

GOD'S PERMANENT WORD  
Psalm 119:89

Intro: There is nothing more important to us in our lives as Christians than the Word of God. There is nothing that is more important for us to read, nothing that is more important for us to understand, nothing that can surpass the Word of God in giving us direction for our lives day by day.

It is by the Word of God that we have learned things about ourselves that we would never have known otherwise. The Psalmist said that "the entrance," or the opening, "of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple" (Psa. 119:130). It is by the Word of God that we have come to know God, and the better we know the Word, the better we know God.

It is by the word of God that we have been saved. The Word has been used to convict us, and regenerate us. The Apostle Peter wrote,

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet 1:23).

It is true that we are saved by Christ and through His work on the Cross, but the Spirit uses the Word which tells us about Christ to make us new creatures.

The Apostle Peter also is the one who has told us that we grow through the Word of God. We all should remember his words in 1 Peter 2:2:

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.

It was the Word of God which brought Jeremiah joy in the midst of his terrible trials. Cf. Jer. 15:16:

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

In this same one hundred and nineteenth Psalm we are promised peace through the Word:

Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them (Psa. 119:165).

We learn things from the Word which cannot be known in any other way, things which far surpass the greatest discoveries which man has made from the beginning of human history down to the present hour. And this will remain true to the end of time. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:9, 10:

9 But as it is written, 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.

10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Where has God revealed these things to us? In His Word.

It is in the Word that we see the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the theme of all of Scripture. The Holy Spirit has been given to those of us who know the Lord to guide us into all truth. And what does He delight to do most of all. He delights to take the things of Christ, and show them to us. Cf. John 16:15.

However, even though all of these things can be said about the Word of God, and in spite of the fact that the Bible continues to be the best seller, yet it is also in some circles the most hated book that has ever been written. There have been times in history when people have tried to destroy the Word of God. Today when you try to tell people that swearing is wrong, that adultery is wrong, that homosexuality is wrong, that abortion is wrong, you can be the object of the greatest scorn. We know how the prophets of the OT suffered because they preached the Word of God. And the same has been true in the Church. There are millions in the world today who will not accept the fact that the Bible is the only true Word of God, and that Jesus Christ is the only Savior.

So, for those of us who are Christians, the Word of God is the most important book that has ever been written. To others, it is a book to be scorned. And they feel that the world would be better off if there never had been a Bible. And still others are totally indifferent. They are willing to let Christians have their Bibles, but for themselves, they are not interested.

In the light of these differing points of view, our text is extremely important. And while it was written by some child of God thousands of years ago, possibly David, he wrote under the direction of the Spirit of God Who chose the writer's words for him, and so it must be accepted, like all of Scripture, as God speaking: **"FOR EVER, O LORD, THY WORD IS SETTLED IN HEAVEN."**

# I. THE WORD IS "SETTLED."

It is "settled." This means it is set. It is secure. It is fixed. It stands unchanged and unchangeable. It is more secure than anything could possibly be here in this world.

We have many valuable things, e.g., the crown jewels in England which are carefully guarded, but no one can guarantee that any possessions here in this world are unconditionally safe. The Lord Jesus spoke of this world as a place where thieves break through and steal. And we know that is the case.

But not so with the Word of God. It is protected by the secure hand and power of Almighty God. Nothing can destroy it. Nothing can take away parts of it. Nothing can change it. This is what the Psalmist meant when he said that the Word of God is settled.

But this raises a question: Where is it settled?

## II. THE WORD IS "SETTLED IN HEAVEN."

This means that God Himself is making sure that His Word is secure. Listen to what our Lord said on this subject.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away (Matt. 24:35).

And just as he said that earth is a place where thieves break through and steal, so He said that heaven is a place where thieves do not break through and steal. Cf. Matt. 6:19, 20).

But how long will this last? We know that we still have the Word of God today approximately 1900 years after it was completed. But will it last? Will the enemies of the Word of God finally accomplish what they want to accomplish by destroying the Word of God.

## III. THE WORD IS SETTLED IN HEAVEN "FOR EVER."

I am sure you would agree with me when I say that that is long as it needs to be safe: "For ever."

Listen to what Psa. 119:152 tells us:

Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

And verse 160 adds to the evidence of what we are told in our text:

Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever (Psa. 119:160).

We have already notice in 1 Pet. 1:23 that the Apostle Peter said that we are born again by "the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." And two verses after in 1 Pet. 1:25 he said that "the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

So the testimony of Scripture is clear: the Word of God is

safe, safe in heaven where it is under the care of Almighty God, and safe forever!

We often hear it said that we no longer have any copies of the original manuscripts. And that is true. But we have many copies of the originals, which may vary in some minor points, but by working with them we know that we have the true Word of God. But in another sense it is not right to say that the originals are gone. God has the originals! I am not talking about the original manuscripts written by Moses and David and the prophets and the apostles of the NT, but since the Word is secured in heaven, if it ever were possible for all of the Bibles in the world to be destroyed, God would be able without any trouble to reproduce the whole Bible in its entirety.

We have two illustrations of this in Scripture.

First, please turn to Jeremiah 36.

Second, going to an earlier time in Israel's history, Exodus 31:18; 32:15-18; 34:1-4, 27-29.

These are two testimonies to the fact that the Lord will not let His Word die. When men have succeeded in destroying it, God has simply given it again.

But I want to point out one more fact from our text.

When the Psalmist said, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven," he not only meant that the Bible would be reserved, but, in preserving the Word of God, we know that:

#### IV. THE CONTENT OF THE WORD OF GOD NEVER CHANGES.

Let me point out in just a few ways why this is important.

A. What the Bible has to say about God has not changed, and will not change. He is still the same holy, sovereign, good God that He has always been, loving righteousness and hating iniquity.

B. God's description of man and sin has not changed, and will not change. Man remains the same sinful creature that he has always been, and what has been sin in the past continues to be sin. There is no such thing as a sin becoming a non-sin. The Bible is the only true source of information that we have about where man came from, what he did to displease God, and what happened to him and the whole human race as a result.

C. God's remedy for man's sin has not changed. Man needs regeneration, not reformation. It is not within man's power to change himself; only God can change him. And this word of regeneration has been made even possible by the coming and death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. What the Word of God teaches about judgment has not changed. Even some evangelicals have started to water down the truth of an eternal hell, but that does not change what the Word of God says.

E. God's purposes do not change. What He ordained to do before the foundation of the world He will without fail do what He has planned to do.

We could go on and on pointing out many features about the Word of God that men have called into question, or have denied, but let me mention one more for the comfort of our own hearts.

F. God's promises do not change. Even when we are unfaithful, God stands faithfully by His Word. He never will leave us, nor forsake us. He does work all things together for good to those who love Him. Add any of the promises of God, they are secure in heaven, and will be carried out in all of His dealings with us.

Concl: I hope this verse means a little more to you tonight after we have looked at it in greater detail. How thankful we all should be that today, at least 3000 years after these words were first written, we, too, can say,  
"FOR EVER, O LORD, THY WORD IS SETTLED IN HEAVEN."

May our faith in the Word of God remain unshaken, and our faith in the God of the Word.

*How wonderful to know this in our  
changing and decaying world.*

*The Psalmist obviously had tasted of  
the good Word of God, and was reveling  
in the permanency of that Word*

*The verse is really an expression  
of worship, and it should be with us, too.*

## GOD'S PROFITABLE WORD

2 Timothy 3:16, 17

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5.

Intro: I began the New Year, speaking at the evening service of January 1, on Psalm 1. It had to do with meditation on the Word of God. On the next Sunday night I spoke on Psalm 119:89, and my subject was God's Permanent Word. Tonight I want to speak on the verses which have long been considered to be the key text for the inspiration of Scripture. But the word that Paul used to describe the Word of God there was that it is a "profitable" Word.

The word "profitable" is only used two other times in the NT, and both are, like our text, in the Pastoral Epistles. You find it 1 Tim. 4:8 and Titus 3:8.

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is **profitable** unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (1 Tim. 4:8).

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and **profitable** unto men (Titus 3:8).

All of these verses speak of something which is advantageous for achieving certain objectives. We learn from 1 Timothy 4:8 that godliness is profitable for gaining the most out of this life as well as preparing us for the life which is to come in heaven. Without specifically mentioning the advantage that believers have from good works, Paul wanted Timothy to be teaching believers the importance of doing good works.

In all of these passages Paul was not saying in each case that it was one of many ways of obtaining a desirable objective, but that these were the only way. It is godliness alone that guarantees the greatest blessings in this life. And it is good works alone which will assure us that we will get the greatest profit out of life here on earth. And all believers will find it so. In some respects 1 Timothy 4:8 and Titus 3:8 were saying the same thing. If there is a difference, 1 Timothy 4:8 is speaking of a godly character, while Titus 3:8 is speaking of godly works.

It is very significant that we find this word, profitable, in the pastoral epistles. They are epistles written to two young pastors, Timothy and Titus, and they deal with the work

of the church, the local church. Paul was always concerned that believers carry on the work of the Lord in the right way, and that would mean pleasing God as well as seeking the highest advantage, or profit, for the people of God. If we do the first, we will most certainly do the second. When we please God, we will do that which is best for the people of God.

The apostles of our Lord were not concerned about numbers and attendance like we are today. They always rejoiced in the blessing of God, and they wanted to see the greatest blessing possible, but they did not primarily seek to build up their churches numerically. But this has become the obsession of the twentieth century church. And that is apparent by the large number of church growth organizations we have. The idea is that the more people we get into church, the more we can reach with the Gospel, and the stronger the people of God will become. But that in itself has no foundation in Scripture. And the result is that pastors and churches are continually looking for new ways of getting people to come to church. And so we have what you never see in the NT: mega-churches! And we have hundreds, even thousands of church goers and church members who give little or no evidence of being saved, and who show little or no interest in the Word of God.

Paul gave no idea that I have ever seen in his writings that the church continually has to be adapting itself to conditions in the world. I have mentioned to you that there used to be a Christian youth organization which had as its motto, Geared to the times, anchored to the Rock. That all sounds good, but where do we get the idea that we can do both of those things at the same time. I think that recent history in the church is that if the church is geared to the times, she is going to be pulled away from the Rock--pulled away from Christ, and pulled away from the Word of God! The church has entered the field of entertainment. The church is following with the world in its counseling. Churches have become big business with all of their facilities. And yet spiritually it has not been for the spiritual advantage of the individual believer. And so Christians are like the familiar wave at a football game, they go first to one church and then to another looking for the most action and the most fun. The world has gone wild on having a good time, and the church has gone the same way. It is time for us to examine the Scriptures to see how God's work is to be done, how the church is to fulfill its mission in the world. What are we to do to make sure that the people of God are getting the greatest spiritual advantage in the church so that they can be the most effective living for the Lord out in the world?

Tonight I want to devote my time mainly to the last two verses of 1 Timothy 3, but before we get into them, let me point out a couple of things from the context.

Let me ask this question: Is the church today to be basically any different from the church in the first century? Are we to have different methods and means, and different objectives from what they had in the first century? Did Paul see any reason why Timothy and Titus should have a ministry which was different in character from his own? Let us let Paul help us in answering those questions.

Please look first at 2 Timothy 2:2. (Read and comment.)

Then turn to 2 Timothy 3:10-15. (Read and comment.)

And finally turn to 2 Timothy 4:1-5. (Read and comment.)

What do we have in these passages? Paul was telling Timothy that conditions in the world were going to get "worse and worse." That means that they were going to get much worse than they were at that time.

Secondly, he told Timothy that the time was going to come when the people in the church and in the world would not want to attend meetings where the Bible was being taught. But what was Timothy to do? Was he to look for some new ways of reaching people? Was he to water down the Word of God so that it would not be quite so hard for people to accept it?

The answers to these questions are given not only in Paul's word "continue" in verse 14 of chapter 3, but in the solemn charge he laid upon Timothy in verses 1 and 2 of chapter 4! Not only was Timothy told not to change from what the Apostles before him had done, but he was charged before God and the Lord Jesus Christ not to change. In 2,000 years God has not changed, people have not changed, the needs of the people of God have not changed, the Word of God has not changed, nor have the purposes of God changed. Times have changed. But in season and out of season the task of believers, the task of the church, the task of its leaders--all remain the same.

I'm afraid that we have used 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 to prove the inspiration of Scripture, but we have not paid sufficient attention as to why God has given us the divinely inspired book which we have. It is because it alone **"is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished** (note those words--not partially furnished, or equipped, but thoroughly equipped) **unto all good works."**



In other words, we are not going to have godly people, nor are we going to have people who are prepared to serve the Lord unless we teach them the Word of God. In the same way we are not going to turn sinners from their sins except through the Word of God.

Let me look with you at the words which Paul used in 2 Timothy 3:16 so that we can see again how absolutely essential it is for people to hear and know and believe and obey the Word of God!

How is the Word of God for our advantage, and only the Word of God?

# I. IT IS "PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE."

This means that God has given us in His Word things that He wants us to know, things that we cannot learn from any other source. In His Word He has told us about Himself. In His Word He has told us about His Son, why He came into the world, what He did while He was here, why He died, where He is now, and what is going to happen in the future. But it is in this Word that we learn about ourselves, how defiled we are with sin, how utterly unable we are to change ourselves, and that we are under divine judgment. If people knew their Bibles they wouldn't be talking about self love and self worth, and patting ourselves on the back when we think that we have accomplished something that will make God happy with us. The Bible needs to be taught, and what is taught needs to be learned. And when people learn what the Bible teaches, that is when hearts will be changed and lives will be changed because it is only the Word of God which the Holy Spirit uses to change them.

But regardless of how much we read our Bible, regardless of how much we have learned, we never outgrow our need for the Word. There is always more to learn, more to put into practice. As long as we live, if we live as long as Methusaleh, we will never outgrow our need for the Word of God.

So we need teaching, the teaching of the Word. But isn't it true that it is getting harder and harder to find teaching even when you go to church these days. People may not want "sound doctrine," but that is what they need, and they are sealing their own doom when they turn away from the Word of God. God always works through His Word. This is the main point that Paul was making. People need to be taught the Word of God.

But let us go on.

## II. THE WORD OF GOD "IS PROFITABLE...FOR REPROOF."

This means that it is in the Bible that we see what is wrong with us. It is in the Word of God what we are convicted that the Word is true and that we are wrong. The Word of God censures us. This means that we need to read the Word of God for ourselves. It means that we need to listen to the teaching of the Word always making the application to ourselves. In the Word of God we see how far we have gone astray, and how deserving of judgment we are, eternal judgment, if our hearts are not changed. Believers as well as unbelievers need the reproof of the Word of God.

But it would be a sad thing, a tragic thing, if the Bible only told us what is wrong with us. And so we go on to the next word.

## III. THE WORD OF GOD "IS PROFITABLE...FOR CORRECTION."

As the word suggests even in English, the Word of God shows us how to make right the things that are wrong in our lives. "Correction" has to do with our characters, as well as our lives. God changes our hearts, and in changing our hearts we are changed, and when we are changed our lives are changed. And this can only take place through the Word. The Word cleanses us and gets us going in the right direction. Man tries to change himself by changing his habits--which is to work from the outside in. God through His Word starts on the inside, and works out.

The fourth advantage we get from the Word is:

## IV. THE WORD OF GOD "IS PROFITABLE...FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Here Paul used a word which commonly was used for the whole education and training of children. But he is using it here for the whole education and training of the children of God! As I have said, we never outgrow the Word. And so as long as we live we need the Word because God works in us through His Word to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ, and that work will not finally be completed until we are "with the Lord."

Concl: What is the purpose of all of this Bible teaching and Bible reading? It is that "the man of God may be perfect."

Paul was probably thinking of how the Word of God was going to be used, first and foremost, in Timothy's life. Those who teach the Word need what they teach. In fact, if the Word is not effective in the teacher's life, those he teaches will

not profit from his teaching. And so Paul said that the goal for Timothy was perfection, spiritual maturity, a growing likeness to Christ, and that this alone was the only way that he could be thoroughly equipped for the work that the Lord had called him to do.

It begins with the teacher and then spreads to every believer under his ministry. It starts with the parents, and then spreads to their children. We all need the Word, and we will always need the Word. And if the world last another 2,000 years (which it won't)--but if it does, the church needs to be carrying on the work of the Lord just like Paul and Peter and John and the other apostles did in the first century--and like Timothy and Titus and the younger brethren did as their successors.

Let us not be discouraged if we don't see people flocking to hear the Word of God. Let's keep praying that the Lord will open their hearts, but let us never turn aside to do anything else but to minister the Word of God in the church and in our families and out in the world. When we are careful to do God's work in God's way then, and only then, can we expect to see the blessing of the Lord. Paul's charge to Timothy is the Holy Spirit's charge to us today. Let us be faithful in carrying out that charge as countless numbers of the Lord's people before us have done.

GOD'S POWERFUL WORD  
Hebrews 4:12

Intro: Since the first of the year in our Sunday night services we have been thinking about various characteristics of the Word of God. On the first Sunday we had Psalm 1 in which we are exhorted to meditate on the Word of God. I followed this up with a message on the permanence of the Word from Psalm 119:89. The third Sunday night we observed the Lord's Supper, and then last Sunday we considered God's Profitable Word from 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. Tonight I want us to consider the power of God's Word, and I am taking as my text Hebrews 4:12. (Read.)

You can see from the context that the Apostle had been writing about the failure of the children of Israel to enter into God's rest. And the obstacle which he mentioned several places was their unbelief, or lack of faith. See Heb. 3:12, 18; 4:2, 3, 6, 11.

There are four powerful means which God employs to bring to us the full blessing of our salvation. First, is the Word of God in verse 12. Second, is God Himself in verse 13. Third, is our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 14 and 15. Fourth and finally, prayer--access through our High Priest to the throne of grace.

Obviously the Word of God is what we need to believe. It is what the children of Israel failed to believe. But we must believe it, and verse 11 indicates that this is a matter where we have a responsibility to God, and it amounts to "labour." This word means that we need to be active and diligent and zealous giving special attention to our faith. Even as far along as chapter 11 we continue to see the importance of faith as the Apostle, reviewing the lives of many OT saints, tells us what was accomplished in each of their lives "by faith."

I don't think that we can say that every Israelite who died in the wilderness was unsaved. There obviously were those who did not know the Lord. But the problem that the writer of Hebrews was dealing with here is the failure of the people to believe God, and to trust Him even when their circumstances seemed to tell them that God was not taking care of them. And it is interesting that the Apostle Paul here pointed to the Word of God itself as the primary source of help that we need to strengthen our faith. That was true of the Israelites in the wilderness, and it is still true for us who are the Lord's people today. But we need to be aware that our primary concern is to be our faith! As Hebrews 11:6 tells us, "without faith it is impossible to please God."

This is where we all have trouble, isn't it? We are surprised by some new experience. Or we have been disappointed that our prayers have not been answered. Many different things can discourage us, and usually when we get discouraged the first thing that we start to do is to neglect our Bibles. And this is just what we should not do. However, the amazing thing which I am sure all of us have experienced is that we find our hearts drawn back to the Word. We may have trouble with it for a while, but we find that we cannot leave it alone. Why? Because, as we learn from our text, God's Word is "quick," meaning living, and "powerful." It is sharper than any twoedged sword. And it penetrates into our hearts making the sharpest possible distinctions.

Now all of this is not something that happens independently of God, nor of our Lord, nor of the Holy Spirit. But the Apostle Paul wanted his readers to know that these words "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword" are words which distinguish the Bible from any other book which has ever been written. We can get help by reading books about the Bible. I have often been greatly encouraged through my reading, but they are helpful only as they bring me back to the Word. But even they must not replace the reading of the Word, this living, powerful Word which is sharper than any sword which has ever been made.

We often talk about faith as a gift of God when it comes to salvation, but we must remember that faith is always a gift. Faith comes from God, and God administers faith to us through the Word. The notable text on this subject is Rom. 10:17:

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Now in order to understand what we really have in the Word of God, we cannot just take one of these words used to describe it, such as "powerful," but we need to consider all of them together. So let us look at our text in detail.

Our text tonight gives us the apostle's description of the word of God.

It is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword." So we have three descriptive words to look at.

# I. IT IS "QUICK."

This is an old English word which means living. The Bible is a living Word not just in the sense that it continues on and on, but because God has placed in His Word the power to bestow life.

We can see this in several areas, e.g., even in creation. "God said, Let there be light," and what happened? "And there was light." And that is the way things went on the six days of creation.

Listen to what the Psalmist, probably David, wrote about creation in Psalm 33:6-9:

6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made;  
and all the host of them by the breath of his  
mouth.

7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as  
an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the  
inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

9 For he spake, and it was done; he commanded,  
and it stood fast.

It would be hard to find a greater example of the life-giving character of the Word, and yet there is another--just as miraculous as creation. In fact, it is called a new creation. I am thinking of course of how you and I were saved. I refer to the words of the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1:23:

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of  
incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth  
and abideth for ever.

When you and I were saved, God used His living Word to cause us to be born again. We were in spiritual death, dead in our trespasses and sins, and through the Word of God we were born again--"born of water and of the Spirit," the water representing the Word. In John 6:63 the Lord said this:

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: **the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.**

I am not saying that the Word of God by itself has some mystical power to give life, but when the Lord is using His Word, the Spirit of God gives it life and power. This is how all of us were saved. The Word of God is living, life-giving! No other book which has ever been written can show that power of God, the power to bring into being a universe out of nothing, and the power to transform an enslaved sinner into a saint, free from sin's penalty and free from sin's power.

You can see how difficult it is for me to talk about a living Word and not speak at the same time about a powerful Word. Life is power, and it is because the Word is a living Word that it also has power. But let me talk about power.

## II. IT IS "POWERFUL."

If it weren't powerful there would be no creation. And if it

weren't powerful, there would be no Christians.

The word which Paul used here is the Greek word from which we get our English word, energetic. This means that it works! And by that I mean that it is effectual. It does what it is supposed to do. It does what God wants it to do, not just some of the time, but all of the time!

God was talking about the power of His word when He gave Isaiah the words which we find in Isaiah 55:11,  
 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.

This is what it means that the Lord's Word is powerful. Prophecy after prophecy which has been spoken by the Lord through His servants has been fulfilled, and every one of them which has not yet been fulfilled, will, without exception, be fulfilled. God's Word is powerful. It is effective. It works. It does not always do what we would like to see it do, but it always does what God says.

We need to remember this in witnessing to people who need the Lord. We don't know how the Lord may see fit to use His Word, but we need to use it because it is through the Word of God that people will be convicted of their sin. It is through the Word of God that they will understand what salvation is. And, as we have seen, if they are to be saved, it is always through the Word of God that they will be born again. When we speak of the Word being powerful we are thinking about it being powerful, effective, successful in carrying out the purposes of God.

What else can we say about the Word of God which indicates more of its power?

### III. IT IS "SHARPER THAN ANY TWOEDGED SWORD."

Now a sword is a weapon of warfare, the most used weapon in the days that the Scripture was written. It speaks of personal combat. A soldier always wanted his sword to be sharp. And it would give him great confidence if he knew that his sword was sharper than his enemy's sword. The Spirit of God tells us that there is no sword made that is as sharp as the Word of God. This also goes along with the thought of the Word being powerful, doesn't it?

Again, let me emphasize that the Word of God does not have the quality of a sharp sword except as it is being used by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul called the Word of God,

"the sword of the Spirit," in Eph. 6:17. So we read it. We tell others what the Word says. But the Spirit is the One Who uses it.

— But how sharp is the Word? Let me read the rest of the verse to you beginning with the word "piercing." (Read.)

Now what is it that you notice about this description of the Word of God? Let me help you if I can.

You can see that when Paul said "to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" he was speaking about the immaterial part of man. We are not just body, but also soul and spirit. One of the greatest problems that theologians have struggled with through the centuries has been to define the difference between the soul and the spirit. Some have felt that the best way to deal with it was to say that they are the same. But here the spirit of God clearly indicates that they are not the same, anymore than joints and marrow are the same. We don't have to understand the difference in order to profit from the Word of God because the Spirit of God Who uses the Word of God knows the difference. It is all perfectly clear to Him.

— When the Apostle spoke of "the joints and marrow" he was speaking of the physical part of man. We are flesh and bones, aren't we?

When you put the two together it amount to this: The Word of God is capable, under the blessing of God, of penetrating into every part of our being. The Word of God deals with the whole man. It even discerns what our thoughts and intents are, the thoughts and intents of our hearts. This means that He judges what we are thinking about, and what our attitudes are. Solomon gave that wonderful advice found in Proverbs 4:23,

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

You see, if we are to be strong in faith, we need our thinking straightened out, and we need our attitudes purified, and this is like a sword being driven into our bodies. It hurts, but it is not until we feel the hurt which is a grief to God that we will see what is hindering us in our ability to trust God day by day.

— Concl: Now let me read the rest of the chapter to you, and I want you to notice as I do the way Paul related what he had just said about the Word to each one of us. Notice the times that Paul said we, and us, and our. (Read.)



What does this mean?

When we talk about going to the throne of grace, it often with the idea that we are going there for someone else. And there is certainly nothing wrong with that. How thankful we can be that we can intercede for others at the throne of grace. But the context here, and the language here, indicate that I need to go to the throne of grace for myself, and you need to go to the throne of grace for yourself.

God works in our hearts to show us our need. We realize from verse 13 that we can't hide anything from the Lord. We might despair if it were not for the fact that the One Who died to save us is the same One Who is our Great High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having gone through the trials of faith that we go through. The difference is that He never failed to trust God like we have so often failed. But having felt the Word of God as a sword piercing our innermost being, in prayer we go to the Lord to obtain His mercy and find the help that we need to keep us trusting the Lord.

So often I find myself praying the prayer of the father who brought his demon-possessed son to the disciples to have him delivered, but the disciples were not able to help him. The Lord said, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." What was the father's response? "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). The Lord helped him to believe, and his son was delivered.

Let us remember that it is our faith which need to be strengthened every day. For this we have to be diligent, which means going to the Word for ourselves. And it is as the Lord uses His Word in our lives, often hurting us as with a sword when we see what He sees, but the result is mercy and help when we look to the Lord for His blessing.

(KJV)

*What is this but spiritual growth.*

*1 Pet. 2:2, 3.*

*Psa. 139:23, 24 - a prayer to pray as we begin to read our Bibles each day.*

*Mark 9:24.*

GOD'S PRECIOUS WORD  
Proverbs 3:13-15

Intro: This is the fifth Sunday night that I have spoken on various characteristics of the Word of God. On New Year's I spoke on Psalm 1, as I have a number of times before. And then in succession we have looked at God's Permanent Word from Psalm 119:89, God's Profitable Word from 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, God's Powerful Word from Hebrews 4:12, and tonight I want to speak on God's Precious Word. My text (at least one of them) is Proverbs 3:13-15.

The dictionary defines precious as meaning two things:

- 1) It has to do with something that is very valuable.
- 2) It is something which is highly esteemed, greatly loved, something that is very dear to us. It can even mean something, or someone who is irreplaceable.

The Word of God can be called precious on both counts. It is very valuable--and there are many Scriptures which speak of it that way. But it is also a Word which is very dear to us. I want to read some of those passages to you this evening. Let me start with three verses which many of us have been memorizing: Proverbs 3:13-15. (Read.)

Anyone who reads the book of Proverbs needs to know that the wisdom and knowledge that are commended in that book, and found so desirable, are the wisdom and knowledge of God. And the only place we can find that wisdom is in our Bibles. It is that wisdom which we need to understand, truth that has been given to us in a special way: by the Spirit of God.

Solomon said almost the same thing in Proverbs 8:10, 11:

- 10 Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.
- 11 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

Solomon must have learned about the preciousness of the Word of God from his father, David. You will remember that the book of Proverbs begins by identifying Solomon with David: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel" (Prov. 1:1). I mention this to point out what David said about the Word of God in Psalm 19:10:

More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Remember that when we speak of David and Solomon we are speaking of two men who were very rich, rich in this world's

goods. And so it means a great deal for them to say that they treasured the Word of God more than silver or gold or rubies or anything else that is of great monetary value.

In Psalm 119:72, probably written also by David, we read as he spoke of the Word of God as the law of God,

The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

Jeremiah expressed his delight in the Word of God in another way. He said,

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts (Jer. 15:16).

Such words would be interesting to us under any conditions, but when we realize how terribly Jeremiah was persecuted because of his faithfulness in proclaiming the Word of God, and that every human comfort had been taken away from him, then his words even more. He found the Word of God to be a source of joy and delight to him even though he had nothing else to comfort him. Take away his comforts; he still had the Word. But take away the Word, and he had nothing left. However, even though riches can take wings and fly away like an eagle, yet the Word of God cannot be taken from us. It is interesting to see how Solomon spoke of riches in Prov. 23:

4, 5:

4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.

5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

The Apostle Peter spoke of the Word of God as "precious." Cf. 2 Pet. 1:2-4:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

It is very apparent that the Word of God was precious to the Apostle Paul because when he was casting his mantle on Timothy, so to speak, he charged him to preach the Word of God. And he claimed that he had finished his course with joy because he had "kept the faith."

It would be impossible to read all of the Scriptures which tell us how the prophets of the OT and the apostles of the NT delighted themselves in the Word of God. They loved it. They meditated on it. They taught it. They believed it. The Word of God was precious to them. If tradition is right, and we have no reason to believe otherwise, most if not all of them laid down their lives rather than to deny the Word of God.

When people in the world hear us as believers talking about how much we love the Word of God, how we love to read it, and how we loved to hear it taught, they really don't understand why we feel that way. But one of the first ways you can identify a person who really knows the Lord is when you see how he feels about the Word of God. I feel sorry for people who go to church to be entertained rather than to hear the Word of God.

But we need to ask ourselves the question, Why is the Word of God so precious to us? Why do we consider it to be so valuable? Why do we love it the way we do? Let give you some of the answers that we find in the Word itself.

Before I give some answers, let me point out that it is not just having the Bible which makes it so valuable to us, but it is in understanding the message of the Bible. And in addition to that, it is dear to us because we have reaped the blessings of being obedient to the Word, of living our lives as the Bible says that we should.

All right, why is the Bible precious to us?

I. THE WORD OF GOD IS PRECIOUS TO US BECAUSE IT IS THROUGH THE WORD THAT WE HAVE BEEN SAVED.

The Apostle Peter expressed it this way:

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet. 1:23).

This is the means that God has used to bring us to Himself. Christ is the Savior, and He died to save us from our sins, but it was the Word of God which the Holy Spirit has used in each of our lives to draw us to Christ. And through that Word our lives have been changed. We have been set free from sin's penalty, but we have also been set free from sin's power. God has done the work, but He has used His Word to awaken us, to teach us of Christ, and even to give us the faith to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. I say without any fear of contradiction, if it were not for the Word of God we would still be in our sins. We have new life,

eternal life, through the Word. What the world needs today is to hear the Word of God. In the Word they would learn what is wrong with our society, and how God changes the hearts of people. And the Word of God is the only place that we can learn what we need to know. This is one major reason why we love the Word of God, and why the Word of God will always be precious to those of us who know the Savior.

But there is another major reason why the Word of God is precious to us.

II. THE WORD OF GOD IS PRECIOUS TO US BECAUSE IT IS IN THIS WORD THAT WE HAVE LEARN ABOUT GOD.

And when I speak of God I am including not only God, the Father, but God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit. And this is the only book we have which gives us the truth about God.

When the Lord walked with two of His disciples on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus He found them greatly discouraged and greatly confused about what had taken place in Jerusalem a few days before when the Lord was crucified. They had even heard that the Lord was alive again. They really didn't know what to believe. But then it was that the Lord took them to the OT Scriptures, and this is what we read in Luke 24:27:

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

And what effect did have upon them? Let me read verse 32 in that same chapter:

And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

And then they hurried away to tell the other disciples that they had seen the Lord, and that He was alive.

The Bible gives us the truth about God. It gives us the truth about Christ. It gives us the truth about the Holy Spirit. The Bible is precious to us because it is true. We don't have to read it suspiciously; we can absolutely trust every word that we find in it. And there is always great joy in knowing what we learn about the Members of the Godhead. It is a book that produces joy. David said that in Psalm 1. Everybody wants to be happy, but the trouble is that most people in the world are seeking what they think will bring them joy, but are not paying any attention to what the Bible says as to the way we can be happy. Knowing God brings both peace and joy. And the Bible is unique in this.

III. THE WORD OF GOD IS PRECIOUS TO US BECAUSE IT KEEPS US FROM SIN, AND MAKES US HOLY.

Another thing that the Psalmist said in Psalm 119 expressing how precious the Word of God was to him is found in verse 11:

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might  
not sin against thee.

The NASB translates the word "hid" as treasured. Now something which you treasure is precious to you. The word implies the idea of hoarding the Word, storing it up, preparing for the days to come. The Bible not only tells us that there is such a thing as sin, but it describes sins in great detail. And even when we are saved we still carry our old weakness with us, and our inclination to sin. Christ died, as I have said to save us from sin's power as well as sin's penalty, but the only way we can experience deliverance from sin's power is through the Word--knowing it, believing it, obeying it (by the grace of God).

There must be hundreds, perhaps thousands of organizations today which have as their purpose delivering people from their bad habits (which ought to be called sin). But the only real and permanent answer to sin is the Word of God--not as some kind of a magical solution, but through Christ as our Savior and our fellowship with Him.

There are many other reasons that we can give as to why we love the Word of God, but let me give one more. You make your own list, but let me conclude my message with one more.

#### IV. THE WORD OF GOD IS PRECIOUS BECAUSE IT IS THE INSTRUMENT BY WHICH GOD GIVES US PEACE.

I said a moment ago that everybody wants to be happy. And I believe that is true. But we also need to recognize that a vital part of happiness is peace. We can't be happy unless we have peace, but peace brings happiness.

When I was a teenager growing up in my home church in Tacoma, Washington, one night we had for the evening service a man by the name of Robert Harkness. He was a writer of Gospel songs, and many hymn books include some of his works. During the service he asked that someone give him a verse of Scripture that they would like to see put to music. I don't remember who the person was who made the suggestion, but I do remember the verse--and I will never forget it. It was Psalm 119:165. That verse says this:

Great peace have they which love thy law: and  
nothing shall offend them.

And I can still remember the tune, although I am not going to sing it for you. But that night that verse was written in my memory and on my heart, and I have gone back to it time and time again to find peace for myself in times of need. God not only promised peace, but "great peace"! And it is a

peace which nothing can take away from us. But how do we have it? By loving the Word of God. Remember that "law" is used many times in the OT, not for the Mosaic Law, but for all of the Word of God.

What do we do if we are to be able to claim that we really love the Word of God? Psalm 119:97 gives us the answer:

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

This means that we don't just go to the Word when we are in trouble, but it means that it is our spiritual food every day as we spend time thinking about God and the wonderful truth He has given us in His Word.

Concl: My subject tonight is one that never can really be treated thoroughly. But I hope that you can really say that the Word of God is not only precious to you, but that it is your dearest possession. I feel sure that most of you can say that you love it, or you wouldn't be coming to a church like Trinity. But let me encourage all of us tonight, young and old, to make sure that you really do love God's Word, and that it is becoming more and more precious to you as the days go by.

Let me conclude with the verses with which we began: Prov-  
erbs 3:13-15.

"Merchandise" means profit. Solomon said that we will profit more from the Word of God than we would if we were the richest people on earth financially. Men have lost great fortunes of money in this world, but we have riches in the Word of God that we can never lose, and which will become more valuable to us the more we learn of them.

GOD'S PURE WORD  
Proverbs 30:5

Intro: We have been learning in this series on the Word of God that there are many ways to describe God's Word. I have been using words beginning with the letter "p" to present what the Scriptures say about themselves, words which we all recognize to be true. We have seen that the Word of God is:

- 1) Permanent -- Psa. 119:89.
- 2) Profitable -- 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.
- 3) Powerful -- Heb. 4:12.
- 4) Precious -- Prov. 3:13-15.

Tonight I want to speak about the purity of the Word of God, and my text is Proverbs 30:5.

You will notice from verse 1 of this chapter that the one who wrote these proverbs was a man by the name of Agur. Chapter 31 was written by a King Lemuel. We do not know who either of these men were, but that need not bother us as far as what they have written is concerned. In fact, we learn from Proverbs 31:1 that what is written there was taught to King Lemuel by his mother. We must accept both chapters as a part of the total Word of God.

Charles Bridges, in his commentary on Proverbs, had this to say about Agur and Lemuel:

Nothing certain is known about the writers; and it is vain to speculate, where God is silent. Far better is it to give the full interest of our mind and heart to the matter of instruction, than to indulge unprofitable curiosity respecting the writers. Our ignorance of the writers of many of the Psalms in no degree hinders their profit to us. We know their Author, when the penmen are hid. It is enough for us to be assured, that they were "holy men of God," who wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. i. 21.) (p. 589).

We can't be absolutely certain who wrote the book of Hebrews, but that certainly does not hinder us from profiting immensely from what the Spirit of God has given us in that chapter.

Many of us are learning from our Bible memory work in the Proverbs that they are usually a collection of wise sayings which may or may not have some connection with what has gone before, or with what follows--usually not! So they invite individual consideration and meditation. Such is the case with our text for tonight, Proverbs 30:5, although verse 6,



in this case, does seem to be related to verse 5. (Read.) But perhaps we can say that verse 4 is connected with verse 5 as well. Whatever we might say about Agur, his comments reveal that he was a very humble man. He did not confess that he had ascended up into heaven, or that he had come down from heaven, to find out about God, but the point he was making in verse 5 is that what we have in the Word of God is our source for divine truth, a very, very reliable and authoritative source. And he summed up his conviction regarding the Word of God by saying that it is "pure." Let us see what he meant.

### I. GOD'S WORD IS PURE.

The Spirit of God led Agur to use a word here which was often used in describing the refining of silver and gold. This process is known as smelting. It is meant to purge away that which is not silver or gold or iron or whatever the metal might be, so that what is left is pure gold, or pure silver, etc. Very hot furnaces were used for this purpose, and this is still the case.

For example, this is what we read in Psa. 12:6:

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver  
tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven  
times.

Another example is what Solomon wrote in Prov. 17:3:

The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for  
gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts.

Obviously the Lord in our text is accommodating Himself to our understanding of what it means that His Word is pure, or that it is refined. He did not mean that God gave His Word in an impure form, and that it had to be purified. But he was saying that this Word of God does not have any errors. It does not have any defects of any kind. There are no impurities in the Word of God at all. It is a holy Word. It is a true Word. And will you notice that this purity extends not just to the Word generally, but to "every word" in particular. If the smallest parts were not pure, then we could not say that the whole book is pure.

More than this, our word "pure" means that this Word of God has been tested over and over and over again, and it has always proven to be the truth of God. An illustration of this is what Joshua had to say about the Word of God after he got the children of Israel into the promised land.

There failed not ought of any good thing which  
the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all  
came to pass (Josh. 21:45).

God Himself stands behind His Word--always! That is the

reason that Paul could write to Timothy, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13).

— Nobody has ever been defiled by the Word of God. No one has ever been misled by the Word of God. The people of God have tried it over and over again in every generation, and the enemies of God have sought continually to defy it, but it stands written, and God stands behind it, down to the very words that we find in Scripture. The Word of God will never deceive us. You parents can safely encourage your children to hide the Word of God in their hearts because it will never corrupt them; it will always make them better, more godly like the One Who has given it to us--and I am not talking about Agur, as wonderful a person as he must have been. I am talking about GOD!

It would be difficult to find a better verse than this for the inspiration, the verbal inspiration of Scripture.

It is impossible for us to know how old this verse is because we don't really know the writer, but it surely goes back to Solomon's day (which was almost 1,000 years before Christ). So let us say generally that this proverb was first written 3,000 years ago, and it is just as true today as it was then. We may have newer translations, but the words of Scripture cannot be changed. "Every word of God is pure."

— This is what David was saying in Psalm 19. Cf. especially vv.7-9.

In Psa. 119:140 we read:

Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

But now let me raise a question:

## II. WHY DID AGUR MAKE THIS STATEMENT ABOUT THE WORD OF GOD?

— We all understand, or should understand by now, that Agur did not write on his own. He did not have some natural insight into divine truth. He wrote, as all of the writers of Scripture wrote, under the direction of the Holy Spirit. And yet, at the same time, we know that the Holy Spirit used the experiences of the writers, their understanding of the truth, and guided them so that they would express the truth in their own way.

— Let me mention three reasons for his strong statement concerning the Word of God. And I am indebted to Derek Kidner and his book of Proverbs for some of the things that I want

to point out to you now, suggestions which, as you will see, arise out of the text.

- A. Agur wanted the people of God to pay attention to the very words of Scripture.

He did not just say, The Word of God is pure. He went much deeper than that. He said, "Every word of God is pure." This means, every word in every book of the Bible is pure. It is tested, and approved. No book is excluded. No chapter is excluded. No word is excluded. This is a statement that can be made about all of the Word of God.

One of the great benefits of Bible memory is that it teaches us to pay attention to each, individual word. That is exactly what the Lord wants us to do. When the kings ascended the throne of Israel, one thing they had to do was to make their own copy of the Law. To do this they had to write out each word. And this would have taught them to pay attention to every word.

- B. Agur wanted the people of God to trust Him.

Look at the statement: "He is a shield unto them that put their trust in him." Our acquaintance with Scripture should not just be for the accumulation of knowledge. That is certainly important. We want to know the God of the Bible. We want to know its doctrines. We want to know its history. We want to know the people who are mentioned in Scripture, and to learn what we can from their lives. But ultimately our acquaintance with Scripture must lead us to trust God! How often we need the Lord as our Shield! We need this every day. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith as we notice the very words of Scripture.

Of course, when we speak of trusting God we should understand that this means believing what He has told us in His Word. We need to believe it all!

- C. Agur wanted us to know that the Word of God is complete.

We see this in the next verse, Prov. 30:6. We are not to add anything, not even a single word, to what God has given us in His Word. In fact, we know that there are severe penalties facing anyone who tampers with the Word of God. We are not to add to the Word of God, nor are we to take anything away from it—again I say, no even a single word.

We see this in Deut. 4:2:

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

God preserves the purity of His Word by telling us to leave it as it is.

This is what we mean when we speak of the sufficiency of Scripture. We don't need human psychology. The Word of God contains all we will ever need, as the Apostle Peter said, for life and godliness.

And then let me add this:

- D. The fact that we don't know who Agur was, helps us to see that he wanted his writings to lead us to the One Who told him what to write.

I am afraid that many times we get so concerned about knowing who wrote the books of the Bible that we forget Whose book this is. Agur would point us away from himself, and turn our thoughts to the One Who speaks in Scripture.

"Every word of God is pure." You can't say that about the words of men. It is what God says that is pure, and it is what He has said that is purifying in its effect upon His people. Even the writers of Scripture wrote other things besides what we have in the Bible. Those words may have been better than most human words, but it is only what they wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit that can be called "pure," "pure" because, and only because, they are God's words. This is gold, as Charles Bridges once said, "without alloy." Although it has always been attacked by its enemies, yet it has always stood the tests, and no impurities have ever been found in it.

It is interesting to me to see what rich truth various commentators have found in this one verse. Let me add one more point which Charles Bridges added, which I give as another reason Agur must have had for pointing out that "every word of God is pure."

- E. We need to know that "every word of God is pure" so that we will not neglect any part of it.

If every word of Scripture is the word of God, then we must not neglect any part of it. I agree that the genealogies are not as interesting as the Psalms. And there are sections of the prophetic books which are hard to understand. Who has not struggled to get through those chapters that tell of how the land of Canaan was divided under Joshua's leadership, or

the chapters in Ezekiel which describe the Temple which is yet to be built? But Agur would remind us that it is all the Word of God, and since it is God's Word, we should not neglect or skim over or cut short any part of the Bible. Years ago when this truth really got into my heart, from then on as I have read the Bible through each year I have painstakingly read every name in every genealogy in both the Old and New Testaments. And to make sure that I do it, I read them aloud.

Read all of the Bible. It is God's precious Word, purer than anything you can ever carry in your hand, and purer than any knowledge that you can get into your heart.

Concl: This morning I spoke to those who were in my class about what we believe here at Trinity Bible Church about the Bible. My text tonight has brought out many of those things that I said, and even more. As I close, let me read for you again the strong charge which Paul gave to Timothy as to what his ministry should be, and what the ministry of every true servant of the Lord should be until our Lord comes.

(Read 2 Timothy 3:14-5.)

## GOD'S PROPHETIC WORD

1 Peter 1:19-21

Intro: For the past several Sunday nights we have been looking at various characteristics of the Word of God. It is a pure Word, a profitable Word, a powerful Word, a precious Word, and a pure Word. Tonight I would like for us to consider God's Prophetic Word. The Apostle Peter called it "a sure word of prophecy." Some translations render it something like the NKJV, "the prophetic word made sure." The idea is not that anything could happen to make the Scriptures more dependable, or truer, than they are, but the idea of a "sure word" is for the strengthening of our faith. If we connect this nineteenth verse with what has gone immediately before (which we considered this morning), we can see that Peter was saying that the transfiguration of the Lord, with the accompanying message of the Father, simply adds to the fact that the Word of God is absolutely true and trustworthy. And this would apply in particular to what the OT (in this case) had to say about the Messiah and Redeemer, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, in spite of the fact that we have the testimony of Peter (here), and the testimony of John in John 1:14, and the reports given of this event in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke--which would be testimony enough, the strongest proof that we have of the Deity of Christ is the testimony of Scripture. It is not that the transfiguration confirms the Scriptures, but the Scriptures confirms the transfiguration of Christ. We must always put the Word of God first. Whatever claims to be the truth of God which cannot be confirmed by Scripture, must be discarded. But, on the other hand, regardless of how amazing an event might be, if it is confirmed by Scripture, that is all the proof that any believer would need.

The prophetic Word is "a light that shines in a dark place." We would be in the dark as far as God and His purposes are concerned if we did not have the Word. The Word sheds its light upon our darkened hearts, and in that light we see light. That is, in the light of the Word of God we see the truth about many things, including ourselves, about which we would be in complete ignorance if we did not have the Word.

So what does Peter say we should do about this prophetic Word?

We would "do well" to "take heed" to it as we would if we were in a dark room, and suddenly someone should come in with a light. We would quit our groping, and take advantage of what the light makes clear to us. We "take heed" to the Word

when we pay attention to it, believe what it says, and apply the full force of the Word to our own hearts. And Peter was writing this in a day when false teachers and false teaching were abounding. He was calling them back to the Word of God, and assuring them that they could follow the Word without any doubt as to its dependability.

As Christians we often say that we would like to have been living when the Lord Jesus was here on earth. I have said that, and you are very unusual if you have not said it. We would like to have heard Him teach. We would love to have seen Him perform miracles. And it would have been a special blessing to have been with the Lord on what is now called the mount of transfiguration. But Peter indicates here that even with such wonderful revelations of God, we are at no loss when we stop to realize that what we have is the Word of God. And therefore, we should not feel that we are at a loss, so to speak, because we live now instead of then! In fact, in one respect, our time is to be preferred because we now have the completed Word of God while the apostles and the church in its earliest years did not have all that we have. And we can say that there will never be any change in our position because we can confidently abide by the Word of God, as Peter said, "until the day dawn and the day star arise in" our "hearts." That is the day when the Lord comes, and then we, too, will see the Lord's glory arising upon us.

When I was growing up in Tacoma, we had two men who often supplied for our pastor when he was away. One was a Scotchman; the other was an Englishman. The Scotchman owned and operated the Eastman Kodak Company in downtown Tacoma; the Englishman was a landscape gardener. Both of those men were powerful preachers, and I remember as a child looking forward to times when they would speak. The Scotchman's name was John Smith; the Englishman's name was Harry Downton. But one thing I will always remember about John Smith's prayers was that he would conclude them with these words: "Until the day dawn, and the day star arise in our hearts." And nothing could shake his confidence in the Word of God. He would have said it must be the Word of God today, the Word of God tomorrow, and the Word of God forever--until the Lord comes!

We can tell from our Lord's ministry, from the preaching of the apostles and others, as well as from the writing of the NT, that there was nothing about the faith of the early believers that compared with their total confidence in the Word of God. In my class this morning we were speaking about Total Depravity. And I called attention to the fact that when Paul was proving this important truth in Romans 3 we have a series of quotations from the OT, especially from the Psalms, in which he was saying, in effect, "It says so in the

Scriptures, and that settles it!" He did not go into a lot of additional proofs. The Scriptures were enough, and that was the kind of preaching which the Lord honored in the early days of the church. The Word has the same power today, and God will use His Word in the same way, but I am afraid that many times we try to prove the Word instead of proclaiming it. Cf. Heb. 4:12. We are living in a day when people are desperately in need of light, spiritual light. And absolutely the only place that light can be found is in God's Word, God's prophetic Word.

But now let us consider for a moment,

# I. THE MEANING OF THE WORD PROPHECY.

Probably when most of us hear that word, prophecy, we think in terms of predictions regarding the future. We think of the book of Daniel, or the book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ. And they are prophetic. They do tell us many things about the future. Dr. Chafer used to tell us in Seminary that approximately twenty percent of the Bible was prophetic in this sense when it was written, even going down to passages like Genesis 18 where Sarah was told that she would be a mother--a prophecy which we know was fulfilled. The fulfilled prophecies encourage us to believe those that have not yet been fulfilled.

But this is not the full meaning of the word prophecy, and our text tonight helps us to understand what was included in prophecy.

If you will let your eye run down through chapter 2 you will see that Peter was speaking of OT history, and among the people that he mentioned is Noah whom Peter called "a preacher of righteousness." Noah predicted the flood, but that was not all that he did. He preached righteousness. He warned people to get right with God so as to escape the coming judgment of the flood. Even Lot must have done some preaching, even though his life is not a good one to follow.

But then look at 2 Peter 3. Here we find predictions concerning the future. This is what we think of as prophecy, but it is only a part of prophecy. If we take chapters 2 and 3 together, then we see the nature of the prophetic Word.

What I am saying is that prophets were preachers first; after that many of them were foretellers of future events. So when Peter called the Bible, "a more sure word of prophecy," he was not just speaking of those OT books which we call prophetic, but of all of the OT! It is proper to call the OT the prophetic Word. And we can say the same thing about the NT.



If we want to get even more specific about the meaning of the Bible as "God's Prophetic Word," we have the explanation in verses 20 and 21. There are two things to notice: (1) what the Bible is not; (2) what the Bible is.

Verse 20 tells us what the Bible is not. It is not "of any private interpretation." And Peter made it all-inclusive. No part of the Bible is "of any private interpretation." What did he mean by this?

He meant that there is no part of the Bible which originated with man. The NIV is close to the meaning of the original. It translates this part of verse 20 like this: "No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation." And in the first part of verse 21 he confirmed this: "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man." What this all means is that this is not a book which men have produced. As far as we have been able to determine, the Bible was produced by approximately forty different writers over a period of some 1600 years, but not one of them could say that what he wrote originated with him! This is what makes the Bible different from all of the other books which have ever been written.

Well, if the writers were not responsible for what they wrote, if they did not originate the contents, how did the Bible come into being?

Our answer is in the last part of verse 20: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." It would be closer to the original text to say simply that "men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." The NIV says, "carried along." I especially like the way it is translated in the NASB: "But men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

This is what we need to understand about prophecy. It is descriptive of all of Scripture. It indicates that this book, while written by men, did not originate with those writers, but that it has all come from God!

We have a good illustration of this in Peter's first epistle, chapter 1, verses 10 through 12. (Read.)

See also what Peter said in Acts 1:16:

Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

And then Peter quoted from two Psalms. David said it, but it came from the Holy Spirit.

The verses we considered when we were speaking about God's Profitable Word also say the same thing: 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. It is God's Word, so why turn to anything else when people are concerned about knowing God, and knowing themselves. God's Word is perfect, complete, and never needs to be revised. And it is the message we need to know and to proclaim.

Now let me go back to verse 19 which really is:

## II. THE APPLICATION.

We can do no better than to pay attention (NASB) to all of the Word of God, God's Prophetic Word. Why follow the changing ideas of men when we have the unchanging Word of God, a book which has been shown to be over and over again God's Word.

What a tragedy it is when people do not know this about the Bible! But it is a greater tragedy when they know it, but don't believe it, and don't obey it, patterning their lives after it. The world today is staggering along in spiritual blindness. This is truly one of the darkest hours in human history, and it is especially dark in our own country. The Lord was speaking words which apply to the USA when He said the words recorded for us in Matthew 6:22-23:

22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Concl: Our country has had the light for many years, but we as a nation have cast it aside. And so our darkness is becoming greater than in nations where they have not had the light.

But what we need to be careful about is that the light does not become darkness to us. Therefore, let us make sure that day by day we are paying the closest attention to the Word of God. If we are doing that, then our light will increase, and it may please the Lord to use us to awaken others to the truth that the Bible is truly the Word of God, God's Prophetic Word.