

The Profitable Word

“All Scripture, divinely inspired, is indeed profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for that discipline which is in righteousness; so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work.”—

*II Timothy 3:16,17,
The Emphatic
Diaglott*

Our opening text was written near the end of the Apostle Paul’s life. At that time, the Holy Scriptures consisted mostly of the Old Testament record, with only portions of the New Testament having yet been written. It is the Old Testament part of the Bible to which Jesus referred when he said, “thy word is truth”; and of which Peter spoke, saying, “the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy

Spirit.” (John 17:17; II Pet. 1:21) Today we also have the words of Jesus, the writers of the Gospels, and the Apostles as provided in the New Testament.

To sincere students of the Bible, it is not necessary to prove that these records make up the Holy Word of God. We have the witness in ourselves that this is so.

As Paul says, quoting from Moses, “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.” (Rom. 10:8; Deut. 30:14) We realize the power of the Word of Truth in our hearts. It is the “power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”—Rom. 1:16

The Indestructible Word

In its completed form, the Bible is one of the oldest books in existence. It has outlived the storms of the last two thousand years. Concerted efforts have been made to do away with it. In some countries, for centuries it was a crime to possess a copy. Today, however, the world is filled with copies of this book. In A.D. 1800 it is estimated that there were between four and six million Bibles in circulation in 30 languages. Eighty years later, in A.D. 1880, there were roughly 165 million copies in 250 languages. Today, the complete Bible is available in more than 700 languages, with some portions available in over 3,000 languages. Hundreds of millions are currently in circulation, and historically, it is estimated that this number has been in the billions. It is therefore quite evident that the Bible’s divine author has also been its preserver.

Many people believe that there is an all-wise Creator overruling all things, admitting to such wisdom and design in all they see around them in the realm of earth and in the heavens. The Bible reveals that there is equal wisdom and design in the moral and spiritual realm. God has an equally wise purpose in connection with the moral government of the world. In his Word he has satisfied our reason and our desire to know something of himself and his plan—something of whence we came,

why we are here, and what lies beyond. The Bible tells of man's original perfection; of his fall into sin and the penalty of death that passed upon all men; of the coming of the Redeemer; the call of the church; and the restitution of all things that will bless all the families of the earth.—Gen. 1:27; Rom. 5:12; Matt. 1:21; Eph. 4:1-4; Acts 3:20-25

There are many wonders in nature that are not seen by the casual observer, or even by the natural eye unaided, but need the telescope or the microscope for their discernment. Thus it is also with the Word of God and the things of the spiritual realm with which it deals. Many of these beauties are not discerned by the eye of the natural man, but need the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit to see them and to be blessed by them. (John 16:13; I Cor. 2:9,10,14) Concerning the many unbelievers of his day, we note these words of Paul, paraphrasing: "When the majority hear the Word of God read to them, there is a veil upon the heart, so that its real significance is not discerned. But when the heart turns to the Lord in full dedication, the veil is taken away and one sees out of obscurity and out of darkness, and beholds as in a mirror the glory of the Lord."—II Cor. 3:14-18

In our opening text, Paul says the Scriptures are not only divinely inspired, but they are profitable. They are our daily bread; the light that shows us the path of life; the revelation that tells us about our Father in heaven and his only begotten Son, our Redeemer, "whom having not seen, ye love." (Matt. 6:11; John 3:16; 8:12; I Pet. 1:8) If obedient to their teachings we shall be sanctified thereby, and thus we will be prepared for an inheritance

among all those who are sanctified. (John 17:17; Acts 20:32) Hence, the Word of God is indeed profitable, yea, indispensable—a precious gift to the children of God from their Heavenly Father.

Profitable in Four Ways

In his words to Timothy, Paul speaks of the profitability of the Word of God in four ways: teaching, conviction, correction, and discipline in righteousness. Teaching, or doctrine, has to do with the understanding of the fundamental truths of God's plan. "If any man will do his [God's] will, he shall know of the doctrine." (John 7:17) The doctrine of God is important, as shown by the following scriptures: I Timothy 4:16; 6:3; II Timothy 3:10; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1,7,10; and II John 1:9 As bones are to the human body, giving it structure and stability, so doctrine is to the functioning of the church, the body of Christ. Without doctrine we would lack the superstructure of faith necessary to know and to do God's will.

Conviction

The term "conviction," as shown in the *Diaglott* translation, can also be stated as "proof." While journeying through the wilderness of "this present evil world," the Lord's people need a sure, infallible, guide or standard. (Gal. 1:4) This is especially necessary today in view of the confusion of conflicting beliefs pervading the religious systems. If we are told that a piece of cloth is eighteen inches wide, we can only have conviction of this by using a measuring rod. If a wall is said to be perpendicular, our eye is not accurate enough to be certain that this is true, so we need to prove it by using a plumb line. In like manner, the divine measuring rod, the Bible, has

been provided to prove the correctness or falsity of whatever may be presented to us as truth. By it we can have conviction as to what is in harmony or out of harmony with the Holy Word.

The Word of God deals with many things beyond the limits of man's present experience, as well as with things on the human plane with which few are familiar. Therefore, our own judgment is inadequate as a guide in connection with these matters. We may come to one conclusion concerning an item of what is presented as truth, whereas someone else may come to a much different conclusion. Consequently, the Lord has provided an infallible guide for his children through his Word. By it we may "try the spirits"—the teachings that may be presented to us—searching the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so. This was the course of the Bereans of old. (I John 4:1; Acts 17:10,11) So far from finding fault with such an attitude, Paul always approved it. By thus realizing that the Word of God is profitable for proof and conviction, and using it to that end, our faith does not "stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."—I Cor. 2:5

Correction

The Word of God is profitable for correction. All need correction both as to faith and conduct. We therefore come to the Word for the correction of our faith; for our understanding of the divine purposes to be amplified; for our conduct, manners, and beliefs all to be ordered according to his will. To neglect doing so, we may get into a condition where we will not receive correction, but take offense when it is kindly given. This is a dangerous

condition. The scribes and Pharisees would not receive the correction given by Jesus, and hence greatly increased their responsibility before God. Such an attitude indicates pride in the heart.

The Lord cannot deal with us unless we are willing to humbly receive correction and to use his Word to this end. Paul suggests that if we have received correction from our natural fathers, how much more should we be willing to be corrected by our Heavenly Father. (Heb. 12:5-11) The apostle also states, “If we would judge ourselves [according to the Word of Truth], we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” (I Cor. 11:31,32) The wise man Solomon wrote, “He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth.”—Prov. 10:17

Discipline in Righteousness

The word “discipline” in our text suggests the thoughts of instruction, education, and training. Toward what righteousness are we to be instructed? Some go about to “establish their own righteousness.” (Rom. 10:3) However, the Word of God is profitable because it instructs us that this is not the kind of righteousness that has divine approval. When we speak of Christ’s righteousness, we refer to the merit of his sacrifice imputed to us by faith, enabling us to be counted righteous, justified in the sight of God. (Phil. 3:9; Rom. 5:1) Even this, however, does not fully describe the righteousness to which the apostle makes reference.

Paul is here speaking of the “man of God” whom he desires to be “thoroughly fitted for every good

work.” Such are already enjoying the benefits of Christ’s righteousness. We would understand the reference to be to the great principles of God’s law and his divine government. These are the great principles that govern God’s dealings, and hence the perfections of the divine character that we desire to copy.

The Word of God is represented as a mirror. We behold in this mirror the glory of the Lord—his wisdom, justice, love, and power, as they are revealed in his great plan of salvation. As we seek to copy these glorious perfections, we are transformed into the same image, becoming in character more like our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus. —II Cor. 3:18

Character—Express Image

The word “character” has been brought into the English language from the Greek. The Greek word is *charakter*. At first it was the name of the sculptor’s tool. Later the finished work of the sculptor came to be called a *charakter*—that is, the ideal toward which he had been working. The word is used but once in the New Testament, in Hebrews 1:3. Here it is translated “express image,” or “exact impress” [*Diaglott*], and applies to our Lord Jesus since his resurrection. He is now the “exact impress” of the Father’s person.

We are called to be “like him, for we shall see him as he is.” (I John 3:2) What a hope has been set before us! How profitable and all-important is the Word of God, that we might be instructed in righteousness and in the great principles that compose the divine character.

Thoroughly Furnished

Under the present imperfect arrangements, many go out into the world who by no means are thoroughly furnished for a calling in life. Many, too, enter Christian ministry, not merely poorly equipped for their work, but quite ignorant of the message they should preach as the ministers of Christ.

Before beginning the great work of the Messianic kingdom, consecrated believers are being thoroughly fitted and prepared for their part in that gracious work of blessing and restoring mankind. During the present life, the least the Lord's servants can do is to seek to be thoroughly furnished for our work now and in the future, as faithful "stewards of the mysteries of God."—I Cor. 4:1,2

We are exhorted to be "complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work." The Word of God needs to be considered carefully in order to ascertain the kind of good works required of us. If we do this, we find that our present work is not one of reforming or converting the world. As a faithful Bible Student wrote many years ago, "The present mission of the church is the perfection of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God's witness to the world; and to prepare to be kings and priests in the next age."

God has provided his Word that we might be fully equipped with all the information we need—light, guidance, strength, encouragement—to be faithful, even unto death. (Rev. 2:10) Let us never allow anything to obscure or cause us to overlook the value and profitableness of the Word of God, given by inspiration that we may be "complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work." ■