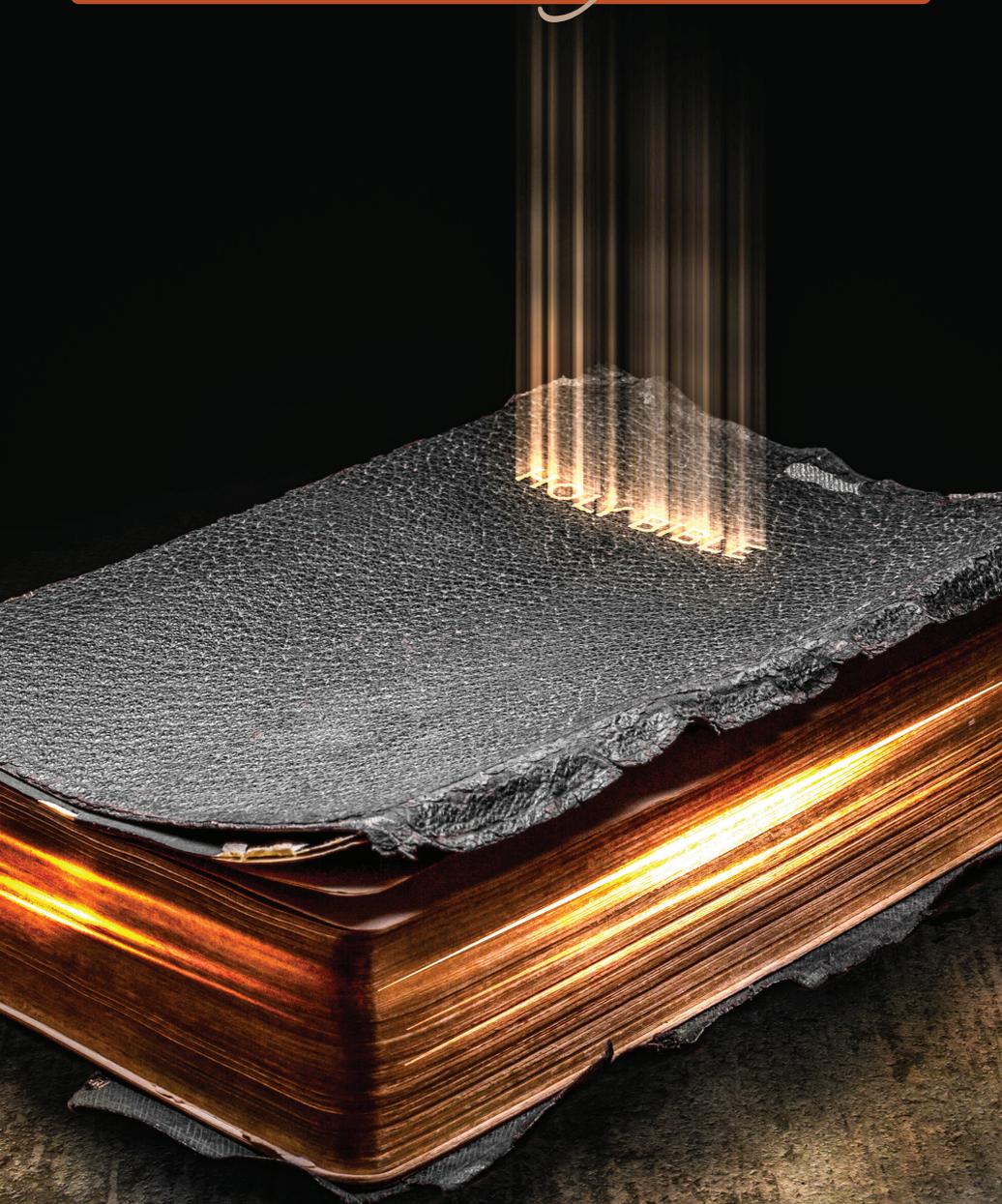


Moments *for* You

Volume 64, Number 1

Theme: The Word



THE BOOK & THE SAVIOR

“The Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

In this glorious section of 2 Timothy 3, the Apostle Paul is exhorting Timothy to follow his example. Paul believes that all Scripture—every passage, every book, every sentence, every word of the Bible from Genesis all the way to Revelation—is profitable for all believers. He calls Timothy to live by the Book, and He’s calling you and me to live by the Book.

Continue in the Book, because that Book gives you the wisdom which leads to salvation. That book tells you the way of salvation. It tells you the plan of God to redeem sinners into His family; to change them, to transform them, to enable them to walk in this world as His people, as an outpost of glory; and one day to enter into the new heavens and the new earth and dwell with Him forever. That’s what this Book tells you. It’s like no other book in the world. It’s the one Book that teaches the way of salvation. Continue in that Book!

It’s not enough to say, “Oh, I believe that Book.” No. If you believe this Book—if you read it and take it to heart—you must have faith in Jesus Christ, because this whole Book is about Jesus Christ. Remember the conversation on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection? Jesus preached the truth of Messiah, the Savior, from the Old Testament: “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:28). In effect, He

said, “This whole Book, this whole Old Testament, is about Me.” Now, if that’s true of the Old Testament, it’s even more true of the New Testament. If you believe in this Book, if you continue in this Book, if you persist in this Book, if you abide in this Book, you will trust in Jesus Christ.

“To Him [Jesus] give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

May God transform us by His truth. —Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III, adapted

CONTINUE IN THE THINGS YOU HAVE LEARNED

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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” (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Imagine a man lost in the wilderness, desiring to get home. As he wanders, he comes upon an overlook. The man excitedly walks to the edge in hopes of seeing where he is and how he can get home. As he is examining his surroundings, he suddenly feels an arm grab him and pull him back. The man watches astonished as the ground he was standing on falls hundreds of feet to the

rocks below. While still in shock, he hears words from behind him, "You have to be careful, it's unstable along the edge." Turning around, the man sees an aged traveler who introduces himself, explaining that he has been exploring the wilderness for years. The explorer offers the man some food and tells him that he can bring him to safety. The man proceeds to thank the explorer for saving his life but explains that he believes he can get home without any help.

The man's response in the story above may seem ridiculous, but it is this exact logic many Christians use every day. While the analogy is not perfect, it demonstrates the flawed relationship that Christians have with the word of God.

We know that God saves us (Ephesians 2:8-9). We also know that He uses the power of His word to save us (Romans 10:17, James 1:18). In fact, Paul addresses this idea in 2 Timothy 3:15 when he refers to the "Holy Scriptures" which can teach what one must know to come to a saving faith in Christ Jesus. God has chosen to use His written word to reveal the gift of salvation through Christ.

Then Paul tells Timothy that since it was through the Scriptures he found salvation, so it should also be through the Scriptures that he lives his life. Doesn't this make sense? Just as the man, saved by the traveler, was foolish to continue in his own way, the Christian, saved through the Scriptures, is foolish to continue leaning on his own understanding.

Paul goes on to explain that the Bible is the very word of God. By saying that Scripture is "inspired" or "God-breathed," Paul teaches that Scripture is the way in which God communicates to His people.

In James 3:13-18 we learn that

there is a difference between worldly wisdom and heavenly wisdom. He describes worldly wisdom as jealous, selfish, and arrogant. On the other hand, he describes heavenly wisdom as pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, and without hypocrisy. The teaching of the world may seem "wise" but it only leads to destruction (Proverbs 14:12). Common teachings today such as: "be true to yourself" or "do what makes you feel happy" sound reasonable. How do we know what is wisdom from the world and what is wisdom from Heaven? The very God of Heaven has revealed His heavenly wisdom through the Bible. For Christians it is easy to fall into worldly wisdom. The only way to combat this is through continuing to find our wisdom from Scripture alone.

Scripture's divine inspiration results, naturally, in profit for the believer. Paul specifically explains that it is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. It teaches us about who God is, and how He desires us to live. We cannot grow in sanctification unless we know the mind of the holy God we wish to be like (1 John 3:3). Furthermore, Scripture alone is adequate for the believer to accomplish every good work the Lord has set before him. Christians do not need any other special revelation from God, and they especially do not need to learn from other religions or ideologies. Scripture works through the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer to teach us all we need to know about how to live a life glorifying God.

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jeremiah 15:16). —Erik Rasmussen

THE WORD IS ENOUGH

Do we really believe that God has given us what we need in this book? Or do we think we have to supplement the Bible with other man-made things? Do we need sociological techniques to do evangelism? Do we need psychology and psychiatry for Christian growth? Do we need extra-biblical signs or miracles for guidance? Is the Bible's teaching adequate for achieving social reform?

The reason I believe this is important is because it is possible to believe that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and yet neglect it in our daily lives because we think it is not great enough for today's demands.

Psalm 19 speaks of the wonderful revelation of God in nature. But then it continues, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (vv 7-8). The revelation of God in *nature* is wonderful, but it is limited. By contrast, the revelation of God in *Scripture* is perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure, sure, precious, sweet and rewarding. Would it be possible for the psalmist to more effectively emphasize the complete sufficiency of God's word?

In Matthew 4 we discover the sufficiency of the word of God in times of temptation, for it was by quotations from Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16, and 6:13 that Jesus withstood Satan. Jesus did not reason with Satan without Scripture. He did not resort to supernatural power or ask God for some special sign or intervention. He knew the Bible, stood on it and used it forcefully.

Second Timothy 3 is the same. Paul is warning his young protégé against the terrible times coming in the last days. They will be days like ours, in which people will be "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy." And if that is not terrible enough, they will be days in which these vices will be found even in the churches. For they will be found among those "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (vv 1-5).

What is Timothy to do when such days come? Surely Paul must have some secret new weapon, some unexpected trick for him to use. No, instead of something new, we find Paul recommending what Timothy has had all along—the word of God—because the Bible is sufficient even for terrible times like these.

— James Montgomery Boice

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT GOD'S WORD?

Too often, Christians reflect on only what they should *believe* about the word of God. But Psalm 119 will not let us stop there. This love poem forces us to consider how we *feel* about the word of God. We see that the psalmist has three fundamental affections for God's word.

FIRST, HE DELIGHTS IN IT

Testimonies, commandments, law—they are all his delight (vv. 24, 47, 70, 77, 143, 174). The psalmist can't help but speak of God's word in the deepest emotive language. The words of Scripture are sweet like honey (v. 103), the joy of his heart (v. 111), and positively wonderful (v. 129). "My soul hath kept Thy testimonies" writes the psalmist; "I love them exceedingly" (v. 167).

But some people say, “I will never love the word of God like this. I’m not an intellectual. I don’t listen to sermons all day. I don’t read all the time. I’m not the sort of person who delights in words.” That may be true as a general rule, but I’ll bet there are times you get passionate about words on a page. We all pay attention when the words we are hearing or reading are of great benefit to us, like a will or an acceptance letter. We can read carefully when the text before us warns of great danger, like instructions on an electrical panel. We delight to read stories about us and about those we love.

Do you see how I’ve just described the Bible? It’s a book with great benefit to us, and one with grave warnings. It is a book about us and those we love. And most of all, it brings us face-to-face with One who possesses all greatness, beauty, and power. The Bible is the greatest story ever told, and those who know it best are usually those who delight in it most.

SECOND, HE DESIRES IT

I count at least six times where the psalmist expresses his longing to keep the commands of God (vv. 5, 10, 17, 20, 40, 131). I count at least fourteen times when he expresses a desire to know and understand the word of God (vv. 18, 19, 27, 29, 33, 34, 35, 64, 66, 73, 124, 125, 135, 169). Our lives are animated by desire. It’s what literally gets us up in the morning. Desire is what we think about, what we dream about, what we pray about. Most of us have strong desires related to marriage, children, grandchildren, jobs, promotions, houses, vacations, revenge, recognition, and on and on. Some desires are good; some are bad. But consider, in that jumble of longings and passions, how strong is your desire to know and

to understand and to keep the word of God? The psalmist so desired the word of God that he considered suffering to be a blessing in his life if it helped him become more obedient to God’s commands (vv. 67–68, 71).

THIRD, HE DEPENDS ON IT

The psalmist is constantly aware of his need for the word of God. “I have stuck unto Thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame” (v. 31). He is desperate for the encouragement found in God’s promises and rules (vv. 50, 52). There are a lot of things we want in life, but there are few things we really need. The word of God is one of those things. In Amos’s day the most severe punishment to fall on the people of God was a “famine ... of hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11). There is no calamity like the silence of God. We cannot know the truth or know ourselves or know God’s ways or know God’s salvation unless God speaks to us. Every true Christian should feel deep in his bones an utter dependence on God’s self-revelation in the Scriptures. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4).

The New Testament teaches that Jesus is the word made flesh, which means (among other things) that all the attributes of God’s verbal revelation (truth, righteousness, power, wisdom, omniscience) will be found in the person of Christ. All that the psalmist believed and felt about the words from God is all that we should feel and believe about the word of God incarnate. Our desire, delight, and dependence on the words of Scripture and our desire, delight, and dependence on Jesus Christ must always rise together. The most mature Christians thrill to hear every love

poem that speaks about the word made flesh and every love poem that celebrates the words of God.

—Condensed from *Taking God at His Word* by Kevin DeYoung.

IN LOVE WITH SCRIPTURE

Could it be true, that the reason we struggle in our Christian walk, is because we are not abiding in the word of God? The difficulty is not the word itself, but our own appetites—or lack of appetite! We read in Psalms chapter 1 about the “blessed man.” We are told that, “His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.”

Here is a man who really loves the Bible! When he has time you will find him reading the Bible and meditating on it. He is reflecting on the law of God. Sometimes when he finishes reading it he will hug it to his chest as his greatest treasure. God’s infallible word can take his breath away. He is intrigued by it day by day, never growing weary of it, but increasingly struck by the evidences of its inspiration, the marvelous accuracy of every word, the complexity of so many of its statements, its stirring concepts, even its remarkable use of prepositions. He is moved by the details of its language and he is quite taken up by Scripture. Here is a man loving the Bible; he is enthused by Scripture. It is a miraculous book that we may yet handle and weigh. It is one of those tangible proofs that God exists, that God is. It is the great evidence for the reality of God. We worship the God who inspired this Book. So the Christian is in love with the word of God.

There is nothing like the power of affection to strengthen desire. A youth may struggle to learn the language of a foreign country in school, but if he falls in love with a girl from

that land, how strong is his appetite for mastering its language. The love of Christ is the strongest constraint to knowing the Scriptures and if we have little desire for the Bible we should ask if we indeed know the Savior or if our first love has been left. Let us begin here, let us be sure that we are in love with the word of God: “O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97).

—Derek Thomas, adapted

A Bible which has frayed edges usually has an owner who doesn’t.

WHY WE DON’T READ THE BIBLE

As believers, one of our greatest dangers is that we can treat the Bible as if it were ordinary. Our passion for the word of God can be depleted over time. Why is it that though we revere the word of God, we no longer read and feed upon it as we once did? Let me suggest reasons why, for some of us, the Scriptures have become less fascinating than they used to be—why the Bible has become a book on our shelf rather than one in our hearts.

For some of us, the Scriptures are too familiar. If you grew up in Sunday School and heard the stories of the Old and New Testaments again and again, you might come to think the Bible is a book that has nothing left to say.

For others, the Bible is too unfamiliar. The reason the Bible stays on the shelf is that it seems to be made up of different and difficult sorts of things. The ancient kingdoms, the middle-eastern nomads and farmers, the Jewish religious sensibilities that make up so much of the Bible are too foreign to this time and place. Yet

that's not true either, of course. The Bible is about our hearts. It's about the God who loves us and orchestrates events to our benefit. It's about sacrifice and community and other things that never change. Though the settings are not familiar to us, the realities they describe are always familiar, because God doesn't change and human beings don't change.

Some will say that the Bible is too distant. We can treat the Bible as a revered, sacred text, but not as something that is relevant in our day and age. It's wonderful, but it's not helpful.

The final, and probably most important, reason that the Bible stays on our shelves, is that it's too powerful. If we hear it, if we approach God in His word, He will tell us things that are so important we have to respond to them. We have to believe and obey what we read. The God who breathed the Scriptures and who makes Himself known in them has plans for us, gifts to give. The more truth there is in our life, the less we're in control. So it's easy to avoid the Scriptures. They are powerful and intrude relentlessly into what is otherwise predictable and under our control.

Whatever the reason, it's too often true of me that I own more Bibles than I read. If you're like me, I want to persuade you that the word of God should become a living book for us again. God's clear word makes sense of life. It should become our passion. We should sing God's praises every day and thank Him every night for such a gift, and we should drink deeply of the truth of the word of God.

—Steve Zeisler, condensed

SUBMISSION TO SCRIPTURE

What is a Christian? Christians can be described from many angles, but we can cover everything by say-

ing: true Christians are people who acknowledge and live under the word of God. They submit without reserve to the word of God written in "the Scripture of Truth" (Daniel 10:21), believing the teaching, trusting the promises, and following the commands. Their eyes are upon the God of the Bible as their Father and the Christ of the Bible as their Savior.

Christians will tell you, if you ask them, that the word of God has both convinced them of sin and assured them of forgiveness. Their consciences, are captive to the word of God, and they aspire, like the psalmist, to have their whole lives brought into line with it. "O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes!" (Psalm 119:5). The promises are before them as they pray, and the precepts are before them as they go about their daily tasks.

Christians know that in addition to the word of God spoken directly to them in the Scriptures, God's word has also gone forth to create, and control, and order things around them; but since the Scriptures tell them that all things work together for their good (Romans 8:28), the thought of God's ordering their circumstances brings them only joy. Christians are independent folks, for they use the word of God to test the various views that are put to them, and they will not touch anything which they are not sure that Scripture sanctions.

Why does this description fit so few of us who profess to be Christians in these days? You will find it profitable to ask your conscience, and let it tell you. —From *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer

The Scriptures were not given for our information, but for our transformation. —D. L. Moody

PASSING IT ON

“Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them” (2 Timothy 3:14).

You do not really believe something until you practice it. James says, “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). The process begins with the mind being instructed, then the heart being fully convinced. Then you practice what you believe.

One of the things that makes believing the Bible much easier is when it comes to us through people we trust. In Timothy’s case, his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, were the channels by which he was taught the word of God. Being of Jewish background, they may have followed the exhortation of Deuteronomy 6, where Moses taught the people how to teach their children. Moses did not say to have a classroom in the home where children were to learn something by rote. Rather, he said to teach them when they get up in the morning, when they sit down at mealtime, and when they go to bed at night. Those are the teachable moments. Use the experiences of a young child’s day to reflect truth from the Scriptures that will lock itself into their hearts. The apostle Paul also made a powerful impact upon Timothy! He never forgot what he had learned, partly because it came through loved ones he deeply respected, those who had answers to the difficulties and problems of life.

The second factor is that this came to Timothy at a very early age. “From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures,” Paul says. Parents should not miss that emphasis. It indicates that childhood is a wonderful time

to get the truth of the Scriptures into a young person’s heart. As a young boy, ten or eleven years old, I was given many memory verses in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School that I committed to memory. I remember those verses yet today. What a wonderful thing to have learned from early childhood the truth of the word of God through those most precious and trusted. —Ray Stedman, condensed

SCRIPTURAL DISCIPLING

It is crucial to be purposefully in the word of God with those you choose to intentionally disciple. When I say *intentionally disciple*, I mean that you choose to have them in your life on a frequent and personal level. You choose to be interrupted and disrupted by these individuals. Perhaps your disciples are people you work alongside in the office, or fellow students on campus. They could be family members, neighborhood friends, or spiritually-sensitive souls you meet at the gym.

When we are discipling someone, we must dive into the word of God together—framing life by what is eternal, asking questions on what Jesus said, explaining God’s big story, discussing its implications on our daily life, and challenging our status quo with the Scriptures. As we do so, we learn the voice of God, the mind of God, the heart of God, and the character of God. Whether this takes place in an organized Bible study or by a gentle infiltration of God’s word into conversations, if we truly care for souls we will point them to the grace and truth found in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16).

—Adapted from *What If Jesus Meant What He Said?* by Nate Bramsen