



BETHEL
PRESBYTERIAN

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Volume 14 Issue 38

September 20, 2015

The Word of God, Part 2

The word “holy” means “set apart,” “different,” or “other.” That is why when the Seraphim who have absolutely no sin stand before God, they are struck NOT on account of His moral purity (for they themselves are morally pure), BUT on account of His otherness; the fact He is totally different, set apart, and greater than their ability to comprehend.

Isaiah 6:3, “And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’”

Holiness speaks of uniqueness and otherness! In the Bible we read about...

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|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| a) Holy people,
Deuteronomy 28:9. | j) Holy gifts, Leviticus 22:3ff. | Zechariah 2:13. |
| b) A holy nation,
Exodus 19:6. | k) Holy utensils, 1 Kings 8:4. | y) Holy messengers,
Mark 8:38. |
| c) Holy ground, Exodus
3:5. | l) A holy temple, 1 Chronicles
29:3. | z) Holy prophets,
Luke 1:70. |
| d) A holy day,
Nehemiah 10:31. | m) A holy mountain, Psalm 2:6. | aa) Holy offspring,
Luke 1:35. |
| e) A holy assembly,
Exodus 12:16. | n) Holy Spirit, Psalm 51:11. | bb) A holy kiss, 1
Corinthians 16:20. |
| f) Holy men, Exodus
22:31. | o) Holy land, Psalm 78:54. | cc) Holy hands, 1
Timothy 2:8. |
| g) A holy place, Exodus
29:30-31. | p) Holy attire, Psalm 96:9. | dd) A holy calling, 2
Timothy 1:9. |
| h) Holy food, Exodus
29:34. | q) A holy name, Psalm 103:1. | ee) Holy brethren,
Hebrews 3:1. |
| i) Holy garments,
Exodus 35:21. | r) A holy city, Isaiah 52:1. | ff) A holy
commandment, 2
Peter 2:21. |
| | s) A holy arm, Isaiah 52:10. | |
| | t) A holy allotment, Ezekiel
45:7. | |
| | u) Holy chambers, Ezekiel
46:19. | |
| | v) A holy war, Micah 3:5. | |
| | w) Holy meat, Haggai 2:12. | |
| | x) A holy habitation, | |

Each of the items or persons in the Bible modified by the word “holy” is somehow different from their ordinary counterpart in this world. And so...

- A holy day is different from an ordinary day! Why? Because it is devoted exclusively to God!
- A holy temple is different from any other temple on this earth because of its purpose!
- A holy garment is unique and therefore not like any other piece of clothing we might wear!

Because they are associated with the Lord or set apart for the exclusive service of the Lord, anything marked as “holy” has a higher function, purpose, calling, and use!

In many of our hands, we hold a book which says, “HOLY Bible.” Now why do you suppose this book got that title? It is because the book in your hands is recognized as different from any other book you will ever own or read! And 1 Thessalonians 2:13-15 bears this out. Here Paul begins his second of two thanksgivings, the first being the fidelity of the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:2) and now he is thankful for the ministry of God’s word.

Concerning this ministry, we have seen that its understanding is according to the grace of God which enables our minds to comprehend the truth. Secondly the purpose of God’s word is to present the whole man complete in Christ.

The Essence of God's Word v. 13c.

1 Thessalonians 2:13c, "And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God..."

We just read something amazing... which most of us probably missed. Think about the gift of speech. No other created being on this earth possesses this gift. Lower creatures don't converse; at best, they signal. Honking my horn in traffic doesn't constitute a conversation, just a warning of some sort; either that "I'm here" or "I'm mad" or "you did something wrong." Yet as image bearers, God gave us an incredible gift called speech! For example take the simple verse, "Ode to a Violin."

Six lessons/In six days/I leave you on a bench/Wounded!

Twelve words communicate a lot! Speech is an incredible gift which we take for granted.

Yet forget speech; what about the gift of words? Words are very powerful. One can utter a simple word and things happen. For example; I can yell, "Help!", and people will come running. Or I can string together a series of words and my world around me can change while I sit in a chair and do nothing:

- "Daughter, fetch my slippers."
- "Son, clean the floor."

What comes to mind with these phrases:

- Orange sunrise.
- Crystal clear Mountain Lake.

By uttering a couple of words, I can change your attitude, outlook, focus... even your mood! Again, animals and insects don't have this power. They are biological computers which function according to their programming. We are image bearers with the gift of words!

We see it in God; yet with Him we have to factor in His omnipotence! In Genesis 1, God speaks a word and the world is formed! Language is power! And that is why when we read that Jesus is the "word of God incarnate" (John 1:1, 14), we understand that while this statement is huge, it nevertheless indicates nothing less than Jesus is the Almighty Power of our Infinite God, Incarnate! Accordingly, Paul wrote this in 2 Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 1:20, "For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes!"

Christ is the fulfillment of every promise God has ever made to you! Christ is the power of God, the ability of God! He is the Living Word of God!

With this background, consider a third attribute that Paul here ascribes to the Bible, it is nothing less than “God’s Word!”

1 Thessalonians 2:13c, “...you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God!”

Did you get that? Do you see the profundity of this statement? Or again, have you grown numb because you share this facet of God’s character- speech? This is God’s Word! A word from me may cause the kitchen to be clean. Your word perhaps can cause a field of wheat to be harvested. The word of the king may change the national borders. Yet, amazingly and shockingly, this is God’s Word which unlike our word is NOT limited or bound by anything other than God Himself! In fact, at one point in his ministry Paul took this truth head-on when he wrote 2 Timothy.

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 may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

This text tells us that if you want to grow as a man or woman of God, it is going to be by “the word of God.” How is that so? It is because “all scripture is inspired by God.”

The Greek word rendered “inspired” literally means, “The breath of God” or “God breathed.” Now from this passage many have falsely deduced (from the English or Latin translation) the MANNER or HOW this can be said to be God’s word; it is “INspired... breathed INTO by God.” But that is NOT what is being taught here.

The word “inspired” is the Greek for “breath of God” which in the Bible is an incredibly significant phrase. For example, it was by “the breath of God” that these things:

- a) The world was created, 2 Samuel 22:14.
- b) Stars were flung into place, Psalm 33:6.
- c) A lump of dirt became a living being, Job 32:8; Isaiah 42:5.
- d) Man’s life is sustained and or ended, Job 34:14; Isaiah 40:7.
- e) The passing of the seasons is determined, Job 37:10.
- f) God’s will for man is brought to pass, Job 4:9.
- g) The wicked perish, Isaiah 11:4.
- h) Judgment is executed on this earth, Isaiah 30:32; 33:11.
- i) The sea was parted in the Exodus, Exodus 15:8.
- j) Peoples are saved, Ezekiel 37:5ff.

Isaiah 30:27a, 28b, "...His breath is like an overflowing torrent... to shake the nations back and forth in a sieve."

Truly, the "breath of God" in Scripture is an assertion of God's almighty power! Accordingly, when Paul declared that "all scripture" is the product of the Divine breath (is "God-breathed") he asserts with as much energy as could be employed by human language at the time that Scripture is the exclusive product of a Divine operation. No wonder why it is more reliable than experience (cf. 2 Peter 1:18-19)!

And so in our lap this day is nothing less than "the word of God!" And so the power of God, the authority of God, the vehicle of God by which the Lord brings to pass His will for His people!

Romans 1:16a, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..."

This is incredible! We can speak a series of words and a person can be freed from their bondage to Satan if they will believe! In Romans 12:2, Paul exhorted us, "...be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." We can believe/rely upon a series of words and our entire Christian life can be transformed!

Jeremiah 23:29, "Is not My word like fire?" declares the Lord, 'and like a hammer which shatters a rock?'"

We can speak God's word and a hard heart can be shattered to submission and love to God!

Now don't forget the first point of this passage, the words of this book are not inherently powerful. But when the reading of God's word is accompanied by the enabling grace of God, the words of this book become the words of life! Furthermore note how the Lord grows the child of God in His word. It usually is "line upon, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:13). With this we therefore do NOT anticipate quick, radical changes in our life as we are in God's word, but a slow, steady, at times imperceptible growth!

With this we behold a third characteristic of the Bible: It is nothing less than God's Word and so a Vehicle of His almighty authority and power!

And so again I ask: do you understand the treasure that rests in your lap this day! It is nothing less than that by which God brings to pass His perfect, immutable will for you, me, and His Kingdom! This truly is a HOLY Bible- no other book can boast of this!

And yet of all the books in this world, the Bible is one of the most neglected! Oh yes, it

continues to top the charts as the most frequently sold book in the US. But sadly, it rarely is read, and even more so it rarely is followed.

When's the last time YOU spent time in God's word? When's the last time you endeavored to submit your life to it? No wonder at times we live in fear? No wonder at times we struggle with this thing called life? We hold in our hands absolute truth. If we would learn it and live in light of it, we would reap a life of certainty, confidence, and conviction! What a difference that would make at this time of uncertainty.

And yet there is more. Notice a fourth attribute of God's Word, its work.

1 Thessalonians 2:13, "And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."

The word for "performs its work" in this passage is ἐνεργέω (*energeō*) from which we get the word "energy." It is NOT a direct word reflecting a one-to-one correspondence between a mover and the thing moved, BUT an indirect word speaking of the secondary means by which something is brought to pass. And so in Scripture it is used in reference to God and the various and sundry means by which the Lord brings His will to pass. For example:

- In Galatians 2:8, we read that it was through Peter and Paul that God brought about His work. The word used here is ἐνεργέω (*energeō*).
- In Galatians 3:5, we read that working through the apostles God gives force to their ministry. Again, the word used here is ἐνεργέω (*energeō*).
- ἐνεργέω (*energeō*) is used of a door/opportunity for work in 1 Corinthians 16:9.
- In Philemon 6, it is used of the secondary means of the "sharing of faith" by which God brings to pass His Kingdom will.

That brothers and sisters is another facet of God's word according to this text! It is a vehicle by which God normatively brings to pass His work and will in the lives of His people. G. K. Beale puts it this way:

The same word for work (*energeō*) in 2:13 is used elsewhere of God working in his people through the Spirit to bring about what pleases him (1 Corinthians 12:6, 11; see also Ephesians 3:16–20). (Beale, 2003, p. 80)

Dr. John MacArthur observed:

The verb rendered performs its work means to work effectively, efficiently, and

productively on a supernatural (divine) level. (MacArthur, 2002, p. 58)

Hebrews 4:12: “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

Do you know what God’s word will do in your life? It will open you up before the Lord and expose the inner part of your heart. This sounds painful, and it is! Yet, it won’t leave you there. Rather, it will refashion you into the image of Christ! Of this we can most definitely be sure.

Isaiah 55:10-11, “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.”

From the Reformation onward, passages like this led many to formulate a doctrine called “The Means of Grace.” By this we mean that there are predictable vehicles by which and through which God imparts His grace to the saint and sinner alike.

Now in theology for something to be labeled “A Means of Grace” it has two characteristics:

1. A command of God intended for all His people and
2. A normative means by which God gives forth His grace. That is why “suffering” isn’t a means of grace; God does not command all people in Scripture to go out and suffer. However God does command us to read His word, to be in it, and so to be bound by it! THIS IS THE FIRST QUALIFICATION (cf. 1 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17). And secondly, God’s word, as we see in our text this morning, is a vehicle of grace by which God brings about His will for His people.

The fourth thing we learn here about the word of God is that it is a normative means by which God brings about His Kingdom Work! And so, if you look at Scripture as a whole you will note that the Holy Spirit, working by and with the word of God, will:

- Sanctify the child of God, John 17:17.
- Mature them, 1 Peter 2:2.
- Free the child of God from any and all bondage, John 8:31–32.
- Perfect them, 2 Timothy 3:16–17.
- Counsel them, Psalm 119:24.
- Build them up, Acts 20:32.
- Ensure their spiritual success, Joshua 1:8–9; Psalm 1:2–3.

- Give them hope by which to live, Psalm 119:147; Acts 20:32.

All of this is the direct working of the word of God in our lives!

That is why we as individuals and families ought to be consumed with the learning of this, God's word! One commentator observed that because of the nature of how God works through His Word, though Paul was now absent from Thessalonica, nevertheless spiritual fruit would continue to be reaped on account of the Spirit of God working by and with the word!

And such is our confidence today when it comes to God's word. Someday you may be bereft of the body life of the church- which is a serious thing (cf. Hebrews 3:12-13). Someday you may have a child rebel against Christ and so go it alone for a time! Yet regardless of where you are or what you are doing, if you know the word of God it will continue to "perform its work in you who believe!"

That is why one of the greatest things any leader could give to his people is the word of God; that is, the practice of daily feasting on it! Listen to the final charge Paul gave the Ephesians elders:

Acts 20:32, "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

May God give us all the grace to receive this commendation personally, and so cultivate in our lives the daily habit of feeding on God's word!

Bibliography

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