

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

JANUARY 2018

The Word of Our Creator

2 Timothy 3:16-17: *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

The Creator of this universe communicates to us "*all things that pertain unto life and godliness*" (**2 Peter 1:3**). How He does this is not a "mysterious" thing, or something only done for a select few. Rather, it is through the Bible. As the Word of our sovereign God, the Bible is infallible.

Many, like Pilate, ask the question "*What is truth?*" (**John 18:38**). Jesus answered this when praying for His disciples in **John 17:17:** *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth.*

While Jesus came to earth as the living Word (**John 1:1,14**), God's written Word is the Bible.

The infallible truth contained in the Bible is not only available to satisfy man's curiosity about how the world came to be. The truth of God's Word leads to something far more significant than knowledge alone...our salvation.

The Bible is the "*power of God unto salvation*" (**Romans 1:16**). It teaches hearers about the dreadful condition our souls are in due to sin (**Romans 3:23; 6:23**). Yet, it also teaches how we can have forgiveness of sin through God's grace. This gift is not earned, but God requires obedience in order to receive it (**Philippians 2:12**). The works of obedience He requires are all revealed in Scripture (**2 Timothy 3:17**).

This is not to say that non-biblical books can never be of assistance in understanding God's will. For example, In **1 Peter 1:13**, the Holy Spirit through Peter tells Christians to "*gird up the loins of your mind.*" One who does not use the phrase "gird up your loins" in his or her "every day vocabulary" might study historical

books to understand what this phrase means.

We must distinguish though between books that help us better understand the Bible and the Bible itself. Words of others should not be elevated to the Word of God. If there is ever a contradiction between the two, God is right.

Despite its authorship, many ignore the Bible.

"Self-help books" are popular, but "*all things that pertain unto life and godliness*" are neglected. Thoughts of men are praised as profound and powerful, but thoughts of God are brushed aside.

This may be due in part to a belief that the Bible is "outdated." God gave an answer for this belief in **1 Peter 1:24-25:** *For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

Another reason some might ignore the truth is because it does not "make sense." Using our own "wisdom," we might expect something different than what the Word teaches.

It takes humility to realize that "*the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*" (**1 Corinthians 3:19**). Instead of trying to fit God's will to our pre-conceived ideas about right and wrong, we must change our ideas of right and wrong to fit God's will. When we do the latter and hear God's Word with the right heart, we will have no doubt that it is truth from Him.

Once we recognize the Bible as truth from God, we should desire it as a newborn babe desires milk (**1 Peter 2:2**).

Consider some reasons a man might fail to study the Bible. He might believe he does not need it. He might be lazy. He might be too focused on worldly things to take time to study.

A baby does not have these problems with milk. Instead, he or she longs earnestly for it.

Just as a baby longs for physical milk, we should hunger and thirst for the spiritual food and drink God offers (cf. **Matthew 5:6**).

The Bereans referenced in **Acts 17:11** demonstrated this attitude. They “*searched the scriptures daily*.” This verse does not tell us how much time they dedicated each day to studying. Nor does the Bible “spell out” exactly how much time meets God’s “minimum requirements” of study. If we hunger and thirst for God’s Word though, we won’t want to put our Bibles down.

Our hunger and thirst for the Word should not be a desire to gain knowledge *only*, but also to “*grow thereby*” (**1 Peter 2:2b**). We should not be hearers of the Word *only*, but doers who put into practice what we learn (**James 1:22-25**).

We know what to put into practice by looking for direct statements and approved examples in the New Testament, as well as necessary inferences made (**Acts 15:7-18**). We look to the New Testament because that is the covenant God’s people are under today (cf. **Matthew 26:28**; **Colossians 2:14**). The Old Testament is important and “*written for our learning*” (**Romans 15:4**), but is not directly applicable in the same way the New Testament is.

Following God’s guidance in the Bible does not come “naturally.” It takes meekness to allow God to direct our steps (**James 1:21**). We must humble ourselves as little children when hearing the Word (**Matthew 11:25**; **Matthew 18:3-4**).

As we study His will for us, we must also look at both the context and “complete picture” of things He says. Looking only at “bits and pieces” of His Word leaves an incomplete and distorted picture of His will.

For example, Jesus commanded “*Judge not, that ye be not judged*” in **Matthew 7:1**. Stopping there leads some to believe that judging others is sinful. Yet, when one looks at the context and complete picture of what Jesus teaches about judging, it is clear that He has something else in mind. The context shows He is warning against hypocritical judging. **Verse 5**: *Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and*

then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye. The “complete picture” shows Jesus does not forbid judging, but He forbids unrighteous judging (**John 7:24**).

Consider another example, from **Ephesians 2:8-9**: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*.

These two verses are (ab)used to promote “faith only” doctrine and deny that God requires works of obedience for one to be saved.

Yet, what the context of the verse really stresses is that no keeping of the Law (“Old” or “New”) makes one deserving of salvation, because no one (besides Jesus) has kept the Law perfectly. This is not the same as saying that God does not require works in order to receive forgiveness.

If we want to know if “faith only” saves, we must turn to the scripture where God talks about faith only, **James 2:14-26**. There, the Holy Spirit states “*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*” (**verse 17**). He asks “*But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*” (**verse 20**). He further states “*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*” (**verse 24**).

The point is that to understand the “complete picture” of faith and works, we must look at all that the Bible says on the subject. Often, one passage helps us to understand another.

As we approach the Bible, we must remember that there are questions mankind sometimes has that God does not answer. We must be careful not to “fill in the blanks” with our own opinions (cf. **Revelation 22:18**).

Yet, we must also recognize that God has revealed all we need to know about why we are here and who we are to be. The most important questions for each of our lives are answered by the Creator through His Word.

God does not speak verbally to us today, but He does communicate through another means: the Bible. May we study it faithfully.

-Michael Hickox

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For questions, comments, or to request a Bible study, please contact MichaelDHickox@gmail.com