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A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php

THE WORD OF GOD

W. FRASER NAISMITH

A young man apprenticed to a firm of architects, and having been brought up in a home where the Word of God was read and revered, came to look upon the Holy Scriptures as a wonderful temple of magnificence. This structure had thirty-nine blocks of solid granite, broadening out to a substantial base in the Book of Genesis—these were the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament: and twenty-seven blocks of alabaster towering to a lofty dome in the Book of Revelation—corresponding to the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. This young man was ultimately won for the Lord, and learning that ‘after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise:’ Eph. 1:13; and realising that the Holy Spirit had come to guide into all truth—John 16:13; he allowed the Guide to direct him through this monumental structure.

The Guide took him up the portico—the Book of Genesis—and led him into the Art Galleries—the Pentateuch, where he saw the pictures of the men of faith such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Joshua.

From the Art Galleries his Guide took him into the Armoury, where, in the Book of Judges, he saw the strange weapons used by Ehud—that dagger by which he slew Eglon King of Moab—the pitcher, lamp and trumpet used by Gideon against the Midianites; and the jaw bone of an ass by which Samson slew a thousand Philistines.

The adjoining room was the Registry Room where, in the books of Kings and Chronicles, the registers of the Kings of Israel and Judah and the register of the sons of Aaron were carefully examined.

Under the direction of the Guide he came to the Music Chamber—the Book of Psalms—there his Guide struck one touching minor chord in Psalm 42 verse 11 ‘Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God’. Then changing from the minor he struck a majestic major chord in Psalm 24:7 ‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in’.

The Guide directed his steps to the Business Chamber where he soon discovered that 'a false balance is an abomination unto the Lord: but a just weight is His delight'. This he found in the Book of Proverbs—ch. 11 v. 1.

The next place of interest was the Chapel—the Book of Ecclesiastes, which he entered to listen to the preacher. The dissertation on things under the sun was most entrancing; and after careful research the preacher said 'All is vanity and vexation of spirit'.

Leaving the Chapel the Guide led him into the Conservatory—the Book of the Song of Solomon—the air was redolent with the perfume of the many flowers. Amongst this gorgeous display there were two flowers which appealed more than all others.—The Rose of Sharon and The Lily of the Valleys shed their fragrance throughout the place; and one would fain have remained in this delectable spot, but as there were numerous other rooms to visit the Guide directed his steps to a large room somewhat differently furnished.

This room was the Observatory—the Prophetic books—where on a large table were displayed numerous telescopes; some large and some small: the large ones were the major prophets and the small ones were the minor prophets. Through whichever telescope he looked he could see one star of outstanding brilliance—The Star of Bethlehem.

Ascending the stairs his Guide brought him into the Audience Chamber—the Gospels—where he held audience with the proprietor. He spoke to him with the dignity of a King in Matthew's Gospel; while in Mark's Gospel the words were those of a humble and obedient Servant. In Luke's Gospel the tones were those of a sympathetic suffering Man of Sorrows; and in John's Gospel He spoke with the majesty of the Son of God.

Adjoining the Audience Chamber there was situated the Executive Chamber where His Guide was busily engaged as the Executor of the Godhead: this is the Book of Acts.

Peering into the Writing Room he viewed Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude all busy writing their epistles—these are the epistles of the New Testament.

Finally he was ushered into the Throne Room—the Book of

Revelation. There he beheld 'the Lamb in the midst of the throne' with an adoring throng lauding Him. This same blessed Person was seen as 'the Word of God' coming forth to subjugate all His foes and as 'The Bright and Morning Star' about to usher in a Day that shall never know a sunset.

The visit had proved a fascinating one and this young man determined that in the very near future he would pay another visit to this magnificent temple and examine each room more minutely.

Coming from the interior of the building this young man gazed at the outside and found numerous marks upon it. These had been made by the fires of intolerance; by the pick-axe of speculation; by the gunpowder of evolution; and by the hammer blows of higher criticism. Looking down on the ground there were strewn about the weapons that had been used against this magnificent temple: no weapon that is formed against it shall prosper! 'The Word of our God shall stand for ever'.

'Last eve I passed beside the blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then looking down, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers worn with use in former time.

"How many anvils have you used?" said I,
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"
"Just one!" said he, and then, with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

'Just so! I thought, the anvil of God's Word
For ages sceptic blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone!'

Paul emphasises the profound value of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3: 15-17; 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable . . . that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works'. The word of God is an absolute essential in a *fivefold* manner at least, and even more. Let us note these for our present study.

To begin with, the Word of God is

Essential for Eternal Life

Our blessed Lord stated 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life'. (John 6:63). This One, who is Himself Life, speaks the words of eternal life: (John 6:68). To hear His word, and believe on Him that sent Him, is to be in the enjoyment of eternal life: (John 5:24).

When Peter wrote his first epistle he stated in chapter 1 verse 23 'being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever'. The Word of God is the seed of our life. New birth is effected within us by the Word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit of God. Man, spiritually dead in trespasses and in sins, is in need of new life. There is only One who can bestow life and He invites all to come and receive from Him a draught of living water, without money and without price. New birth is an absolute necessity if one has to enjoy the favour of a holy God and the companionship of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout eternity. There is a remarkable dissertation on new birth given in John chapter 3 by the greatest of all teachers. Nicodemus came for an interview with the Lord Jesus Christ one night; and to him Christ said 'Ye must be born again'. Even though he was a teacher of Israel he was obviously in ignorance of this great and precious truth. The Old Testament had given allusions to this truth; yet this learned theologian was ignorant of such teaching. In Jno. 3:5 Christ indicated to Nicodemus 'Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'.

To be born of water is to be born by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. Water has numerous meanings in scripture, and the context alone can determine the significance of the term used. In John 3 water obviously means the Word of God. The Holy Spirit delights to take it and use it to convict of sin, and bring the sinner into the assurance of life through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul affirmed to the Romans in chapter 10 verse 17 that 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.' The light of divine truth shone into our troubled consciences and

souls and produced light and life. The same apostle stated in Eph. 5:26 'that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.' He uses water here as a symbol of the word; and we feel justified to apply the same principle in interpreting John chapter 3. The Lord Himself in that memorable prayer of John 17 when speaking about His disciples requested 'that the Father would "sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth".' Then, secondly, the Word of God is

Essential for a Holy Life

The writer to the Hebrews in ch. 12 v. 41 reminds us that we should 'follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord'. God desires that His people should bear the characteristic features which commend themselves to Him who is holy. Of our own selves such a product is impossible; but provision is made through the Word of God, as the Psalmist states in Ps. 119:9. He asks the question 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?' Then he proceeds to answer his question by saying 'by taking heed thereto according to thy word'. The word for 'young man' is the word which suggests one growing; and can be translated 'youth', and would apply to both male and female. The word 'cleanse' suggests 'making clear' or 'translucent'. Youth desiring to make translucent the way can do so by taking heed to the Word of God. The road may be rough over briar and root and the way may be long as the dark shadows fall across the pathway; but the Psalmist in the same Psalm verse 105 reminds us 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path'. The picture is that of a lantern bound to the ankle—'a lamp to my feet'—so that it sheds its beams along the pathway making the next step visible—'a light unto my path'. We should readily stumble and fall and bring dishonour on that worthy name of our adorable Lord had we not the Word of God as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. The way is irradiated by the light of divine truth enabling us to walk in a manner well pleasing to God. Thus the Word of God enables us to live a holy life in which God can find pleasure. How good it is to be in that position described by Isaiah in chapter 30 verse 21—'Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying This is the way,

walk ye in it'. The counsel of the Word of God is unerring, and when heeded our lives shall be lived in holiness—without which no man shall see the Lord. Again the Word of God is

Essential for a Happy Life

The Lord Jesus Christ speaks in Jno. 15:11 thus "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full". His joy was ever doing the will of the Father. Prophetically He said 'I delight to do Thy will, O! my God; yea, thy law is within my heart'. In His prayer of John 17:13 Christ said 'these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves'. The words of our adorable Lord produce a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. The prophet Jeremiah assures us of this when he intimates—"Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was to me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart' (Ch. 15:16). Our privilege is to search in the Word of God as for hid treasure; and when we have unearthed the valuable nuggets of truth which encourage towards a joyous life, we feel recompensed. When we make the Word of God the food of our souls then we experience an inward satisfaction. If the Word of God is the man of our counsel then our steps shall not slip; but our ways will be directed. Then we can climax our study with the assurance that the Word of God is

Essential for a Victorious Life

A careful reader of Ephesians will have noticed that much is said about our warfare in the closing chapter of that epistle. Our foes are the princes and marshalls of the darkness of this world; and a 'self' which rivals Christ in the heart. The conflict is with a heart that loves the things against which we strive. There has been provided a full panoply and it is ours to contest every inch of the ground. There are unseen foes in the heavenly places, and our weapons are not carnal but mighty. The weapon of defence is the shield of faith by which we ward off the fiery darts of the wicked one. Our weapon of attack is the Word of God—"the sword of the Spirit". It is said of Richard Coeur de Lion that he had a sword so well tempered that he could

cut through a bar of iron with it and then turn it on a gossamer thread and sever it. There are big testings and there are small ones, but the same sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is sufficient for each. The Lord in Matthew 4 quoted out of Deuteronomy on three occasions during his temptation and defeated the enemy, the devil. When David would go forth to meet Goliath who had defied the armies of the living God, we are informed that Goliath had a target of brass between his shoulders. If the occasion arose he was prepared to turn his back on the enemy, for the necessary preparation had been made. There is no armour for the back of the good soldier of Jesus Christ. The spiritual victory can only be won by using the weapons divinely provided. With the sword of the Spirit we can quench the fiery darts of the wicked one. David used only one stone of the five that he collected: Christ used only one book out of the five books of the pentateuch—he used Deuteronomy. If we would live victoriously then we must make ourselves conversant with the power of the sword of the Spirit which we would wield. The Word of God is the only weapon of attack: it needs no defending: let the lion loose and it will defend itself!

Ralph Waldo Emerson said 'Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasms'. May God give to us all that marked enthusiasm in the reading of the Word of God, and may we meditate on these things, so shall our lives be lives of victory and not defeat. Let us hold fast the faithful Word! directed thereby, and the joy of doing the will of God will bring pleasure to our hearts. It is only in this way we can appreciate what true joy really is. Our Saviour said to His disciples—'that *my joy* might remain in you, and that *your joy* might be full' (Jno. 15:11). This was the reason He had spoken these things unto them. His words brought the assurance of joy to His followers; and the Word of God brings a similar assurance to us as we read and study it.

It becomes obvious therefore that the Word of God is

Essential for a Satisfied Life

The yearnings of the infant are for the milk though a child cannot understand the hunger pangs nevertheless he or she

becomes aware of a need, and gets to appreciate that there is a place where that need can be satisfied, as the child nestles on the mother's breast. Peter tells us that 'as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby'. No child of God need suffer hunger pangs for there is ever at his disposal the 'sincere milk of the word' by which development can be obtained.

The wise man Solomon could say 'feed me with food convenient for me'. The infant of faith requires the milk of the Word; but those who are developed spiritually can indulge in strong meat which belongeth to them that are of full age—Heb. 5:14.

The philosopher Job could say 'I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food': Job 23:12. It is true we do not live to eat; but we do eat to live! This spiritual food—the Word of God—was esteemed more highly than the 'meat that perisheth'. Do you take more care and concern over your body than you do over your soul? One dear brother used to say 'No Bible, no breakfast!'

May we feel encouraged to put more stress on the Word of the living God as that which provides a satisfying portion for the soul than on the food that we partake of for the sustenance of our bodies!

Christ said in John 6:35 'I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.'

STUDIES IN PHILIPPIANS

R. NORTH

Introduction

The epistle to the Philippians has been called on epistle of Christian experience. In each of the four chapters Paul delights to occupy his readers with Christ. The object of all Christian experience is that Christ may be better known. It is the most personal of all Paul's collective writings. Written in the straits of an unjust imprisonment, it is not merely free from complaint but is actually full of joy. Joy is not a passing emotion: it is