

FAITH COMES FROM HEARING THE MESSAGE

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

Romans 10:17-18

Until someone hears the Word of God, they cannot be saved. The Word of God is a living and active power, a timeless moment at which, in our own time and space, we can meet the living God. Christ died on a Roman cross at Jerusalem, and his death was effective then and is effective now to bring forgiveness to sinners.¹

The Bible is far more than a record of human experience or a report of spiritual realities by long-dead men. Through the Scriptures the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection and the ascension are as real today in our lives as if they were happening today... the reality of a present day Savior and a present day salvation. The Word is God's expressed purpose, which shapes history and cannot be changed... no matter how human beings respond. God's spoken word brought the universe into existence and his Word is what keeps it going until his appointed time.

God expresses himself in his revealed Word and continues to act through it. The Word is both recorded truth and our moment of truth—both truth about God and the place where we meet God personally. It is content, giving shape and form to historical reality; and it is confrontation—that moment of meeting God that calls for our personal response of **faith**.

The Word is very clear... "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

John 3:18

Jesus as the Word

The "Word" is the active, powerful presence of God, through which he works his will in history.

John 1:1-4 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men."

John's Gospel opens with the affirmation that Jesus is the eternal, preexistent **Word**, who was with God and was God from eternity. This person, the agent of creation and source of life in the universe, became flesh and lived among humanity. Jesus the living Word, like the written Word, becomes the place of meeting, where God's hidden glory is unveiled and the Father becomes known. The Word... that is and brings life—Jesus himself, is expressed in the message about Jesus. As we respond to the message—the written Word, we experience the reality that it both expresses historical acts and contains vitalizing, transforming life for all who **believe**.

The biblical Word cannot be separated from God's personal presence and power in *believer's* lives. The word that Jesus spoke was the word of transforming power... by his word the sick were made whole and demons were driven out. The word that Jesus spoke was the word of salvation that brings life to the dead—"dead in *their transgressions*" and continues to transform lives, today, and in the future.

God, as a living person and as divine power, finds expression in every word he utters. It is because God can never be isolated from his utterances that Scripture calls out to us: "*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts*" (Hebrews 3:15). In the Bible *believers* find both guidance for daily living and godliness. By living

¹ Galatians 2:16

in harmony with the Word of God, the *believer* experiences God's grace, finds great peace, freedom from sin, and the confident expectation of salvation.²

2 Peter 1:3-4 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Coming to the Word of God *believers* meet God in his fullness:

- Learning the plans, and power, and purposes of God.
- Comprehending God's ways and sensing his love and holiness.
- It is the passport to the fullness of life... the sharing of the life of God!

Believers are to let Jesus' word dwell within, for it is in the Word that we meet God. Response to the Word—to Jesus, is our response to God. Romans 10:17 says, "*Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*"

God has given us his Word so through the Holy Spirit our knowledge of him will correspond as nearly as possible to his true being; that we might know him as he is. A right concept of God is essential to our practical Christian living.

God is a person, and in the depth of his mighty nature he thinks, wills, enjoys, feels, loves, desires and suffers as any other person may. He communicates with us through the avenues of our minds, our wills, and our emotions. The continuous interchange of love and thought between God and the soul of the *believer* is the throbbing heart of New Testament worship.³ The Bible shows us: Who God is, what he has done for us, what he requires of us, and who we are in his eyes. There is a God from whom we come, through whom we live, and to whom we're accountable. In 1 Corinthians 8:6 we read, "*...yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.*"

As the one and only Son of God, Jesus is without parallel; as the only divine-human book, the Bible is unique. The Bible is not just a book of stories, or teachings, about God; it is the story of history as seen from God's point of view... it is God's recounting of history from the very beginning. It records events that took place in God's creation of heaven and earth and the events that followed, as God revealed himself to man.

The Bible is the written Word of God—the Bible is divine revelation. God genuinely wants us to get to know him—personally; that's why he gave us the Bible. God is the central character and in it he reveals... who he is, what he does, what he is like—in other words, his personality. The Bible is the best-selling book in the history of humanity. Although the Bible has been around for some time, the wisdom and knowledge contained within still applies to us today.

- Everything you need to know about God and life is found in the Bible.
- It's the "user's manual of life" ...God's Word applies to our everyday life.

2 Peter 1:3-4 "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

² Psalm 119:165-166

³ A.W. Tozer "The Pursuit of God"

In some respects, as Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the flesh, so the Bible is the Word of God in the words of men. Although the words of the Bible are truly human, they are not **merely** human. In 2 Timothy 3:16 we see... *All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, correcting, rebuking, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* The Bible is words breathed out by God through the mouths and pens of men. God spoke his Word to men called *prophets*... and God's chosen *prophets* wrote down exactly what God wanted them to write.

Sometimes he spoke out loud... sometimes he spoke to them in visions.

- Sometimes he just put the message directly into their minds.
- God caused the *prophets* to write down exactly what he gave them.

2 Peter 1:20-21 **“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”**

The Holy Spirit infallibly guided the writers of Scripture and continually works effectively in the lives of believers. The Bible is not men's ideas, but God's own Word. The Bible is the only book in the world authored by God... God gave his words to men, words that God tells us we need to know. Thus it is true... what the Bible says, God says.

No Other Book In The World Was Written This Way—With God Telling Men Exactly What To Write.

- God is the author of the Bible.
- God used more than 40 men to write down his words.
- It was written in 3 different languages—Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek.
- The Bible was not written all at once—it took some 1,600 years for the entire Bible to be written down!
- Yet, the Bible reads like one book from beginning to end, because **God is its one author.**

You can be certain; without doubt, that your Bible is a reliable copy of the words God spoke. The Bible has been passed down to us intact and with extreme accuracy. Like God, then, the Bible is trustworthy and true. Everything the Bible teaches, affirms, commands, and says concerning God's kingdom is trustworthy and true. Jesus said to the Father: *“Your word is truth.”*⁴ Jesus promised that the *“Spirit of truth”*⁵ would guide Christians into all truth by testifying about Jesus.

The Holy Spirit helps believers to interpret Scripture... revealing the wisdom of God.

- Only the Holy Spirit can reveal God's wisdom and truth to humankind.
- The purpose of the Holy Spirit's special work of revelation is that *“we may understand what God has freely given us.”* (1 Corinthians 2:10)

As the one and only Son of God, Jesus is without parallel; as the one and only divine-human book, the Bible is without parallel. Just as Jesus is true man and true God and was in the world with a task to perform... so the Bible is God's infallible—unfailing Word to us. *“So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty.”* (Isaiah 55:11)

God is the Creator/owner of man and the Bible conveys his message to mankind.

This places 3 requirements on all mankind and in particular on the children of God.

1. We are to trust and obey every word of God.⁶
2. Christians are to be totally loyal to the Word of God.⁷ We are to live by every word that comes from the mouth of God.
3. God's Word is to govern every area of our lives.⁸ It is the standard by which we can judge all that we feel and imagine, believe and think, say and hear, see and read, do and desire.⁹

⁴ John 17:17

⁵ John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1John 4:6; 5:6

⁶ Matthew 14:31, 21:21; Luke 8:11-13; John 3:18

⁷ Deuteronomy 8:3; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 40:6-8; Matthew 5:17-20

Now what?

Open your Bible to meet, hear, and receive Christ... drawing from him the very holiness that was exhibited in him and that he will exhibit in you. The most wonderful secret of living a holy life does not lie in imitating Jesus but in letting the perfect qualities of Jesus exhibit themselves in your life as he speaks to you and guides you as you meet with him in the Bible. It is his wonderful life that is imparted to all who seek him.

The Word, which is and brings life, is Jesus himself and is expressed in the message about Jesus. As we respond to the message—the written Word, we experience the reality that it both expresses historical acts and contains vitalizing, transforming life for all who believe.

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Now what?

But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

⁸ Psalms 1:1-3; 119; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

⁹ Leviticus 18:1-5; Mark 7:13; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:5