

The Sword of Spirit

It always amazes me how the enemy is clever at preventing us from doing the things which we know are beneficial for us, the things that we know will help us move forward and heavenwards in our walk with Christ. Although I am not talking about prayer this morning, I know from experience that the enemy has used my prayer life to discourage me and pull me down. And he does the same with our dedication to reading, studying and applying God's living Word in our lives. You know how you feel after a few days having not spoken to your Heavenly Father in prayer or having not heard from Him through His precious Word. I don't know about you but I feel awful, both in my body and my spirit.

One thing I noticed in our western world today is that the more Bibles we have in our possession, the less we read it; the more versions of the Bible we have access to, and the less we study and apply it to our lives. This is a real struggle that we face as a Church and we need to reverse this pattern. However, this morning, I am not here to condemn or to make people feel guilty but to encourage you, the same way the Spirit encourages us to commit ourselves to God's Word.

I would like to look with you at two things concerning God's Word; first its *Importance* and secondly its *Influence* and *Impact*.

A. The Importance of God's Word

The way I see things is that if something is important to me, I'm going to commit to it, not just with my time but also my energy. Your job is important to you, you'll try hard to excel in it; your family is important to you, you'll do whatever it takes to provide for and protect it. My first embarrassing question to you this morning is "how important is God Almighty to you?" How deep is your love for Him?

In 1 John 5:3 the apostle tells us "*This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome*". That really makes me wonder how much of God's commands I follow and obey as a token of my love for Him. You might ask "but what are God's commands?"

Would you like to turn to Deuteronomy 6:4-9, where Moses gives us the answer to that question. "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*"

Later on, in chapter 32 just before he dies, Moses said to the people of Israel, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. 47 They are not just idle words for

you—*they are your life*. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

In the same way the Israelites were instructed to follow God's precepts, today we are commanded to keep God's Word in our hearts simply because it is our life. Both your spiritual and physical life depends on it not to mention your eternal destiny. If that is the case, how much do you value your life and how much time do you invest in what really matters. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us to "*store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal*". Are you investing time in God's Word today or in your promising career or maybe your brand new car, or even your bank account!

Illustration: Juliet's verses

B. The Impact and Influence of God's Word

We looked at the importance of God's Word and how much we should value it; now I'd like to examine with you the impact and influence of the Word of God.

1. As most of you will know, this year our theme at CJ's is "a time to grow", growth in all its dimensions. We don't want to become stagnant or dormant but our desire is to move forward. The only way to grow in your spiritual life is to take the Bible more seriously as 1 Peter 2:2-3 remind us "*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good*". You might argue "Pastor, I take notes faithfully every Sunday"; good but that's not enough, you have to let the Word come straight out of the Book into your system so it can challenge and transform you. Look at the man in the first Psalm and how he is described; he is a blessed man likened to a tree planted by streams of water which yield its fruit in season, whatever he does prosper. And what is the reason for that? You guessed it; he delights in God's law and meditates on it day and night!

Before I move on to my next point, I'd like to give you a little warning here which comes from Hebrews 4:2 "*For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith*". There is no point in reading your Bible 50 times a day if you do not believe what it says or put your trust in the one who inspired it. It's like reading a manual on how to work out your new DVD player but don't really follow the instructions because you think it's nonsense.

2. As soldiers of the Lord, we shouldn't be surprised to see that Satan is trying everything he can to destroy the testimony of Christ whenever he can. The enemy will use our prayerlessness or Bible-lessness in order to defeat us and destabilize the Church. But the good thing is that in this war, we have the weapons to fight.

Ephesians 6:17 tells us to "take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" in order to defeat the enemy. It's the only offensive weapon mentioned in that armour and our Lord Jesus used it to great effect when tempted by Satan in Matthew 4. On three occasions, Jesus used different swords saying "it is written" and defeated Satan who left with his head down. In the same way, the enemy is trying to keep us from being effective and will throw all sorts of things at us but once again we can protect ourselves by using the sword of the Spirit, God's word. The sad news is that you can only use what you have and what you know, hence the necessity for us soldiers to acquire as much as we can by spending time in the Book.

3. The final point I would like to look at is found in **Hebrews 4:8-12** and deals with the power of the Word to keep us from sliding or drifting away.

Last Sunday Pastor Julio talked to us about Sabbath and rest. Here, the peace of God, the rest of God enters into us as we obey Him by faith and surrender to His will. As the Israelites exemplified so beautifully, this is not an easy job and that's probably why they failed on so many occasions. I often feel like I'm not better than them because I also fail God all the times but it's only by His grace that I can stand.

I don't know about you, but there is a question that challenged me seriously last Sunday; "How much of the world/ Bible permeates/ influences my life?" The more we get blended in the world and our society, the more we tend to drift away from the Lord and what really matters in life. The Israelites doubted God's promises and rebelled and as a consequence did not enter into the rest of God. **Psalm 119:133** says "Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me". A reminder to us that as we trust God's word, it will rearrange things in our lives and help us get our priorities right. The Word exposes our hearts; and then, if we trust God, the word enables our hearts to obey God and claim His promises. Only the Word can move us away from the path of sin into the path of righteousness.

Now that you know all this about the power of God's Word, it's up to you to act and pray. Ask God to help you read His Word every day and meditate on it so that it's not just like reading a novel but it becomes alive and speaks to your heart.

Illustrations: Heather/ Julio/Caroline

The Bible is a seed that brings life and takes roots in whoever receives it in faith. It's like water which cleanses us and refreshes us. Like fire it purifies and only leaves what is good and honouring to God. It's like a lamp that keeps you from stumbling on your path and leads you to loving and worshipping God more and more. Amen!