

“The Word of the Lord”
By Parrish Lee
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1 Samuel 3:1 ...And the Word of the Lord was precious in those days...

If you could repeat after me, I want this to permeate our minds: “And the Word of the Lord was precious in those days.” Precious, meaning valuable; meaning that we don’t want to let it become corrupt. It is special. Saints, we have reached a day and time where the Word of the Lord is not precious in our land, and, if I could be so bold, the devil would have it that it is not precious amongst God’s people.

Deuteronomy 11:18-25 ...lay up these My words in your heart...

The Lord says to lay up His Word in our hearts and in our souls, tie them to our hands. Our promise from the Lord was that if we keep His Word, He will drive out our enemies and give us victory wherever we go; but, that’s if we keep His Word. Of course, in those days, it’s not like they had a lot of books, but, sometimes you had people that would say, “Oh, I got tired of keeping the Word of the Lord,” or, “Oh, I got bored with keeping the Word of the Lord.” When you push the Word out, what are you making room for? Now, keeping in thought with our Scripture for the day—the Word of the Lord being precious—I want to do a brief overview of the Word of God with man.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God...

This means that before there was anything else, there was God’s Word.

Genesis 2:16-17 ...thou shalt not eat of it...

The first account of God’s Word is God taking care of us. God warning us what was bad, and showing us what was good.

The first recorded instance of God’s Word being written down was when the Lord Himself wrote it down in the form of the Ten Commandments on the stone tablets delivered to Moses on the top of Mount Sinai. Biblical scholars believe that this occurred between 1400 B.C. and 1500 B.C.—almost 3500 years ago.

Exodus 31:18 ...tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

Those tablets got broken. You don’t see God writing any more. He inspires people to write, but He makes them write it down.

Now I’d like to talk a little bit about the history of God’s written Word.

The first hand-written English language Bible manuscripts were produced in the 1380’s by John Wycliffe, an Oxford professor, scholar, and theologian. Wycliffe was well known throughout Europe for his opposition to the teaching of the organized church,

which he believed to be contrary to the Bible. With the help of his followers, called the Lollards, and his assistant, Purvey, and many other faithful scribes, Wycliffe produced dozens of English language manuscript copies of the Scriptures. They were translated from the Latin Vulgate, which was the only source text available to Wycliffe. A religious leader was so infuriated by his teachings and his translation of the Bible into English that, 44 years after Wycliffe had died, this leader ordered Wycliffe's bones to be dug up, crushed, and scattered in the river!

One of Wycliffe's followers, John Hus, actively promoted Wycliffe's ideas: that people should be permitted to read the Bible in their own language, and that they should oppose the tyranny of the religious church that threatened anyone possessing a non-Latin Bible with execution. Hus was burned at the stake in 1415, with Wycliffe's manuscript Bibles being used for kindling for the fire.

In the 1490's another Oxford professor, and the personal physician to King Henry VII and Henry VIII, Thomas Linacre, decided to learn Greek. After reading the Gospels in Greek, and comparing them to the Vulgate, he wrote in his diary, "Either this [the original Greek] is not the Gospel... or we are not Christians."

In 1496, John Colet, another Oxford professor and the son of the Mayor of London, started reading the New Testament in Greek and translating it into English for his students at Oxford, and later for the public at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. The people were so hungry to hear the Word of God in a language that they could understand, that within six months there were 20,000 people packed in the church, and at least that many outside trying to get in! Fortunately for Colet, he was a powerful man with friends in high places, so he amazingly managed to avoid execution.

King Henry VIII had requested that the Pope permit him to divorce his wife and marry his mistress. The Pope refused. King Henry responded by doing it anyway (later having two of his many wives executed), and thumbing his nose at the Pope by renouncing Roman Catholicism, taking England out from under Rome's religious control, and declaring himself as the reigning head of state to also be the new head of the church. This new branch of the Christian church, neither Roman Catholic, nor truly Protestant, became known as the Anglican Church, or the Church of England. King Henry acted essentially as its "Pope." His first act was to further defy the wishes of Rome by funding the printing of the Scriptures in English—the first legal English Bible.

After King Henry VIII, King Edward VI took the throne, and after his death, the reign of Queen Mary—known as "Bloody Mary." She quested to return England to the Roman Church. In 1555, John "Thomas Matthew" Rogers, and Thomas Cranmer were both burned at the stake. Mary went on to burn reformers at the stake by the hundreds for the "crime" of being a protestant.

The "translation to end all translations" (for a while at least) was the result of a combined effort of about fifty scholars. They took into consideration The Tyndale New Testament, The Coverdale Bible, The Matthews Bible, The Great Bible, The Geneva Bible, and even Rheims New Testament. The great revision of the Bishop's Bible had begun. From 1605 to 1606 the scholars engaged in private research. From 1607 to 1609 the work was assembled. In 1610 the work went to press, and in 1611, the first of the huge (16 inch tall) pulpit folios known today as the 1611 King James Bible came off the printing press. Starting just one year after the huge 1611 King James Bibles were printed and chained to every church pulpit in England; printing then began on the earliest

normal-sized printings of the King James Bible. These were produced so that individuals could have their own personal copy of the Bible.

So, in our brief history lesson, we've seen a little of the persecution of the Word of God; not to be put in English, burned, restricted from the people, and so much more that time will not allow. That's the written Word. After all it's been through, you would think it would be treated like gold, and not like paperweights.

Now the spoken Word:

John 10:4-5 ...the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice...

Such a nice, wholesome Scripture, the type that you find on Hallmark cards, and plaques with flowers and angels... but, if we look at it closely, we see that if we are His sheep, we should know His voice. They say that when a baby is crying, all women hear it, but, the one that will fight a bear and jump into a fire to get to that baby, is the mother. She knows her child's voice, and vice-versa.

I've seen times when I was at someone's house, and the mom would just get up and walk out of the room, and then come back later. "Is everything all right?" "Yeah, the baby was crying." None of the guys heard a thing. Not all mothers have that testimony, but they should, saints. I've seen where someone would say to a child, "your parents said for you to..." and the child turn around and say, "That doesn't sound like something my mother or father would say." When I would be playing with my friends, and one of our parents would call them, all the kids would stop, but that child would respond, for they knew the voice of their parents. This is very similar to how God's children respond to God's Words—written and spoken—we hear and we follow.

Now, a couple of points about His Word.

Hebrews 4:12 For the Word of the Lord is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any...

God's Word is powerful, and it doesn't play favorites. It will discern your heart to see to see exactly what's going on in there. Have you ever been faced with something and just wanted to know if you were right, so you look into His Word and got your hide tanned? I remember when someone really got under my skin and I wanted to give them what for, but before I do, let me seek God's face and make sure that I am right. You know what God told me? Render not evil for evil, pray for them that despitefully use you, the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Amen. One brother shared with me that sometimes to return to the sheepfold, he has to rebuke himself, "How dare you come before God with lust of the eyes and pride of life and..."

And the second point:

Isaiah 55:8-11 ...it [My Word] shall not return unto Me void...

We have the guarantee that if God said it, it is done. For all of you who have ever said, "What about me? I've hazarded my life—been made fun of, ostracized, chosen last at jobs and family at times, sometimes it doesn't seem fair. If you keep God's Word you get to be last, but nobody is going around behind God's back. If we suffer with Him, we

shall reign with Him, and Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

We need to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we are in the body of Christ. The Bible says to “Examine yourselves daily to see whether you be in the faith.” I was talking to brother Malcolm and he said, “We can’t take that lightly... not like some exam in school where a ‘D’ is passing, but more like a forensic investigation where you want to see every shred of evidence, whether we are in the faith.”

2 Timothy 1:8-12 ... He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him...

