

THE ROLE OF THE WORD OF GOD IN SALVATION

Big Picture, we have been focusing on God's Word—the Bible—for the past 8 weeks. In the way of review, we first looked at **attitudes** we should have toward the Word of God.

What was **Job's attitude**? Job 23:12 "...I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." That's the attitude God **wants us to have**, isn't it? Why? Because **food for the body** only helps you in this life, **but food for the soul** prepares you for the next life—and for meeting God!

Then we looked at **David's attitude** toward the Word of God. What was David's attitude? From Psalm 119, we learned that David didn't **grudgingly do** what God said—he **delighted in and loved** God's commandments! What are **commandments**? **Orders** from God! Does God **want us** to have an attitude that delights in being "ordered around" by God? Yes, He does! We see that in John 5:3 "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." (meaning burdensome)

Second, we looked at **beliefs** about the Word of God. What should **we believe** about the Bible? One of the main things I've been trying to emphasize is that God's Word **is authoritative**, meaning it has the **final say** on **what we believe**—and **how we live**!

But in order for the Bible to be **our authority**...our boss...our guide...our judge...the measuring stick...the standard that we go by to determine **what to believe**—and whether we **should do or not do something**—there are some foundational beliefs we need to have.

First, we need to believe that **God is our authority**. Does God have the right to tell us what to do! He certainly does! Why? Here are 5 Bible reasons that we looked at a number of weeks ago: 1) Because God created us. 2) Because God created us for His glory. 3) Because God is Sovereign over every one and every thing. 4) Because God is the Judge of all. 5) Because Christ redeemed us—and we are not our own!

The **second foundational belief** we need to have for the Bible to be our authority is this: that **the Bible is inspired**—that it is God-breathed—that God moved men to write down His Word. I like this quote attributed to Norman Geisler and William Nix: "God *moved* and the prophet *mouthed* these truths; God *revealed* and men *recorded* His word."

We saw the truth of inspiration in II Timothy 3:16; let's turn there. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...." What does "all" mean? "All" means **all**—and that's **all**, "all" means!

And because **all Scripture** is inspired by God, it is **all authoritative**. We don't get to scratch through it like a chicken scratches in the dirt; **picking out** what we like—and **kicking aside** what we don't like! It is puzzling to me that so many "believers" think it is okay to **judge God's Word** and decide for themselves what is relevant—and what is not! God's Word judges us—we are not the judge of it!

What I want to do now is look at a **second belief** we should have about the Bible. Not only is the Bible authoritative, it is also **beneficial**. The verse before us says that Scripture is "profitable." In other words, there are **benefits** to be gained from it; it is helpful and useful. How is it profitable?

There are many ways—way too many to cover in one sermon! This morning I want to zero in on the one found in verse 15—that the holy Scriptures are able to make us "wise unto salvation." You already know from your outline that the title of this morning's message is "The Role of the Word of God in Salvation."

So what is the role God's Word has regarding salvation? Before we look at the answer to that question, we need to ask ourselves **this** question: "Salvation from **what**?"

The words "save," "saved," and "salvation" are used a number of times in the Bible. Sometimes it means to be saved **from enemies**; other times it means to be saved from **physical death**; and still other times it means being saved from a **certain situation**. But usually when the Bible speaks of "salvation"—especially in the New Testament—it is referring to being saved from the **penalty of our sins**.

--We are not saved **from our sins** because we still sin after we become a child of God.

--And we are not “saved” **from the devil** because he still bothers us after we are saved—even more than he did **before we were saved!** Someday the devil won’t bother us, but that won’t happen until we get to heaven!

--What we **are saved from**—if we are God’s child—is being **judged** by God... **and punished** by God...and **eternally separated** from God because of our sins! We are saved from facing God at the Great White Throne judgment that is written about in Revelation 20. Let’s turn there; I want you to see it for yourself in your own Bible. Please follow along as I read verses 11-15. Salvation, then, is escaping **this** judgement—and being allowed into heaven—instead of being cast into the lake of fire!

Back to our first question—and the title of the message: **What role** does God’s Word have in bringing us salvation? **1. We would not know about salvation without the Bible**

Although this one is what we would call a “no-brainer,” I wonder if we appreciate this truth enough. **What would we know** about God’s way to be saved from the penalty of our sins if we didn’t have the Bible?

--From **creation**, the honest observer would say “Yes; there is a God.”

--From our **conscience**, when we feel guilt for doing wrong, we would assume there is a Judge.

--And from the **God consciousness** we are born with, we are aware of a Being that is greater than us. But at most, the things I just listed—commonly referred to us **general revelation**—teach us there is a God that we are accountable to—but not **how to be forgiven** by Him and **how to have a relationship** with Him!

We need God to **reveal that to us**—and He did in the Bible! And that’s why Paul wrote to Timothy that the holy Scriptures are what make us “wise unto salvation” as we noted earlier in II Timothy 3:15.

Our hearts should **be blessed by the thought** that God has declared unto us **His thoughts!** But our hearts should **be most thankful** that God has declared His thoughts on **how to be forgiven!**

2. How God’s Word and salvation are connected

First, let’s look at... A. Statements from Scripture

For the sake of time, we are not going to turn to these verses, but I do have them there on your outline.

Psalm 19:7 “The law of the Lord is perfect, **converting the soul...**”

Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the **gospel of Christ**: for it is the **power of God unto salvation** to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Ephesians 1:13 “In whom ye also trusted [referring to Christ], after that ye **heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation**: in whom also after that **ye believed**, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,”

I Cor 1:21 “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the **foolishness of preaching to save** them that believe.”

I Cor 15:1-2 “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the **gospel which I preached** unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ² **By which also ye are saved**, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”

James 1:21 “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and **receive with meekness the engrafted [implanted] word, which is able to save your souls.**”

Even though there is a lot in these verses—and even though we went over them rather quickly—it is impossible to miss this truth: God’s Word—specifically the gospel—is where we learn how to be saved!

We see that truth in what **God says**; we also see it in what **Satan does**. **Does Satan** know that God’s Word is connected to salvation? He certainly does—that’s why he tries to snatch God’s Word out of people’s hearts!

B. Snatching by Satan

Please take your Bibles and turn to Luke 8. Here—and in Mark 4 & Matthew 13—we have the parable of the sower. We are not going to read the whole chapter, but notice verse 5. We have the explanation—from Jesus Himself—in verses 11-12. Why does Satan want to take away God’s word when it is “sown” in someone’s heart? Because he doesn’t want them to believe it and be saved!

3. How God uses His Word to save us

We just noted from a number of verses that God uses His Word to save us. But how? Does **the Bible itself** save us? Does **just having a Bible** in your home bring forgiveness of sins—and make you a child of God?

It doesn't, does it? The Bible is **not like the blood of a lamb** that was sprinkled on the door posts of the homes of God's people when the death angel passed over Egypt.

And the Bible **is not a "good luck" charm** like God's people thought the ark of the covenant was when they battled the Philistines on the day Eli the priest died.

Just **possessing** a Bible is not enough to be forgiven by God—and just **reading** the Bible is not enough, either! So how does God use His word to bring about our salvation? Let's turn now to I Peter, chapter 1, beginning with verse 22. Verses 22-25 really lay out for us the connection between salvation and the Word of God; please follow along as I read them to lay the context.

A. The Word of God is the truth regarding salvation

In vs 22 it says their souls were purified because they obeyed the truth

In vs 25, it says the word of the Lord endures forever—and God's Word is where they heard the gospel from.

What is the gospel? Gospel means "good news" and God **through Paul** gives us an explanation of it in I Corinthians 15. After saying in vs 1 that he had **preached the gospel to them**, he says this in **I Cor 15:3-4** "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died for our sins** according to the scriptures; ⁴ And that **He was buried**, and that **He rose again** the third day according to the scriptures:"

Although **Peter** doesn't spell out the gospel like Paul did in I Corinthians 15, he **does refer** to the death and resurrection of Jesus here in this chapter.

--In vs 18-19, Peter reminds them they were not redeemed—rescued from the penalty of sin—by silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ—an obvious reference to His death.

--Look at vs 21. "Who by Him [Jesus] do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead...." Here we have an obvious reference to the resurrection.

To recap, the **gospel is the good news** that Jesus left heaven, came to earth, lived a perfect life, died in our place for our sins on the cross, came back to life, and returned to heaven!

Who is this good news for? Everyone! The angels made that announcement when Jesus came into the world as a baby—something we will be celebrating 3 weeks from today!

Luke 2:10-11 "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you **good tidings of great joy**, which shall be to **all people**. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David **a Saviour**, which is Christ the Lord."

So...if the "good tidings of great joy" is to all people, that's means **everyone gets saved**, right? **WRONG!!!**

B. The truth must be obeyed to experience salvation

Vs 22. 'Your souls were purified'—meaning you were forgiven and cleansed—when you obeyed the truth!

Knowing the truth is not enough—we must **believe it and obey** it!

Hebrews 4:2 "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, **not being mixed with faith** in them that heard it."

--They heard the gospel preached, but it did not profit them—it did not save them. Why? Because it was not mixed with faith!

Notice on your outline the very sobering words found in **II Thessalonians 1:7-8** "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and **that obey not the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ:"

So how does a person **obey—or disobey**—"good news?" The good news won't be accepted and believed and understood until we understand the **bad news** first. **What's** the bad news?

The bad news is that God is holy...and perfect...and can't stand the sight of sin! The Bible says that very thing in **Habakkuk 1:13** "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity..."

So if God can't **even look on sin**, how are sinners like us **going to get into** heaven?

When we become perfect! But we can't be perfect, can we?

We **can't get rid** of the stain of our past sin—and it is **impossible for us to not sin from this point forward**, no matter how hard we try! So we are doomed—and without hope—because we cannot meet the standard of God's perfection!

And that is **exactly why Jesus came**—to take the **penalty of our sin** and give to us His righteousness; His "perfectness." We are **not made perfect**—that won't happen until heaven—but we are **declared forgiven** when we recognize our need for mercy and come to God in humility and repentance like the prodigal son did.

Obeying the gospel, then, is understanding our need for Christ and trusting in Him—and Him only—for our forgiveness and salvation.

But there is another aspect of our salvation that Peter talks about in these verses that we dare not miss and it is this: C. God the Holy Spirit brings about salvation

In vs 22, we see that obeying the truth happens "through the Spirit"

In vs 23, we see that being born again is not of corruptible seed—it is not of our doing.

In vs 3 of this same chapter, we see another reference to being "born again": "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath **begotten us again...**"

James 1:18 "Of His own will **begat He us** with the word of truth,"

We don't "beget"—meaning "birth" ourselves—God is the One who "births" us. He is the One who gives us new life and makes us a new creation. Our new nature—our "seed"—is from God!

I John 3:9 "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [continually practice] sin; for His [God's] **seed remaineth in him**: and he cannot sin, **because he is born of God.**"

Here's how one **commentary put it**: "We are born again of the Spirit, yet not without the use of means, but by the word of God. The word is not the begetting principle itself, but only that by which it works: the vehicle of the mysterious germinating power [Alford]." (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Bible Commentary, Vol 3, pg 603).

Lastly, let's consider... **4. God's Word needs to be shared to save others**

We noted last week from II Peter 3:9 that God wants people **to repent**. **II Pet 3:9** "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish**, but that **all should come to repentance.**"

Here's possibly a trick question: "Can someone get saved without the Word of God?" Yes—and no! Here's what I mean. If you don't **physically have** a Bible with you, you can still share the gospel with them, correct? You can use Scripture that you have memorized...or a tract...or your own testimony—or all 3!

What if you don't have it memorized perfectly and you paraphrase it? Can a person still get saved? They can, can't they—as long as what you share is the truth as found in God's Word!

Our biggest problem, though—IMO—is not that we share God's Word **incorrectly**—it's that we **don't share it** often enough! Please turn now to Romans 10.

--In vs 13, we have one of the most wonderful promises in all the Bible! But notice the penetrating questions that follow in vs 14.

--Vs 14a "How then shall they **call on** Him in whom they have **not believed?**"

--They can't, can they? They need to believe on Him before they can call on Him!

--Vs 14b "...and how shall they **believe in** Him of whom they have **not heard?**"

--Again, they can't! They need to hear about Christ before they can believe on Him!

--Vs 14c "...and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

--Once again, they can't! People need to hear from other people—not just the preacher in the pulpit—the message of salvation!

Will people always **want to hear** what you have to say? Obviously not! If **Paul** had mixed results—and if **Jesus** had followers and haters—rest assured that the same message is going to be **received by some**—and rejected by others. But Jesus wants us to tell others—and to pray that He will send forth laborers.

May God help us all to be more faithful in sharing the “good news” with others!

So what does God want you to do with what you heard this morning?

1. First, are you saved? Are you sure you have been forgiven by God and are born again? If not, you need to get that settled. You do not want to be at that great white throne judgment when God judges you for every sin that you’ve committed!

2. Second, are you sharing God’s Word? People need to know what God says about heaven and hell—and about judgment and Jesus. Are you asking God to help you share His Word?