us judge what we are taught (1 Corinthians 10:15), to test the spirits (1 John 4:1), to be fully convinced in our own minds (Romans 14:5), to be mature enough to judge between good and evil (Hebrews 5:14).

Here is Jesus' command and promise to us:

"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."
John 14:15-18

'What we need is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Without this, we are no more fitted to go forth to the world than were the disciples after the crucifixion of their Lord. Jesus knew their destitution, and told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they should be endowed with power from on high. Every teacher must be a learner, that his eyes may be anointed to see the evidences of the advancing truth of God. The beams of the Sun of Righteousness must shine into his own heart if he would impart light to others.

No one is able to explain the Scriptures without the aid of the Holy Spirit. But when you take up the Word of God with a humble, teachable heart, the angels of God will be by your side to impress you with evidences of the truth.' *Selected Messages Vol. 1: p 411*

Learning from Jesus/Jesus Versus Scripture?

A few weeks ago we studied that Jesus accepted the authority of the Old Testament. This is not surprising as He Himself was the Author; He is the Word (the Logos) of God.

Jesus confirmed the authority of the Bible in the following ways:

1. His personal conduct; He obeyed the Scriptures.

*“Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ”
Matthew 4:10*

Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:37-40

*“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”
Matthew 5:17, 18*

2. Jesus submitted Himself to the Old Testament prophecies about His life and mission as the Messiah.

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. Mark 8:31

*“How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?” Matthew 26:54
And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24:27*

Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Luke 24:44, 45

3. Jesus used the Old Testament when confronted by the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and lawyers i.e. the leaders of His time. He addressed the arguments they brought to Him using the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures.

“What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” Luke 10:26

*He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition... making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”
Mark 7:9, 13*

Jesus answered and said to them, “Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? Mark 12:24

Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” John 5:45-47

4. Jesus accepted the historical record of the Old Testament.

He spoke of Creation and marriage (Mark 10:6-8, Matthew 19:4, 5), Noah and the Flood (Matthew 24:38), Elijah (Luke 4:25-27), David (Matthew 12:3, 4), Daniel (Matthew 24:15), Abel and the prophets (Luke 11:51).

The Sermon on the Mount does not nullify the Old Testament law; it deepens, clarifies and expands it. The Ten Commandments are ‘the letter of the law’; the Sermon on the Mount is ‘the spirit of the law’. Any Christian who is satisfied that he has ‘kept’ the Ten Commandments in its entirety should measure his performance by the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:19, 20

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.” Matthew 7:24, 25

Quiet Times

In the frantic pace of life today, it is nearly impossible to hear the ‘still small voice’ of the Holy Spirit. We need to set aside time to spend with God: to meditate on His Word, to communicate with Him through prayer and listen to His voice. We have to discipline ourselves to do this, for it is easy to make excuses because we are busy.

Andrew Bonar, the 19th century Scottish minister and evangelist, often said that he never spoke to anyone before speaking to Jesus Christ; he never did anything with his hands until he had been on his knees with God and he never read the papers until he had read his Bible.

“Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28

“In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” Isaiah 30:15

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! Psalm 46:10

Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him...Psalm 37:7

Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.... My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. Psalm 62:1, 2, 5

In the morning, O Lord, You will hear my voice; In the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch. Psalm 5:3

Wait on the LORD; be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart. Wait, I say, on the LORD! Psalm 27:14

Memory and Song

One of the best ways to keep the Word of God in our hearts is to learn and memorise passages of Scripture. This is particularly easy when one is young, so we should teach our children to memorise Scripture. They will remember it even when they are old, for as we grow older, it is our long-term memory that stays intact.

Singing the Word is also an excellent way to remember Scripture. In addition to singing Bible verses or passages, there are great hymns by Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley and others who dwell on the great themes of salvation in the Bible. The Reformers understood this well- Luther and Calvin. The latter was responsible for the Psalter; setting the words of the Psalms to music.

One of the best ways to teach theology to children and youth is to take the great hymns of the church and ask them which Bible passages they refer to and do a short Bible study on the passage or the theme of the hymn.

*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall **meditate** in it day and night, that you may observe 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. Joshua 1:8*

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” Deuteronomy 6:6, 7

His delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. Psalm 1:2

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Colossians 3:16

Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:18-20

I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. Psalm 89:1

“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” says the Lord. Zechariah 2:10

In the presence of physical and spiritual enemies:

But I will sing of Your power; Yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises; for God is my defence, my God of mercy. Psalm 59:16, 17

And now my head shall be lifted up in honour above my enemies all around me. Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD. Psalm 27:6

My son, keep your father’s command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life. Proverbs 6:20-23

Conclusion:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men...He was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth...**And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:1-3,9, 14, 16, 17***

The Bible proclaims the good news of the gospel of Christ that we might know God, and it explains the will of God so that we may all grow spiritually before Him. It reveals to us our place in salvation history and so provides answers and guidance to every generation.

God’s Word convicts us (Nehemiah 8:9), it corrects us (Psalm 17:4), it cleanses us (Psalm 119:9), confirms us (John 8:31) and equips us (Proverbs 22:21).

We know God through His Word (Daniel 11:32) and we know God’s will through His Word (Psalm 40:8).

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

“Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” Luke 11:28

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life. Philippians 2:14-16

“Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you. Let them all be fixed upon your lips, so that your trust may be in the LORD.

I have instructed you today, even you. Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, that I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, that you may answer words of truth to those who send to you?" Proverbs 22:17-21
