

## The Power of The Word

The first chapter of James gives us an exhortation to “lay apart all filthiness and overflow of evil, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21). From these words, we learn that the Word of Yahweh becomes a saving power when it is planted into the hearts of men who are meek. The Parable of the Sower describes the various conditions of heart into which the Word might be sown (Mat. 13:3-23), but James gives a further detail: in order for it to save men’s souls, their hearts must receive the word “with meekness”. A meek man is one who will give proper attention to the Word-seeds which are sown, inducing a spirit of humility, and trembling before the Word of Almighty God (cp. Isa. 66:2). Such a one will be instructed, and be wise. He will repent of his former ways, and seek heavenly things, setting his affection on things above, not things on the earth (Col. 3:2).

Indeed, Ezekiel informs us that a repentant response is vital for the Word to save souls: “... when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall *save his soul alive*” (Eze. 18:27). A man therefore, can only “save his soul alive” if he permits the Word to so influence his disposition of thought, that he makes Yahweh’s Ways his own, and turn away from the vanity of his former life, determining to rather seek first the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness (Mat. 6:33).

The word, thus received, therefore becomes a saving power. Indeed, “the Gospel” it contains is described by the Apostle as being “the power of God unto Salvation” (Rom. 1:16). So, the Bible is more than ink on the page, for its words are vehicles of ideas; the means whereby Divine Thoughts and Ways become impressed and transported into the human mind. To those who meekly receive it, it becomes “the word of God, which *effectually worketh* also in you that believe” (1 Thes. 2:13). The ideas and principles that it conveys become embedded into the mind of the believer, working a great work within them. Through its creative and purifying influence, a “new man” is formed, after the likeness of his Maker (Col 3:10). Being born of God, this New Man can be armoured with the things of the Spirit to resist temptation, and so cease from being under the dominion of Sin: “whosoever is born of God doeth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 Jno. 3:9, cp. Psa. 119:11). With the seed of the Word remaining within him, the Man of God is endued with a power that wars against the lust of the flesh, causing a conflict in the minds of those who would bring every thought into captivity to Christ. Even so, it is written: “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17).

The Word, being an influence that “worketh” in the believers to do good, is therefore a Living Word. So the Spirit “moved” the writer to the Hebrews to describe it:

“... the word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of life and breath, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb: 4:12).

The comparison here, is with the scalpel used by the Priests to cut open the sacrificial animals that were brought before him, to see whether or not there was any inward blemish or disease and to wash it as prescribed by the Law. Just as the Priest used a sharp knife to cut the “joints and marrow”, and inspect the inward parts of the offering even so Christ, as our High Priest, is able to inspect and discern the thoughts and intents of our heart, through the piercing effect of the Word. Sharper than any two edged knife, it is able to enter into our minds, and expose our thoughts and intentions before the Great High Priest, who then presents the ecclesia before Yahweh as a “living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1), not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but rather that it should be holy and without blemish.

The Word, as well as a saving influence, is also a formidable weapon to be used against the flesh - both within our own selves and also as manifested in those who follow the Carnal mind. So, the Apostle describes it as being “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17). And again, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4-5). We do not war after the flesh, but we must be strong in the warfare of faith. The doctrines taught in The Word, are antagonistic to the serpentine disposition of thought harboured by the majority of men. So it is, that whilst “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:14), their folly is amply exposed when compared with the Wisdom of the Word, and Christ Crucified (1 Cor. 1:18-25). The Sword of the Spirit is able to cast down to the ground the high pretensions of men’s philosophy - but more than this, it is a weapon which we must wield against the wiles of Sin arising in our own minds. As we seek to restrain our minds to bring every thought to the obedience of Christ, the only weapon we have against Sin, is The Word, as The Sword of the Spirit. It follows therefore, that those who do not give earnest attendance to The Word and who are slothful in their Bible Study, will not be sufficiently equipped to war the warfare, will not bring their thoughts into the obedience of Christ, and will therefore be dominated with the Carnal Mind, which is enmity with the things of the Spirit of God.

In our New Testament reading for the day, our attention is directed to Timothy, a man zealous for the Truth, who had been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is to him that the Apostle wrote: “from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith with is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). From his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5), Timothy had been instructed in the Truth from an early age. These women of faith and courage were intent on infusing the principles of the Truth into the mind of Timothy, heeding the proverb that “train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). Timothy was an example of this, for he remained a steadfast follower of Messiah, tending to the early ecclesias seeded by the work of the Apostle Paul. We must never underestimate the importance of instructing the young in the ways of the Lord. In their minds, as ours, are to be found the seeds of decay and decadence; the embryonic carnal mind which is attractive to the natural man, and which will soon lead him down the wide road that leads to destruction. Only by countering these influences by the power of the Word-Seed of the Spirit can they be brought out from the dominion of Sin, to become faithful servants of Christ.

Timothy was told that the Word was able to make him “wise unto salvation”. We have already seen this, that elsewhere the Gospel is described as being the “power of God unto Salvation”. It is this twofold; both in that it inculcates the wise principles that will lead a man into a faithful service to Yahweh, but also in that it leads a man away from the Broad Way, to the Narrow path which leads to life. It is “perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple” (Psa. 19:7). Making the simple wise unto Salvation is what makes the Word to be powerful. Contrary to what the Humanistic errors of the heathen would have us believe, to be “simple” is never a good thing in Scripture. There is a certain truth, that the Gospel is “the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3) in the sense that the principles it sets forth are unsullied by the complications of man’s theorising, but that does not negate the other truth that it makes those who are enlightened by it, wise. It is often thought that to have a “simple” basic faith is all sufficient, whereas Scripture always speaks in terms of simple men being made “wise” in the things of the Spirit. Rather than to be simple in our faith, we should seek wisdom, for wisdom is the principal thing to be grasped, and is of more value than all the treasures that this life can bring.

The Apostle continues to describe how the Word is profitable for “instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). Interestingly, the word translated “instruction” here, is the Greek word for “chastening”. The Word itself chastises us in righteousness. An example of such a thing can be found in Joseph, a man of outstanding faith and virtue, who suffered much persecution. Of him, it is written: “whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: until the time that his word came: ***the word of Yahweh tried him.*** The king sent and loosed him ...” (Psa. 105:18-20). Joseph truly was “tried” by the Word, for he had to have faith in the visions that were revealed to him, that spoke of his future glorification and pre-eminence over his brethren. It was because of these visions that his brethren “hated him” (Gen. 37:4, 5, 8) and “envied him (Gen. 37:11). They spurned the Revelations of Yahweh, and instead became dominated by the desire to remove the “dreamer” from their midst. In the words of Jude, as “wandering stars”, they “despised dominion,” and when Joseph came seeking their welfare, they “fed themselves without fear”, having cast him into the pit. And like as Judas betrayed Messiah, selling him for the price of a common slave, even so Judah persuaded his brethren to sell Joseph for the love of money.

Truly, the Word tried Joseph, for he had to be steadfast in his faith, without wavering, looking to and hoping for the day to come when his brethren would bow before him, as he would be elevated to great glory and honour. And even so our Master’s brethren, as the greater extended family of Israel, it is written, shall look upon him who they pierced, and mourn, prostrating themselves before him, and bowing the knee at the mention of his Name. In Type therefore, Joseph’s trying circumstances were but a reflection of those to be endured by Messiah himself. We can all take great comfort from these things: we may have to endure chastening for holding fast to the Word. It is through much tribulation that we shall enter into the Kingdom of God. And though the Word will try us, and chasten us, the ultimate benefit will be seen in the day of coming Glory, when we shall live and reign with Messiah, our Redeemer, with those who despised us being placed under our feet (cp. Rev. 3:9).

The Apostle taught Timothy (and ourselves) that the ultimate effect of The Word, received in meekness, and acted upon in faith, was “that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:17). Another rendering of this is:

that the man of God “might be fitted, equipped for every good work”. The idea here is that the Word provides us with all the equipment needed in order to carry out good works. As a faithful workman (cp 2 Tim. 2:15), the believer needs to be proficient in the use of the tools necessary for the accomplishment of his work. He needs to be able to effectively wield the Spirit’s Sword in the cutting down of every high thing that exalts itself against Christ. In order to show himself to be approved unto God, he needs to gather to himself every resource that God provides him with, in order to be a victor in the warfare against Sin. The Word itself is a powerful resource which ought not be underestimated, for it is through it that, as the Apostle describes, the God of peace shall “make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ” (Heb. 13:21).

When we come to consider our Master and Messiah, we see in Him all of the righteous principles of the Word set forth. He was “the word ... made flesh” (Jno. 1:14). Being “full of grace and truth”, he displayed the Glory, the Glory as the only begotten of the Father: he alone followed the pattern of the Word in totality. Daily his ear was opened (Isa. 50:5) to the Word, as he followed its precepts and embodied its principles. In Him, we see One who overcame – the only One who has overcome – the Carnal Mind. Delivering it a crushing blow by bringing it to the death of the cross, the Master truly cut down every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God. We look to him therefore as our example to follow after, that we, “as reflecting in a mirror the glory of the Lord, shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18) at the appointed time, to be made partakers of Divine Nature, and the glory yet to be revealed.

*Christopher Maddocks*