

The Work of the Word

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[0:00] Well, let me say to you tonight, the Word of God works.

! It's capable of carrying out the work or works that God intended it to do.

The Word of God that has been delivered to us is thousands of years old, but it is just as relevant today as when it was first unveiled.

Two of the areas where we see the Word of God active and working are found in the process of salvation and in the process of sanctification.

And the first thing I want to mention tonight is salvation. Scripture provides instruction for salvation. 2 Timothy 3.15 says this, that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

[1:32] Now, I think I mentioned this later, but I'm going to say it now because if I didn't, I'll get it in now. When Paul wrote those words, he was writing to people that had only had available to them the Old Testament.

But the Old Testament presents salvation. Presents salvation. The same salvation you and I enjoy. The gospel of Christ is that which saves a sinner. The gospel is found in the scripture. Scripture, therefore, is the source of saving faith.

The Holy Spirit provides the truth of the Word and faith in Christ which leads to spiritual life. There is no other way by which a man is saved.

Men do not, and I'm going to use men because we're all men in here. Men do not stumble into eternal life. Neither are they tricked into eternal life.

[2:40] I remember a huge church up north that had a men's luncheon, I think a couple times a week. And the pastor announced, he said, the reason we do that is we give them this huge free meal.

They get tired and lethargic. They got to go back to work. You know, they're tired. And that's when you hit them with the gospel. Before you know it, they become believers. I don't even know it. You're not going to trick anyone into believing.

We do need a new call for your pastor. That'll be my love offering. Men and women are saved when they hear the Word of God preached or taught.

Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ. I was going to talk to the pastor before and I forgot to, but someone told me once that says, faith comes by hearing and hearing by speeches about Jesus Christ.

I don't know if that's in there or not, but it sounds good to me. The Word of God is presented by witnessing human vessels. That is God's plan for reaching people with the good news, which is the gospel of Christ.

[3:55] Now, there are many examples of God reaching people with his saving grace by the Word being presented. Dr. Luke reported of a woman named Lydia who made her living in Thyatira selling purple fabric.

She worshiped God based upon the information that she had at the time. She heard a man named Paul come to her town and preach. His message opened her heart to the gospel and she was radically saved.

God has chosen believers to be his spokespersons, his spokesmen, if you will, in the world to bring his saving truth to the loss.

And I hope you all realize that you are spokesmen for God. You're his mouthpiece. Don't stray from the Word.

Repeat what's in the Word, but you are his vocal cords. Timothy heard the Word and was saved through a method that will be very familiar to some of you, probably to Mike and probably others.

[5:15] He learned about saving faith while sitting on the knees of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. He saw God living in his family and was drawn by the Spirit to the gospel of Christ.

And all I can say is thank God for mothers and grandmothers. I remember at a very early age, in fact, it was the Christmas time, because my dad was in Arabia, as he often was.

He pioneered Arabia, Saudi Arabia, for Phillips Petroleum. And my mother would be here alone with me for weeks at a time, 10, 12, 15 weeks at a time.

And we were doing something that you young guys never heard of. Some of you have. We were stringing popcorn for the tree. And I was eating more of it than I was stringing.

And she sat there telling me about Jesus as we were stringing that. But I always remember that. My grandmother on my dad's side was a dear saintly lady. And 25 years after she died, we opened one of her Bibles.

[6:26] And I found a note in there. My uncle did, Uncle Bruce. And it said, I hope that my children and grandchildren will read this book. And that some, I guess she was parroting Paul, some will be saved.

And then she said, I am under the blood of Christ. I believe in God the Father. I believe in Jesus the Son. 25 years. Though she was dead, she was still speaking to her family.

Interesting, the scriptures that were used by Eunice and Lois were the Old Testament. The sacred writings of the faith that Timothy was built up on was the Old Testament.

The Old Testament gives the witness that leads to salvation. It is there that we see the holiness and majesty and loving kindness of God.

It was in the Old Testament that God's children learned about one who would come and provide the sacrifice for their sins, which would lead to eternal life.

[7:30] They believed in the promise of the coming Messiah and were saved. Now, we believe in the Messiah that has come and are saved. It is the same Messiah from different perspectives of the cross.

They looked forward. We looked back. They did not have near the information we have because we have the completed word of God. But they believed in the promise of a coming deliverer, and that satisfied the wrath of God.

They believed in his promise that he would send the Messiah. Now, we could spend a lifetime talking about salvation found in the Old Testament. We could talk about the moral law, especially contained in the Ten Commandments.

There, men saw the righteousness of God came face to face with their own unrighteousness. The commandments show us our need for a Savior to deliver us from the wrath of a perfect God, that wrath directed at those who violated his perfect standard.

There's nothing wrong with the law. It's holy and perfect and shows the holiness of God. Now, in the great chapter 11 of Hebrews, where we learn about the heroes of the faith being saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

[8:57] But if you look at those guys, all of them lived centuries before the incarnation. They're all Old Testament figures. They're all old, but they believed God.

And like Abraham, they longed to see the day of Christ. They saw it in their minds and in their hearts, and they were glad.

Even Jesus, you know, said, they longed to see me. And they lived their lives. They died. They never saw him. But they saw him in their heart.

The understanding of the Old Testament saints was not as complete as ours, as I've said. They did understand, though, one would come and suffer for their sins, which would satisfy God.

John the Baptist knew of this anticipation. He saw Jesus, and when he saw him, he declared, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[9:57] So we see abundant scriptures that provide instruction that lead to salvation in the Old Testament.

And, you know, that's why I remain excited about our opportunity here to print and distribute Bibles in basically obscure languages to people who see the word of God for the first time in their language.

And there is an excitement in all that. The word never returns void. Only God knows how many of his children will be drawn to Christ through our faithfulness a world away.

A world away. And we will probably never meet most of those people this side of heaven. I'll let you in on a little secret, and I've not had the opportunity to mention it to the pastor or Jonathan, but I was given a video a couple weeks ago, and it's a film of those Bibles reaching their destination in Vietnam.

And it's really long. You're going to have to work with this thing. It's really long and almost repetition. You say, now we're going to carry another box, you know, and now we're going to get another.

[11 : 21] And I watched it, but I hope maybe when we're getting ready for our March time, you know, the new time, we might want to think about showing that.

Scripture also provides instruction for sanctification. 2 Timothy 3, verses 16 and 17. All Scripture. How much? All. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Now, it's interesting there we talk about sanctification. I've actually been working up, looking ahead next year, next fall even, of maybe doing something in the area of sanctification and other areas too, but it's really a fascinating study.

I've been focusing on Romans 6, 7, and 8 as I go through that word for word. Scripture comes from God and is about God.

[12 : 41] The Bible is God's self-revelation about Himself. I'm always amazed at some of these new guys today, and I think Shuler started this, but that the Bible is about man and about man's needs and about man's self-esteem.

And, you know, he even wrote a book and he said theology is about man needing self-esteem. The very word theology, I mean, that's an oxymoron.

You can't, it's the study of God. You can't get to man's self-esteem from that. The Bible is about God.

He reveals Himself. He has given this word to fallen creatures that most desperately need it. In the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, I like to say from Genesis until Maps, we see God's truth.

We see God's character, His attributes. We see His plan of redemption for unsaved fallen people. How He's going to get some of them into the kingdom of God.

[13 : 52] That's all outlined there. Since Scripture is inspired by God, it is obviously inerrant. Why is there any argument on that? This is true of both Old and New Testaments.

Jesus verified this during the Incarnation. He gave powerful testimony to the authenticity and inspiration of the Old Testament and what would become the New Testament.

And it's pretty amazing. He had a number of things to say about this. In fact, there's a record of this in Matthew 5, verse 17 and 18. Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets.

He was being accused of this. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the law until all is accomplished.

And I love what Luke says in chapter 16, verse 17, quoting Jesus, It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the law to fail.

[15 : 12] Wow, you think, you just focus on that a little bit and chew on that. Easier for this universe to dissolve than for just one thought of God to be wrong or to fail.

The Lord affirmed over and over that the Old Testament Scriptures spoke of Him. I love to read the story of the journey down the road to Emmaus.

And you know the story. He runs into a couple of His followers. They're really sad. They're a crucifixion. We thought this one might be the Messiah.

You know, because a lot of guys came to Israel. They come today claiming to be the Messiah. And so it says that Jesus began talking to them and He showed them the Scriptures that spoke about Him.

You can read that in Luke 24, 27. Jesus did this by beginning with Moses and then coming forward, coming toward us through all the prophets.

[16 : 29] And by the way, if you're ever challenged on the issue of evolution versus creation, just say this. Jesus started with Moses.

Jesus affirms the accuracy and authenticity of the writings of Moses. And what did Moses write about?

Genesis. He wrote about creation. He wrote about creation. And he didn't start with some primordial soup and a lightning bolt struck it or a dinosaur laid an egg and accidentally a bird flew out.

You know, I'm always amazed by evolution. This is not even my... I can't... I'm not charging for this. Evolution won't do it. You've got to have double evolution because when this bird is evolving, this boy bird, there's got to be a girl bird.

You've got to have double evolution going on at the same time. I mean, there's just no other way. I'm throwing that in for free. Hey, when Roger said, from good is into you.

[17:42] Yeah. I mean, I saw a deal the other day on one of the channels. There's this snake that loves to eat this bird's eggs.

He lives to eat this bird's eggs. The bird builds a nest and a hedge. Low. Snake can go up there. But there's one branch of one particular tree and the snake hates that because of the chemical in that branch.

And the bird, the mama bird, gets that branch and she has to break it with her beak to let the chemical come out and she lays it on her nest. When she does that, the snake won't get near the nest.

Now, that would take millions of years for the bird to figure that out in evolution. They ain't going to be around. The snake's going to eat all the eggs.

I mean, this is the absurdity and there's many, many examples like that. The question often arises, how did the men who wrote the Bible remember the events?

[18:46] You know, I mean, first of all, God did not have me do it. I forgot Diane's name for two hours one day. I mean, it was embarrassing going around the house and we'd only been married 30 years.

The answer is they could not through just mere humanness remember all that stuff. Jesus said this so we could understand.

Listen to what he said in John 14, 26. The helper, Holy Spirit lives in you. He's your helper. The helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

There's your answer. That's how the men remembered what was said and wrote down the content into the inspired words of the New Testament.

So Jesus is here putting his stamp of approval on the New Testament. He's already approved the Old, beginning with Moses. Now he's put his seal on the New. When Jesus died, rose again, and ascended to heaven, the New Testament had not been written.

[20:05] Hadn't been written. How was this accomplished without Christ supervising the autographs? The Lord made it clear he would reveal additional truth after he returned to heaven.

John 16, verses 12 to 14. I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. Well, when can we bear them, Lord?

When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak of his own initiative, but whatever he hears, he will speak and he will disclose to you what is to come.

He shall glorify me, for he shall take mine and shall disclose it to you. Here we, again, we have the Lord Jesus near death. We're in the 16th chapter of John and he's talking about the coming of the Holy Spirit.

He wouldn't leave us as orphans. He'd send another who would indwell us, never leave us, never forsake us. The New Testament writers were filled with and inspired by the Holy Spirit of God to write down the words of Scripture without any error.

[21:17] Without error. Now, we could go months or years on the inerrancy of Scripture, but we've got to move on. Paul also said that Scripture was profitable.

That is a statement which really speaks to the sufficiency of Scripture. In fact, the Greek word for profitable there means that Scripture is beneficial, productive, and sufficient.

The Bible has absolute sufficiency to meet the spiritual needs of God's people. When I was a rookie police officer back eons ago, old-timer, World War II vet, I'm sure he's gone by now, but one of the officers, and he got talking about the Bible one night.

I wasn't a believer. Didn't know he was. And he said, you will discover if you'll read the Bible and stay close to the Bible, it's got an answer for everything. He's got an answer for every situation.

I didn't believe it at the time, but I believe him now that I see it with spiritual eyes. Now, David understood the sufficiency of Scripture when the Lord inspired him to write these words in the

Psalms.

[22 : 30] Psalm 19, verse 7 and forward. The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

The judgments The judgments of the Lord are true, they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover, by them your servant is warned and keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults.

Also, keep back your servant from presumptuous sins. Let them not rule over me. Then I will be blameless and I shall be acquitted of great transgression.

[23 : 32] Well, what a testimony. So, in this passage, David referred to God's word by six different titles. He said, the word of God is God's law, God's testimony, God's precepts, God's commandments, God's fear, which is referring to worship, and God's judgment.

He also mentioned six characteristics of God's divine truth. He said, it is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true.

And then, in just those few verses, he mentions six blessings that the word brings to believers. It restores the soul. It makes wise the simple.

It rejoices the heart. It enlightens the eyes. It endures forever. It produces complete righteousness. And as if that weren't enough, David tells us that the word of God grants benefits to the believer. It makes us rich, delights us, rewards us, convicts us, and protects us. That's in verses 7 to 13 of Psalm 19.

[24 : 45] The scriptures are all sufficient. What else do the scriptures do for the followers of Christ? Well, they're useful. Okay, what are they useful for?

Well, for one thing, they're useful for teaching. The scriptures provide us divine instruction by giving to us the correct doctrines of God.

I hear whole denominations and churches mock doctrine. Guys, doctrine is what holds us together.

So, doctrine makes us what we are. Don't ever underestimate the importance of doctrine.

Because they are inspired, the scriptures cannot be understood by the natural man. Now, what did God mean when he wrote natural man? That's the unsaved man.

They can't be understood. I used to make an assumption if you were a professor of religion like the University of Chicago, you must be saved. Boy, I found out different. It's a detriment, actually.

[25 : 51] men and women can read the book and get some moral fabric out of it. That's why you hear people say, well, I think Jesus was a real moral guy and he's a good philosopher, a man of love, you know.

But the natural man cannot understand the deep things of God. In fact, they appear to the natural man, the unsaved man, to be foolishness. foolishness to him.

Wait a minute, you want me to believe in a Jewish carpenter that was nailed to a cross 2,000 years ago and by that you think I can have a relationship with God if he exists?

I mean, that's the natural man. He cannot understand what they say or mean. These truths must be spiritually acquired.

Well, how do we do that? Well, we are given the mind of Christ to understand the deep truths of the word of God.

[26 : 51] That's what it takes, the mind of Christ. For the definitive passage on that, read 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verses 14 to 16. Now, in his first letter, John warned believers about the dangerous teachings of Antichrist.

But then he assures us that we have an anointing from the Holy One who will let us understand these things. 1 John chapter 2 verses 20, 24, and 27 speaks of that.

So the word of God is useful for teaching. Okay, teaching what? Teaching us truth. The truth of God's word is like a gold mine.

And there's always another nugget. I think we kind of talked about that a minute ago. There's always more. There's always another nugget. I heard Paul Worsher the other day talking about in heaven, people say, oh my, this is going to be a long time, eternity.

First of all, there's no time in heaven. I'm not going to go to Mike and say, hey, next Thursday, let's have a softball game. It's not going to be that. We do it today. Plus, when I play softball, let's do hardball.

[28:07] And where was I going with that? I don't know. But Paul Worsher says, we're going to spend eternity picking gold nuggets off the cross.

A deeper, deeper, deeper, ever deepening appreciation for what Jesus really did. We're just scratching the surface down here. when we really understand in heaven the depth of our depravity and the depth of his love to go there, God in human flesh and die for us.

And he said, that will last for eternity. The word is spiritual wealth that we should be continually depositing in our minds and in our hearts.

Those deposits, by the way, will follow us into glory someday. And let me say this with kindness in my heart. You're getting some real good teaching in this church on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday evening, less so maybe on Monday night, but still I hope it's pretty good.

You need more teaching than that, than what you will receive in a church building. When we were debating about having the school here, you know, I made the comment, and you made the comment too, Pastor, but churches are the most underused buildings in America.

[29:35] You know, a couple hours on Sunday morning, an hour on Sunday night, an hour on Wednesday, and then they're, you know, so you can't get it here. You need more teaching. Go home, turn off television, open the Bible in a systematic study of God's Word.

That's what you need. That's what we all need. when we deposit truth into our mental bank account, we will be able to draw on those deposits.

We can draw on them when we're confronted by temptations, which I do a better job of that, when making moral choices, and when seeking God's will for our life.

Why? Because it's all in there. it's all in there. It is also useful for reproof. Another work of the Word of God in the life of Christ's followers is that of reproof.

You know, we really don't use that word much anymore. It means to convict of misbehavior or false doctrine. through the study of the Word of God, we are equipped with knowledge and understanding of divine truth.

[30:59] When we possess divine truth, then falsehood and sin and erroneous beliefs and ungodly conduct are revealed to us quickly.

we should all be at a level in our own lives. When we hear something that is false and misleading, we should recognize that.

And you know, I came kicking and screaming to this when I was a real young believer, but I used to say, well, Satan just hangs out in the bars and all that. He hangs out in the church. And you know, Satan's been crafty to get individuals, churches, and denominations not over here, but over here. I'm reminded of that rocket they sent to Mars, and one scientist group computed in the British and one in American, well, when it got to Mars, Mars wasn't there.

It was multiple millions of miles away. If you start not here, but here, how far off are you going to be?

[32:02] You know, because you're going to keep lengthening that. Reproof. Scripture has a twofold purpose. It tears down and destroys that which is sinful and false, and it builds up and improves that which is righteous and true.

It falls to church leaders to both reprove and build up. the church is to be healthy. If a church is to be healthy, it must reprove sin and falsehood in its midst.

You can't let that fester. It's a disease that's got to be cut out, and it may be a little painful, but it's got to be done. There are times when each of us needs to be reprovved.

It may come from Scripture. It may come from a godly friend that has seen something in our conduct that makes reproof necessary, but regardless of the origin we should look at such as God dealing with us to make us stronger.

See if the score changed, John. I'm sick of it. To make us stronger and more spiritual within the body of Christ. God uses reproof so that we would be seekers of righteousness and renouncers of sin and falsehood.

[33:34] He brings us back to that level. Scripture is also used for correction. The Greek word used here for correction is the only time it appears in the New Testament.

It refers to the restoration of something to its original or proper condition. It's used a lot in Greek literature and it referred to helping a person back onto their feet once they had stumbled and fallen. It was helping somebody get back on their feet. I have an interesting word picture. In the church correction comes from godly pastors, godly leaders, godly men who are committed to god's word and purity in the church.

One of the great correcting passages in the bible is 1 john 1 9 where we're instructed to confess known sin before the lord. You ought to be carrying that on daily in your life.

Daily. So I don't know any sin that I committed. Lord I can't remember any but I'm sure you remember them. So I'll confess those that I don't remember. confession of sin should be a normal course of action for the genuine believer.

[34 : 52] God reminded Paul that believers were to correct those who were in opposition to him. Well there's something else the word of God does.

It provides training in righteousness. Training comes from the Greek word *paidia* and that's speaking of training up a child.

Train him up in the way that he should go. The idea here is for there to be a positive instruction. This is a building up. As believers we are to be in continual training in righteousness until the Lord Jesus returns for us.

That's a continual process. part of the sanctification process. That's what we're really talking about here. And again God uses people in the church to carry out this training.

I would suggest in some poor way what we're doing here tonight qualifies as part of our training.

Paul said elsewhere that we're to be nourished by the words of faith and by sound doctrine.

[36 : 08] So the question then is do we really desire training? And if we really do and that's our heart's desire then we can then say with the psalmist as the deer pants for the water brook so my soul pants for thee oh God.

That's really where we should hope to arrive at where we are wanting the word of God just like a thirsty man coming out of a desert wants water.

and finally Paul gives us an enabling scripture that the man of God may be adequate equipped for every good work.

The Bible is of great value to the believer because from it we learn truth. The Bible can be of value to an unbeliever because it teaches the way of salvation.

But the Bible has a very special value to the shepherd the under shepherd the elders that are involved in the preaching and teaching of the flock.

[37 : 23] Through the indwelling spirit of God such men are able to proclaim the truths of God's word. We heard that Sunday morning didn't we?

It's through the spirit of God. When you see the man in this church standing behind that pulpit you can mark it down. He's standing there representing Christ. He's representing Christ.

Adequate there refers to persons who are complete capable and proficient in what God has called them to do. Now the preacher who carefully studies, believes, and obeys the truth of scripture will stand strong in living and defending the faith.

Equipped for every good work is also an interesting phrase. It applies to men that are able to meet the demands of righteous living. By a life lived the preacher affirms the power of the word of God in his own life.

how he lives his life. He is thus able to lead others to salvation and then equip them for faithful service to the Lord. I remember Dawson Trotman who died young, the founder of the Navigators.

[38 : 43] He said, don't tell me how many men you've led to Christ. Tell me how many you've led to Christ that are leading men to Christ. We're equipping. We're replicating, reproducing ourselves.

So let me ask this. What is your purpose in the church? Is it to lead others to Christ? Is it to teach truth to believers? Is it to refute error in the church?

Is it to correct and rebuild the lives of erring church members? Is it to train believers to love righteousness?

If you could say yes to any one of those, then you must allow yourself to be molded by the truth of scripture. Again, go home, turn off television, and one day, my prayers we will all hear, well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your master.

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