



BETHEL  
PRESBYTERIAN

# MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## A Theology of the Word of God

Last week we examined Deuteronomy 29 where we saw the glorious stewardship that we have received from God in the form of His word. What a contrast, on a day-to-day basis, we spend so much of our lives being worried and bothered about things we can't control:

- The economy.
- The future.
- Relationships.
- Our troubled world.

Now undoubtedly there are built in responsibilities with some of the things I just mentioned, but ultimately they rest with God. Indeed! The calling of God is to concern ourselves with that which literally rests in our hands, specifically the word of God. Moses told the people of God,

Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things [concerning the future] belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed [the word] belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

And that raises the question: What have we got when it comes to this gift?

If we were soldiers and were given a new weapon, we'd want to examine it, study it, and try it. We'd want to come to understand it. So today we learn that the word of God has been entrusted to us. So what do we have when it comes to this gift?

The passage at which we are looking answers this question. Paul is bringing his treatment of the nature, content, and scope of the gospel to a close.

- In Romans 1, Paul demonstrates that the Gentile without Christ stands condemned before God.
- In Romans 2, he argues the same for the Jew. Without Christ, they have no hope.
- In Romans 3, he summarizes his teaching by asserting that ALL stand guilty before God and so ALL are in need of the cleansing blood of Christ.
- In Romans 4, he then transitions into a defense of his teaching from the OT. What he has been teaching is true when it comes to two of the most important OT characters in Judaism: David and Abraham.

With this, Paul brings his treatment on the Old Testament to a close in which he essentially gives us A Theology of the Word. If God's teaching to Abraham or David can be quoted in an argument concerning the nature of the gospel today, then how are we to take God's word? What is the focus of the teaching of God's word? And how applicable ought it to be in our lives?

### *God's Word is Timeless*

Paul answers these questions in Romans 4. Notice first that when it comes to God's word, it is timeless.

Romans 4:23-24, "not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him (not in reference [to Abraham] only was Gen. 15:6 written that God's righteousness was given to Abraham) but for our sake also."

This is an important truth, and a theme that pervades Scripture. What is written in the Word of God was written to a specific people/person. Yet, because of its Author and the fact that its Author is omniscient, Scripture is understood as having been written for and to us as well!

Psalms 78:5-7, "For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel [this is God's word], which He commanded our fathers, that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children, that they should put their confidence in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments."

This principle was laid down in the Old Testament. The word of God which was given to a certain people was nevertheless to be passed along to the next generation with the result that what was written to a previous generation was written for all generations! And this principle we see in the New Testament as well.

Romans 15:4, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

And thus, it is not just that what is written in God's word is informative and edifying to those who read it. Rather, in the truest possible sense, much of what is written in God's word is to be understood as having been written to us! God's word is a Divinely inspired love letter to all God's people!

1 Corinthians 9:9-10, "For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle the ox while he is

threshing.' God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written..."

1 Corinthians 10:11, "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

And that is why Paul says here, "Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also..." See, because of the TIMELESS Nature of God's word, much of what was written of Abraham, about Abraham, and to Abraham is understood as having been written to and for us!

So we conclude from this text a very important truth: God's Word transcends time! Though it was written for a specific purpose to a specific people, and therefore must be interpreted in its original, historical context it is nevertheless by its inspiration is intended for us as well!

In other words, I can read God's Word, and provided that

- I understand what it meant to its historically intended recipient- and this takes diligent study and work.
- It was not intended solely for its original recipient (e.g. Matthew 1:21; John 14, 16).
- I can conclude that what is promised, commanded, or declared belongs also to me!

See, God's Word is TIMELESS! As this is true, I hope you see the obvious implication. We live in an age which has sought to "mysticize" religion. Recall in Scripture that there really are only two religions:

- Religion #1: Those which would seek to ascend up to God via a variety of sundry mediums...
  - Architecture.
  - Religious rites and sacrifices.
  - Music.
  - In some places, drugs, alcohol, and the like.
- Religion #2: Those which understand that God has condescended to man and so deigns to fellowship with us through His Son.

The first is wholly subjective. The latter is wholly objective. Now it would be nice to say that throughout Redemptive History these two religions have remained distinct, but we can't. The history of God's Old Testament people reveals the constant mixture of the two religions such that at many times, the Old Testament Jew can be found seeking to ascend to God via the ritual and sacrifices of Baal.

In the New Testament we find this in Ephesus. Paul told the Ephesians:

Ephesians 5:18: "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."

He was NOT giving a theological commentary on drinking. In Ephesus, the primary pagan deity of the mystery religions was Bacchus, the god of wine. As such, we understand that Paul is addressing the manner and means of worship. It is not about filling yourself with a drug, losing control of your faculties, and thereby ascending unto God. Rather it is about worshipping via the Holy Spirit as He fills us/condescends to us and so teaches us in His word.

Sadly the early church didn't learn this. By the Reformation Rome had so corrupted the worship of God that it

resembled more the mystery religions of the ancient near east than that which is taught in Scripture.

- Worship had become an experience.
- Via the architecture, incense, music, and mass the worshipper ascended into the presence of God!

And today the push still is being made.

- *Come to our church and NOT worship Jesus, BUT experience Jesus!*
- *Vibrant Christianity transcends the dead religion of orthodoxy to embrace the glorious and ever changing experience of communing with God.*

In this context the emphasis today, which I know you are well-aware of, is on an independent and personalized relationship with God whereby the Lord speaks to the individual in his heart. Child of God, consider Paul's first point — it will radically change your life. When it comes to the objective word of God, the Bible, it is timeless.

In other words, we do not need nor should we ever seek a personal message or impression from God. Such is what is found in the many mystery religions of this world, but not in Christianity. Because the word of God is timeless, we don't need a private message from the Lord!

### *God's Word is Particular*

Now as amazing as this is, it gets even better; the word of God is particular.

Romans 4:23-24a, "Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned..."

The word of God is written only for "our sake", to whom God's righteousness will one day — in the day of judgment — be openly credited or reckoned. In other words, the Word of God is not written for all people, in all places, at all times. Rather, it was written for a particular people!

And who are these people?

Romans 4:24b, "as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."

The one who is...

- Trusting God to save them.
- Relying upon the work of Christ on the cross as the basis upon which they stand before God.
- Saved on account of Christ.

It is this one to whom God has given His word. As such, not all should consider the word of God as a love letter written to them, ONLY THE CHILD OF GOD! Again...

2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God [the Christian] may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

This is not to say that the non-Christian shouldn't read the word of God and heed it, nor that the non-Christian can't benefit from reading God's word or hearing it preached, provided that the Spirit of God is working. Rather, it is to say that God's word was written with a specific people in mind- the Redeemed!

Romans 15:4, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

And so we learn from this text that the word of God was written for a specific people, those who rest upon the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. And thus we see that God's word is not only Timeless, but it is also written with a specific people in mind: It is Particular. And this only makes sense, B.B. Warfield was correct in saying that "General Revelation is given to man as man, without reference to the fall. Special Revelation (God's Word) is given to man as sinner!"<sup>1</sup>

Now, looking at the whole of fallen mankind this only makes sense. Who is it that God helps? Who is it that God aids? The Child of God, the one on whom God has set His love.

Hebrews 13:5-6, "Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,' so that we confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?'"

Hebrews 2:16, "For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham."

Isaiah 40:30-31, "Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up *with* wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary."

With this being the case, it should not shock us that the word of God, whose purpose is the aid and benefit of the sinner in order that they might know God, is intended for a particular people: The Child of God. And so today, if you are a child of God it can be said in the truest possible sense, "You possess in your hands this morning a Love Letter from God.

- Written by His hand."
- Sealed by His blood."
- Addressed specifically to you!"

So how about it? Does this make you feel special?

It should! When Paul described the benefit of being a child of God he wrote these words.

Romans 3:1-2, "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God."

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<sup>1</sup> B. B. Warfield paraphrased from a quote in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*.

Brothers and Sisters! Do you understand the implication of this verse? What are the privileges of the Jew, the child of God on whom God had set His love?

Of all the things Paul could have referenced, he mentions here, first and foremost, God's Word! Truly one of the chief blessings we have received in Christ is the word of God!

Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

And this therefore raises an important question: "Do you read this love letter?" In an age in which even the body of Christ is seeking something more, something better, it is imperative that we wake up and...

- Stop seeking something more from God, and...
- Start using what we already have been given in Christ: God's Word!

Indeed! May God give us the grace to entrust to God the secret things, and with gratitude and the knowledge of how privileged we are to have God's word open before us, let us dive into the study of this glorious deposit. And that brings us to the final point that we derive from this passage, that God's word is priceless.

### *God's Word is Priceless*

Romans 4:25, "He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification."

This is a creedal statement of the early church given to summarize the teaching that Paul has been presenting in Romans 1-4. Notice this:

- He who was delivered up because of our transgression. This is a judicial term; this has reference to the commitment of a criminal to his punishment. As such, Christ was delivered up to serve the sentence of death, the sentence that OUR sin deserved!
- And was raised because of our justification. This is in reference to that great event that testified to the deity of Christ, the Resurrection (Romans 1:3-4). Had Jesus not risen it would have been evident that He was not WHO He claimed to be, and thus the saving benefits that His advent was said to have secured would have perished with Him. Yet, because of His resurrection the promised blessings of the Cross-work are obtained, and with them, justification.

Now while this creedal statement, addressing the death and resurrection of Christ, summarizes the teaching that Paul presented to the Roman's, we note in this context that it is also the grand theme of Scripture which is why Paul states it here.

John 5:39-40: "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me..."

The grand theme of Scripture is Jesus Christ!

Luke 24:27, "And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things

concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”

As such we see the priceless character of Scripture. Its subject matter revolves around the greatest story ever proclaimed: the Good News of Jesus Christ’s Sacrificial Death and Resurrection! And that is why the word of God is not like the billions and billions of words written and strung together which fill the millions of books accessible to us today. Rather, the word of God has been correctly called the “Holy Bible” because its focus and subject is Jesus Christ!

And thus, what we possess in our hands this morning is no ordinary book. Rather, it is the PRICELESS Word of God! Look again at Romans 4:25.

Romans 4:25, “He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.”

Where else can you go to read these words and hear this message? No place other than the word of God!

The Word of God is Priceless! As a TIMELESS love letter written to a PARTICULAR people, it contains the greatest story ever told: the sacrificial life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And all of this is why it is no understatement to call the word of God, “The Word of Life!”

Accordingly we must seek from this book nothing less than a taste of “the word of Life” every time we read it. The word was given to us that we might know how to live as Kingdom Citizens. However if we confine our study of the word simply to ethics, we not only will sabotage our growth in grace, but we will miss THE point of the entire book, Christ and Him crucified.

We must begin here, what does this passage teach me about God? His Kingdom? His regency and rule? What does this passage teach me about the Savior? See we are not after learning esoteric truths about God or the word. We are after Christ! Then once we’ve gazed upon the Lord and there been refreshed by His consolations, we then ask, “How shall we then live?”

The two questions not only are essential and inseparable, but their order must never be reversed. This book, on every page, contains the most glorious message man could ever hear. And it is this message which alone must compel us and so shape the way we live.

Why am I making such an issue here?

For so many in the church, personal devotions are about...

- Learning the content of the Bible.
- Uncovering its secret and hidden truths. \*\*and some even\*\*
- Seeking to have an encounter with God.

Our goal in Bible reading ought to be one and the same as for why the word was written...

John 20:30-31, “Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

We must come to the word of God that faith in Christ either might be engendered or strengthened. \*\*and then\*\* We must come to the word of God that in believing we might live the life that has been granted us in Christ. That's the end!

Now in the process

- Will your theology become crisp?
- Will you plunge deep into the word of God?
- Will you learn great and glorious truths about man, this world, and the like?

No question! Yet this is not the telos! The telos is knowing Christ and living Christ! Toward that end, Henry Law wrote speaking of God's word:

“Do not close the volume without inquiring: Is sin more hateful to me? Is the world more worthless in my estimation? Is the flesh more treacherous in my sight? Is Jesus brought nearer to my adoring soul? Is my heart won to more entire devotedness? Am I more resolute to live for Him who died for me?”<sup>2</sup>  
(*The Raven*, 1869)

Child of God, you ask and answer these questions of God's word, and you'll become a faithful student of this Timeless, Particular, Priceless book!

### **About Bethel Presbyterian Church**

*The Bethel Presbyterian Church Ministry of the Word* is published regularly. It is distributed via the internet.

### **VISIT US WHEN IN Broomfield, COLORADO**

Feel free to visit Bethel Presbyterian Church when in Broomfield, Colorado. Bethel Presbyterian Church meets at Broomfield High School, Eagle (10<sup>th</sup> Street) and Main, Broomfield, Colorado. The telephone number of the church is 303-469-6912. The worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. each Sunday. Bethel Presbyterian Church is a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

All our sermons can be accessed via the World Wide Web. The recording for this sermon (the last few minutes were not recorded because of a power outage during the sermon) and these notes can be found at [The Blessing of Scripture](#). The web address for all sermons at Bethel Presbyterian Church can be found out as follows: <http://bethelpresbyterian.sermonaudio.com>

### **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on August 16, 2009. Greg is the preacher at Bethel Presbyterian Church.

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Law, *The Raven*, 1869