

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

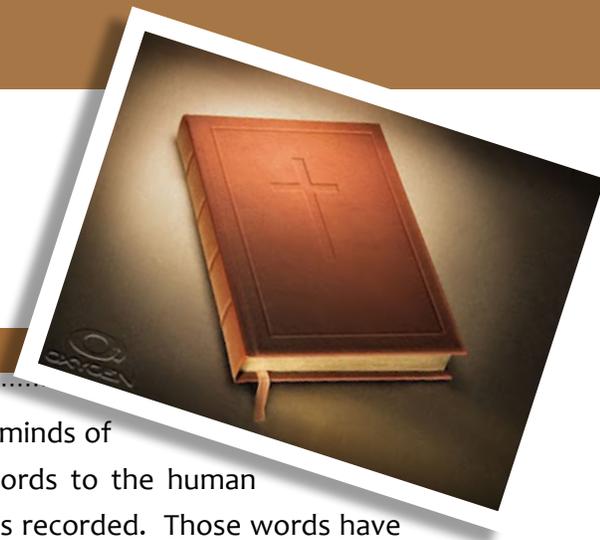
John 8:32

The Word of God—Final

Theme: How His truth gets into our minds

Review

The Bible is designed to get divine truth from the mind of God to the minds of humans. God's Word was originally written as He breathed the words to the human authors; this process assured that the absolutely correct message was recorded. Those words have been faithfully transmitted through the centuries to assure that future generations also had the Word. The Bible is God's Word; we have it today and He has promised it will not pass away. In addition to having His Word, the Holy Spirit helps us correctly understand it. Each of us must study it and ask Him to guide our minds and thoughts. It is His truth which sets people free from sin while creating fascinating hope and joy. It is an honor to hold in our hands the Word of God.



Introduction

This final lesson on the Word of God will bring into focus all that has been taught. It is trusted you will see that it is no small thing to have a Bible and an incredible privilege to know the truth of God. **"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth"** (John 17:17). **"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"** (John 8:32).

Bible Truth

It Exists and You Have It!

The Old Testament's (OT) Hebrew text is well established. The New Testament's Greek text is faithfully preserved in the majority of manuscripts that presently exist. Why is this important? Because the originally inspired words of God do exist, and we have them! Furthermore, competent translations into our common languages are the Word of God. There may be a few minor variations based upon which text is used, but those variations will not alter matters of faith. The word "competent" implies the translation was made by qualified, original-language scholars; by God-honoring

translators; and not the work of one particular person or religious group.

Which Translation Should You Use?

Discussion: Would it be best to ask your friends to read a newer translation of the Bible knowing they probably will read it or insist they read an older translation (which some claim is the best) knowing they probably will not read it?

It seems the above discussion about translations has existed forever. Generally one generation will want the

next generation to use the same translation (version) they used. This makes a lot of sense because the former translation has served well; in addition, people can easily share verses and study together. Each generation wants to assure the next is grounded and true to the faith; this stability is important and often viewed as related to a Bible translation. There is always the fear the next generation will be lead astray by some new version of the Bible. However, we must remember the important thing is to actually read the Bible and not get hung-up on discussions about which version. Reading and studying the Word is what will assure the next generation loves the Lord and faithfully serves Him.

This issue could be easily resolved if an exact word-for-word translation from the original languages existed. If you have studied a foreign language, you know that a word-for-word translation is not possible between languages; that just is not how languages work. Here is a word-for-word translation of Matthew 1:18: **"Of the but Jesus Christ the birth thus was. Being betrothed the mother of him Mary to Joseph, before to come together them, she was found in womb having out of Spirit Holy"** (1). All the words are English, but the sentence structure is still Greek and no one would read such a translation even if the English words were updated. Once the sentence structure is modified, then the matter of whether or not a translation correctly conveys His truth becomes an issue. The translators have to decide which words and thoughts best reflect the Greek text with the goal of expressing those original words, thoughts, and intentions in a readable style. Translating is a difficult process; especially to capture the meaning originally intended and to do so in a readable way.

It is important to understand our Lord used a translation. Jesus used the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament). It is clear it was not the best translation, but He used it anyway.

Jesus used that translation because it was in the language of the common people. William Tyndale seems to have followed Christ (discussed in last week's lesson) believing that the common or lowly person (he said plowboy) should be able to read the Bible in his/her own language. Jesus knew the Septuagint was not a perfect translation; yet He called it Scripture, taught from it, quoted it, and made use of it with the common people. This is much the same issue we face today as we consider whether we should use a beloved older translation or a more readable, newer translation. By using the Septuagint He shows us that a competent translation is the Word of God (Matt. 21:42, 22:29; Mark 12:24; Lk. 24:27, 24:32, 45).

Discussion: Today in America almost every person can read the Word in her/his own language. So what prevents teens from reading it today?

How Spiritual Truth is Transmitted

God is not inspiring new Scripture today. He has clearly told us that the Word is complete **"...I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill (complete) the word of God"** (Col. 1:25, parenthesis added, contrast Col. 4:12). No more has been or will be written since the first century; we have it all. Some people will claim to have received a new revelation from God; do not be misled by those who say this because it is in direct opposition to what God has said. If they believed the Word of God, they would not make such claims because they violate what is already written.

There is no indication God has or will inspire Bible translators, but He can certainly guide them. Additionally, it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to help each of us understand what is written. This ministry helps reduce problems with poorer quality translations or hard to understand older translations, i.e., He teaches us the spiritual truth we need from whatever translation

we use. There is an old saying, "God can draw a straight line with a crooked stick;" meaning God can assure we get His truth regardless of the translation used.

A question to consider: if you were stranded on a deserted island and had just a page or two of the Bible, would that be enough to teach you what to believe in order to be saved? No one really knows the correct answer because it depends upon what page(s) you have. However, the point is that it is very possible that the Holy Spirit could lead you to the truth even with just a little Scripture. Similarly, He can lead you to the truth with this translation or that translation. God always has a way of providing the truth a person needs.

Explosion of Christianity

The Age of Grace (the Age in which we live) began in the first century. The Apostle Paul was the apostle specifically selected by God to be the Apostle to the nations. He ministered to the gentile nations and Christianity began to increase at a rapid rate. From that start Christianity has grown eventually resulting in an explosion in Christianity world wide. Only God really knows the actual numbers, but estimates of the number of people saved indicate that many, many more people are being saved on a yearly basis now than at any other time in human history.

What is the cause of this explosion? There are many, but it all began unfolding with the death of Christ and the introduction of the Age of Grace. The main reasons for the explosion of Christianity are broken into two groups below. You will see both groups are deeply centered upon the written Word (and the One revealed in it).

The Message: Our Age is very special because the grace of God has gone to all nations in the world. Previously, in the OT and the Gospels, the plan was for Israel to first be converted and then they would go into all the world with the gospel. This made the proclamation of the gospel contingent upon human performance; but

whenever anyone's salvation is dependent upon another human, there is a problem. Indeed, the chosen nation rejected the Lord and (at that time) could not be the group of people God would use to be a blessing to the world. God had a secret plan for what would happen after Israel rejected Him. This plan is called the Mystery (secret) in the Bible (Eph. 3:5-9; Col. 1:26). **"...how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already)..."** (Eph. 3:3).

Basically, the Mystery is what our Age of Grace is all about. It is the simplicity, fairness, and grace of this Age that bring so many to Christ. Here are the basics of our Age:

- salvation is by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, without works (Eph. 2:8-9)
- all people are equal before God; there is no special nation or person (Gal. 3:28)
- all believers are made members of one new spiritual Body (Body of Christ) (Eph. 3:6)
- missionary efforts depend upon individuals, not a special group or nation (2 Cor. 5:20)

World events: In God's perfect plan for our Age, He knew there would be a huge increase in world population beginning around 1500 AD. This was God's timing as He guided human history so that world events (actually His) were ideal for spreading the Word. The invention of the printing press (1455 AD) made inexpensive, numerous, reliable copies of the Bible available. The Reformation (religious movement of the 16th century that started Protestantism) created a zeal to get the written Word to the common people in their language. Soon there was a missionary zeal to get the Word to the far corners of the Earth in the common languages. Missionaries could finally reach the far places because there was a reduction in disease and travel became easier. Many groups and individuals started translating the Bible (many were not perfect, but the Lord still used them for His glory).

If the Bible were not the very Word of God, with all its power and truth, this never would have happened. Millions/billions of people coming to faith in Jesus Christ is not the result of some man-made book but the Book of God. Furthermore, if it were not for the Word of God being made available in many languages (translations), this explosion would not have taken place.

Share: Can you share a time when you sensed a burning desire to share the Word with others because it is just

too good not to share? **"And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!'... So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"** (Rom. 10:14b-17). The word preacher includes teens at school, home, or wherever.

Life Applications

As noted in Lesson four, you are not capable of understanding His truth without some help; thus He says, **"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"** (1 Cor. 2:14). So God has given the Holy Spirit to guide the believer as he/she reads, meditates, and studies the Word. This ministry of the Holy Spirit makes known the things God has prepared for those that love Him; it is called illumination. Illumination takes away our spiritual darkness and teaches us about salvation and the will of God in our lives.

Here is what you are asked to do so that He can work in your mind and impart spiritual truth:

1. **"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God..."** (2 Tim. 2:15). To be diligent means to study, to work hard, and to think about the Word of God (1 Tim. 4:12-13). A person has to make time with the Lord a priority in life; not something to do if there is time.
2. **"Test (prove) all things; hold fast what is good"** (1 Thes. 5:21, parenthesis added). Do not just believe something because someone says it is true or that it is in the Bible. You may have to check things out to make sure they are true. At times it may be good to hold off on making a decision on exactly what you believe until the Lord leads you further in life. When the Lord

convicts you of truth, then make that truth part of your daily life.

3. **Seek wisdom of mature believers** (pastors, parents, authors,...) (Prov. 15:32; 1 Cor. 1:21).

4. **"Pray without ceasing"** (1 Thes. 5:17). As you pray (just talking in your own way to God), remember to ask that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will and spiritual understanding (Col. 1:9).

Following these steps helps get the Word from the written page into your heart/mind. **"For 'who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.'" (1 Cor. 2:16).**

Truth from God's Word saves, transforms, gives hope, provides assurance, and reveals what the future will be. However, false teaching, **"... will spread like cancer"** (2 Tim. 2:17). False teaching is like a cancer because it can spread rapidly even though it is harmful and serves no good. Cancer brings misery and takes control. God's truth is purifying and gives freedom. You have a choice, you can devour the truth and let it change you from within or allow false teaching to become a cancer in your soul forever destroying and harming you.

If you want to make a difference, if you wish to accomplish something important in life, then trusting in Christ and getting to know the Word of God are the starting points. As His truth comes into your life, you will

be transformed to have a mind like Christ; it will become clearer and clearer how to serve Him in a way that "makes a difference."

Take 2 Heart

Summary

God originally breathed special words to humans, then assured those words were handed down to us. It is necessary to have translations into other languages; Jesus' own ministry proves that. Some translations are better than others, but in spite of minor variations, reliable translations are the Word of God. The Holy Spirit teaches us from our Bible and imparts true spiritual understanding. Thus, the written Word and the Spirit assure the truth gets from God's mind to our minds. That truth leads to our salvation, freedom from sin's control, and to a life guided by the one and only God. Please be diligent in the study of the Word and devour the truth of it. As you grow in Christ, His desire for your life will become clearer and you can make a huge impact upon this world as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel

"... that at that time you were without Christ, ... having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the Blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:12). Jesus Christ took your place on the Cross as your substitute to pay for your sins. It is by faith (believing) in Him that you

are brought near to Him; which basically means your sins are forgiven and you are saved.

Encouragement

The pressures and demands upon a teenager can be intense. On top of that, adults often imply that teens do not read their Bible or act in the "right" way. However, you know the Lord looks upon your heart and sees your inner desires and faith. He is patient and understanding even during times of doubt, discouragement, or fears. He wants to comfort and guide you; certainly He is not out to "get you" for doing wrong. Please do not expect God to speak to you in an audible way, but you can be sure He will speak to your heart as you study the Word of God. As you read and study your Bible. may He encourage you, enrich your life, and guide you into His truth.

Remember: In many parts of the world the common person cannot read the Bible in his/her own language either due to illiteracy or lack of available Scripture. Does this create a desire within you to help them in some way?

Reference:

(1) *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man*, James Williams and Randolph Shaylor, 1999, ISBN 1-889893-38-2