

“So Shall My Word Be”

*“As the rain
cometh down, and
the snow from
heaven, and
returneth not
thither, but
watereth the earth,
and maketh it
bring forth and
bud, that it may
give seed to the
sower, and bread to
the eater: So shall
my word be that
goeth forth out of
my mouth: it shall
not return unto me
void, but it shall
accomplish that
which I please, and
it shall prosper in
the thing whereto
I sent it.”
—Isaiah 55:10,11*

The Word of God reveals the divine plan for the reconciliation of the sin-cursed and dying race. In our text we are given the blessed assurance that God's purpose will not fail, that he will cause the things spoken by his Word to be accomplished. This is one of the important lessons we learn when we first become acquainted with God's glorious plan. How blessed it is to be thus assured! It gives us a firm foundation for faith and enables us to rejoice in the hope set before us in the Gospel.

Not only does our text comfort us with the assurance that God is graciously willing and abundantly able to accomplish his loving purpose that

he has revealed through his Word, but also that his Word itself has a function to perform. This also will be effectively accomplished in keeping with the divine purpose. The Apostle Paul assures us that the Word of God is “quick,” or living, and “powerful,” sharper than a “twoedged sword.” (Heb. 4:12) God’s Word reveals his plan. It is also used by him to accomplish much of it. This is especially true with respect to the outworking of his will in the hearts and lives of his consecrated people. In this connection, how blessed it is to realize that if we yield ourselves unreservedly to the influence of the divine Word we will be sanctified by it and made “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”—Col. 1:12

A Lamp to Our Feet

The psalmist wrote that God’s Word was a lamp to his feet, and a light unto his path. (Ps. 119:105) Again, he wrote, “The entrance of thy words giveth light.” (vs. 130) How much we also need this enlightenment! The people of the world are engulfed in darkness, but by his Word God gives us light: “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.” (II Cor. 4:6) Paul says this light has “shined in our hearts” by the Gospel, and while we are still in a darkened world, we can now see our way.

Light is a symbol of knowledge, of understanding, and how wonderful is the understanding the Lord has given us through his Word. We have been blessed with a knowledge of God’s plan, both for ourselves and for the world. In our day by day walk in the narrow way our steps are guided by the Word. We can depend upon its directives to guide us aright—that

is, if we are sincere and humble in their application. James wrote, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." (James. 1:5) It is through his Word that God answers our prayers for wisdom. If we search diligently for this wisdom, our pathway will become "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—Prov. 4:18

We Feed upon the Word

God's Word is also likened to food. This is because it nourishes each of us as a "new creature" in Christ Jesus. (II Cor. 5:17) As we feed upon it, we become "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." (Eph. 6:10) Through this spiritual nourishment we grow up to the stature of spiritual maturity in Christ Jesus. Quoting from Moses, Jesus said to the Adversary, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—Matt. 4:4; Deut. 8:3

Jesus referred to the Word of God as food in one of his promises to those who faithfully watch for his coming. He said: "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke 12:37) How rich has been the feast of Truth we have enjoyed through the fulfillment of this promise. It is all the Word of God—that which has gone forth from his mouth through his son, Jesus Christ.

Waters of Refreshing

The Word of God is also likened to water. It is refreshing, invigorating, and life-giving. How dry

and desert-like our lives would be without the refreshing waters of the Truth. We rejoice in the assurance given by the Master that spiritual food and drink will be abundantly provided for those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” (Matt. 5:6) Jesus promised that such would be “filled.” This has proven to be true. How refreshing and filling has been the Word of Truth.

Additionally, the Word of God is pictured by water because of its cleansing effect in our lives. Paul wrote concerning our being cleansed “with the washing of water by the word.” (Eph. 5:26) This function of God’s Word was foreshadowed by the water in the laver that was located in the court surrounding Israel’s Tabernacle. Here the priests washed, and to us, the prospective “royal priesthood,” the Word is a place for cleansing from the faults and stains of our fallen flesh.—I Pet. 2:9

An Armor of Protection

“His truth shall be thy shield and buckler,” the psalmist wrote. (Ps. 91:4) As Christians, we are each a “soldier of Jesus Christ.” (II Tim. 2:3) We are fighting a “good fight of faith.” (I Tim. 6:12) Soldiers have enemies who fight against them, and our enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil. Against these enemies the Word of God is as an impregnable armor of protection. Satan, and the unseen powers allied with him, are especially powerful, and Paul tells us that to “stand” against these we will need to “put on the whole armour of God.”—Eph. 6:11

Paul identifies each part of this armor and suggests the manner in which it serves to safeguard us

against all “the fiery darts of the wicked.” (Eph. 6:16) There is the “helmet of salvation.” (vs. 17) This well represents our knowledge of the Truth. It is essential that we know the Word of God in order to give battle to the Adversary. When Satan attacked Jesus as he was leaving the wilderness, his knowledge of God’s Word was his protection. Against every fiery dart of temptation the Master’s defense was, “It is written.” (Matt. 4:4,7,10) So it will need to be with us if we are to be successful soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Another part of the Christian’s armor is the “breastplate of righteousness.” (Eph. 6:14) The breastplate of an ancient armor was designed to protect the heart and other vital organs. The Word says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23) We know that the Lord is not judging us according to the unwilling imperfections of our fallen flesh, but the Adversary endeavors to discourage us along this line. He would have us believe that there is little use in our trying to please the Lord, because we will always come far short of the divine standard of righteousness. However, in this also the Word affords protection, for it assures us of our Heavenly Father’s loving provision through Christ, that our standing of righteousness, or justification, is in him and not in ourselves.—Rom. 5:1

As a result, when the Adversary hurls his fiery darts of discouragement, they fail to injure us, for we remember the protective assurance of the Word that declares, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is

risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”—Rom. 8:33,34

Paul mentions the “shield of faith” as that part of the Christian armor designed to quench all the fiery darts of Satan. (Eph. 6:16) It is the “faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 1:3) However, merely to have a knowledge of this faith is not sufficient. We must also have full confidence and trust in it. Thus, the symbolism of the “shield of faith” also includes our belief in the “precious promises” of God. (II Pet. 1:4) Full confidence in the divine plan and purpose, including the manner in which God’s providences are operating in our lives, furnishes a bulwark of strength against any and all efforts Satan may make to destroy us as New Creatures.

There is also “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (Eph. 6:17) This is the offensive part of our armor. With it we give battle to our enemies, but it is not a carnal sword. None of the weapons of our warfare, Paul says, are carnal, but “mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; ... and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.”—II Cor. 10:4,5

Satan’s fiery darts are suggestions that are contrary to the will of God for the body members of Christ. These may often seem very plausible, and they are always more pleasing to the flesh than is the expressed will of God. If we accept these and are governed by them, they result in serious injury to us as New Creatures. However, if we wield the “sword of the Spirit” to repel and destroy those suggestions, we will come victoriously through each skirmish with the Adversary.

Our walk in the narrow way is also protected by the Word. Paul says that our feet are “shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” (Eph. 6:15) The way of the Christian is often rough and difficult. The Adversary places stumbling stones over which we may fall. The Word also speaks of the “snare of the fowler.” (Ps. 91:3) The protection of our feet is referred to as the “gospel of peace.” This indicates that one of Satan’s methods of attack is to lure us into carnal strife and controversy with those who may oppose us. Such a course may be appealing to the flesh, but is a snare and a stumbling stone to the New Creature. “Blessed are the peacemakers,” says the Word, “for they shall be called the children of God.”—Matt. 5:9

We are to have our “loins girt about with truth,” Paul says. (Eph. 6:14) The function of a girdle in ancient times can be likened to a belt. This suggests it as an apt symbol of service. The protective qualities of the Word of Truth depend upon our holding it unselfishly—in love. In other words, we must be faithful servants of the Truth with which we have been blessed. We cannot enjoy its benefits just for ourselves, but are to use them faithfully for the blessing of others. Otherwise, the “whole armor of God” will not remain properly bound to us, and sooner or later we will fall before our enemies.

Servants of God’s Word

The Lord assures us in our opening text that the Word which goes forth from his mouth will not return to him void. It is important to remember that he uses his people as servants of his Truth. God does not shout his Word from his throne in

heaven, but conveys it to the hearts and minds of his people through human instruments. He inspired the ancient prophets to record his plan in the Old Testament. He guided Jesus in his teachings. His Holy Spirit miraculously enlightened the minds of the apostles so that their sermons and writings serve to elaborate further the Word that goes forth from God's mouth.

Paul explains that in addition to the miraculously inspired servants of the Word, the Lord has also provided pastors, teachers, and evangelists. (Eph. 4:11, *Weymouth New Testament*) In a still broader sense, every consecrated child of God is a servant of his Truth, for "the Spirit of the Lord GOD" is upon them all, anointing them to this service. (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18; I John 2:27) The great plan of salvation that is outlined by his Word is the reconciliation with God of the sin-cursed and dying race. The plan is centered in Christ Jesus, the Redeemer and Savior. Paul wrote that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," and then adds that in this great project we are "ambassadors for Christ." In order to serve as Christ's ambassadors, the Lord has given unto us "the word of reconciliation."—II Cor. 5:19,20

The Parable of the Sower

It is almost beyond comprehension that God should use such frail and imperfect servants as instruments for dispensing his Word. It is wonderfully reassuring to be told by him that his Word will not return unto him void, but that it will accomplish that which he pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto he sends it. We rejoice in this,

but when, by his authority we proclaim his Word, the results may appear meager. Frequently, indeed, there may seem to be no results at all. However, his Word explains this also for our encouragement, showing that while to our finite minds our efforts may be useless, his Word does accomplish his good purposes.

This explanation is found in Jesus' parable of the sower. (Matt. 13:3-8,18-23) The seed in this parable is the "word of the kingdom," or the Word of God. It is the great plan of God for the reconciliation of the human race to himself. It is the plan that will reach its glorious consummation when his kingdom comes, and his will is done in earth even as it is in heaven. The sower of this seed represents all the Lord's consecrated and Spirit-begotten people. To these God speaks, saying, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."—Eccles. 11:6

In the parable, some of the seed sown falls by the wayside, and the birds carry it away; some falls on stony ground, where the earth is shallow; some falls among thorns; and some falls on good ground. Only that which falls on the good ground brings forth "fruit" to maturity. When we proclaim the Truth and there are apparently no results, if we remember this parable we would not be discouraged. It shows that Jesus knew in advance that much of the efforts of his people would seemingly be in vain.

In reality, however, it is true that even though our efforts frequently seem to be wasted, God's Word does not return to him void. He does not need our

help to disseminate his Word. He has given us this privilege in order that by its faithful use we ourselves may be enriched and strengthened spiritually. The prophet wrote, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." (Prov. 11:24) God wants us to scatter the seeds of Truth in order that its life-giving powers may increase in our own lives, regardless of how it may be received by others. This is God's way of making the Word of Truth the greatest blessing to us.

If we are obedient to his ways, we can be sure that his Word, when we proclaim it to others, will not return unto him void. As noted in the parable, a great deal of the seed we sow falls by the wayside; that is, the people do not understand what we tell them. Even so, however, we receive a blessing. By telling the Truth to others it becomes more powerful in our own lives. It is through obedience to the Word, including the Lord's instructions to proclaim the Gospel "for the witness of Jesus," that we are made ready to live and reign with Christ. —Rev. 20:4

When we sow the seed of Truth, some falls on stony ground. The parable indicates that this represents those who hear the Word with joy, but are not able to endure the ill will and persecution that result from espousing it. They do receive joy from the Truth, even if only temporarily, and this is a blessing to them. While they are not prepared to fully give their hearts to the Lord during the present time, they remember it with joy, and in the next age will be ready to enter the "way of holiness."—Isa. 35:8 *(Continued on page 36)*

(Continued from page 31) There are also those who hear the Word of Truth, rejoice in it, make progress for a while, but permit the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches to choke out their spiritual lives. The Word was very effective in their hearts until they permitted the circumstances of life to take the place of its hallowed influence. God's Word is indeed powerful, but he does not use it to coerce the minds of his people. Through the exercise of the free will of those who accept his Word, the Lord tests their fidelity to him and to his laws of righteousness.

Finally, there are the hearers of the Word in which the Truth falls on "good ground." These not only respond to the message but continue to progress in spiritual growth, bringing forth fruit "with perseverance." (Luke 8:15, *New American Standard Bible*) The growth and fruit-bearing of these depend upon their daily application of the Word of God. This daily work of fruit-bearing in the hearts, minds, words, and actions of the consecrated is therefore also accomplished by the Word that goes forth from the mouth of God.

We cannot keep the Truth to ourselves and expect to receive all the rich benefits it contains for us. We feed upon the Word as we share it with others. We are refreshed by it as we seek to "water" others. The cleansing power of the Truth in our own lives is the more effective as we exhort one another "unto love and to good works." (Heb. 10:24) The defense of the Truth against the attacks of the various enemies of the New Creature is greatly strengthened as together we "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 1:3

The “Foolishness of Preaching”

Paul speaks of the work of God that is accomplished by the “foolishness of preaching.” (I Cor. 1:21) This preaching is not limited to lecturing from a podium. All the faithful consecrated children of God participate in it to the extent that they permit the Word to radiate from their lips and their life. From the human standpoint it might well seem foolish that such a mighty work could be accomplished in seemingly so ineffective a manner. The reason it can be done is because God gives “the increase.”—I Cor. 3:6

The work of God in preparing for the kingdom is symbolically described in Isaiah 51:16—“that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth.” The “foundations of the earth” referred to here is the earthly phase of the kingdom of Christ, under the direction of the resurrected Ancient Worthies of old. They were prepared for this honored position through their obedience to the Word of God as it was made known to them in past ages. The “heavens” are symbolic of the spiritual phase of the kingdom, made up of Jesus and his church. Since Pentecost, these also have been prepared for their positions of glory by obedience to the will of God as expressed through his Word.

Jesus said in consecration to his Father, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” (Heb. 10:7; Ps. 40:7) It was his faithfulness to this covenant that qualified him to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. Thus, it was the Word of God recorded by the prophets that prepared and sanctified the Master, setting him apart for the holy and honored position he occupies at the “right hand of

God.” (Col. 3:1; Heb. 12:2) On behalf of his followers Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth,” and then he added, “thy word is truth.”—John 17:17

In order for the Word of Truth to accomplish this divine purpose in planting the new heavens, it must be communicated from one to another of his dedicated people. God does not emblazon it upon the skies where all can read it. He gave it to the prophets, to Jesus, and to the apostles, by the power of his Spirit, and we receive it from them and continue to communicate it one to another. This being the Lord’s arrangement, we get the full force of God’s statement, when through the prophet he said, “I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.”—Isa. 51:16

We must also have the Word in our hearts, but it should not be hidden there. If it is to be truly effective in our lives it must also be upon our lips. It was so with Jesus, who is represented prophetically as saying, “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.”—Ps. 40:9,10

It is a humbling thought to realize that the Word of God, which he declares shall not return unto him void, can be communicated through us, and will be if we are faithful to the commission that has been given to us by the anointing of the Spirit.

How reassuring it is to know that even though our efforts are feeble, and we speak with stammering tongues, the Word will accomplish the good pleasure of the Lord.—Isa. 28:11

Very soon the work of the present age will be successfully completed. We may not be able to see now just what our part in this labor of love has accomplished, but beyond the veil we will discover that the Word of God as uttered by our imperfect lips contributed something to the total effort, that the words we spoke to glorify our God were blessed by him to the strengthening of others in the narrow way, and to the enrichment of their spiritual lives.

That same Word, while being communicated for the gathering and building up of the church, has served as a witness to the world. (Matt. 24:14) In this way also it accomplishes the will of God. We may at times think that our efforts are in vain, but that is only because we do not always realize that the Lord's ways are higher than our ways, and his thoughts higher than our thoughts. (Isa. 55:8,9) God's Word, as proclaimed by us and by his authority, may not accomplish what we would like to see, but we may be sure that it will accomplish what he pleases. In this we can rejoice. Upon the basis of this assurance, let us endeavor to be more and more emptied of self, and filled with his Word. Let it so fill us that it will overflow from our hearts and lips for the blessing of others and to the glory of God.■