

Introduction

I read a joke about a man who took his wife for counseling. After just one session with her, the therapist told him: "**I have bad news. Your wife has lost her mind and I can't help her.**" To which he replied, "**I'm not surprised. She's been giving me a piece of it every day for the past 20 years.**" We're all familiar with that idiom aren't we? People say they going to give someone a piece of their mind. Well, the fact is that God Himself is doing just that. He's giving us a piece of His mind, and that's what I'm going to preach about today.

The Word of God

The subject of our text is found in 1:22, 25. It's the word of God. Suppose I asked 100 typical church goers, "**What is the word of God?**" Probably 99 would answer, "**the Bible,**" or its synonym "**Scripture.**" Almost all Christians equate the term "**the word of God**" *solely* with His written word, the Bible, and I highlight the word "**solely.**" But they shouldn't because it encompasses much more than that.

Let's consider what words, generally, are. Recall something I've said, sincerely, on numerous occasions: "**Anything that can be done with anger can be better done without it.**" Those words express what's inside me, my personality. They express my thoughts. I think anger is foolish and detrimental. They also express my will. I want others and me not to get angry. They give you a piece of my mind in other words or, more broadly, a piece of my personality.

That helps us define "**the word of God.**" It's anything that expresses His personality, by which I mean His thoughts and will. The universe, for instance, expresses His personality. It is a word of God. Human beings, since they're in His image, express His personality. They are a word of God. And Jesus in the flesh expresses His personality, supremely. If we want to know His thoughts and will, we only have to examine the person, words, and actions of Jesus. They are the clearest

and brightest expressions of what God thinks and wills. That makes Jesus not *a word* but *the* Word of God, to quote John 1:1. Anyway, those three expressions of God's personality, and all others, are words of His.

One of those others is the Bible. The Bible is the result of God speaking to men. He communicated His thoughts and will to its writers. He then directed and empowered them to accurately record what He communicated. That makes the Bible the unique *written* word of God. Its contents express His personality more clearly and brightly than any other word of His except Jesus. That means when you and I seriously engage it, we're also seriously engaging the very personality of God Himself.

We now know what the word of God is, and I'd sum it up this way. It's Him giving a piece of His mind or, more broadly, of His personality.

The Word of God Is Powerful

Now, notice what Peter implies about it in 1:24-25 by quoting Isaiah 40:6-8. It's powerful – beyond limit. It is so because of something God is – infinite. That's He's infinite means this. He speaks what He wills and it occurs, without any restriction. You and I are finite. What we will is restricted. It often occurs but only when we *also act* in some way. So, I will a German chocolate cake on my kitchen table and it occurs. But it occurs only if I *also act* using a cake mix, eggs, water, a can of frosting, and an oven. That is so because I'm finite. But God is infinite. He wills and it occurs without any restriction. It occurs directly, simply because He speaks what He wills, without Him also acting. So, He speaks, "**Let there be a German chocolate cake,**" and it occurs.

The most obvious example of His infinity is Him creating the universe in Genesis 1-2. He willed every detail, spoke it, and it was so. An equally obvious but ignored example is Him sustaining the universe. Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus "**upholds all things.**" He keeps everything existing and working as it does. How? That verse tells us, "**by the word of His power.**" He wills everything in the universe to continue existing and working as it does, speaks it, and it is so. Our sun illustrates and

even proves this. It **“shines”** by an incredibly delicate balancing act between gravity and nuclear fusion. It’s a miracle that it shines regularly and uniformly and I mean that literally. It’s a miracle. God upholds the delicate balancing act between gravity and nuclear fusion – and all things – by the word of His power.

One of those **“all things”** that He upholds is His written word, the Bible. Listen carefully to what I’m going to say. God never leaves the Bible alone. As I just explained, He never leaves the sun alone. It would implode if He did. In the same way, He never leaves the Bible alone. He unceasingly directs His thoughts and will to it through the Holy Spirit.

That’s what makes it infallible. Think about it. We claim that it is inerrant, without mistake or error of any kind. That claim applies only to the original manuscripts, to the actual papyrus that Moses, Isaiah, Matthew, Paul, Peter, and all the other Biblical authors wrote. But we don’t have any of those originals – just copies of copies. So how do we know that the copies we have are accurate (the same as the originals)? It’s that God never leaves the Bible alone. He willed that the originals be accurately copied, and empowered human copiers to achieve that.

Then there’s the issue of interpretation. The Bible being free of error doesn’t necessarily mean our interpretation of it is free of error. But our interpretation of it can be generally free of error. Why? God never leaves the Bible alone. He unceasingly directs and enlightens disciples of Jesus as they seriously engage it. Some secularists try to denigrate its value by claiming everyone interprets it differently. But their claim is bogus. Disciples of Jesus who seriously engage it don’t. They interpret 99% of it the same way.

I trust you get the vital point I’m making. God never leaves His written word, the Bible, alone. He upholds it by the word of His power. He unceasingly directs His personality, His thoughts and will, to it.

The Written Word of God Is Powerful

That in turn makes it powerful. More specifically, it makes it

inherently transforming. That's always the effect of it on disciples of Jesus who seriously engage it. It transforms them, profoundly.

Peter makes that clear in our text. Consider the term **"the word which was preached to you"** in 1:25. The word preached refers to literal words that God gave the Apostles and that they spoke and wrote. Also consider the term **"the pure milk of the word"** in 2:2, which has a parallel in 1 Corinthians 3:2. Peter is referring to what Paul did there, the spoken and written words of the Apostles. The word of God in those verses, therefore, connotes primarily His written word.

Notice what that word does if we've tasted the kindness of God to quote 2:3, which means are disciples of Jesus. 1:22 – It purifies our souls so that we love Christians. 1:23 – It makes us born again, which means spiritually alive. 2:2 – It enables us to grow in respect to our salvation, that is, increase in our spiritual aliveness. We are as a result, according to 2:1, able to conquer sins that routinely beset others like malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. Now that is transforming!

I'd explain how that happens this way. Because the Bible is God's word, He is always present with it. He always gives a piece of His mind and His personality in and through it. His mind then impacts our mind and His personality our personality as we seriously engage it. The result is the transformation of the persons we are and the lives we live.

Some years ago, a national magazine published a story about Chuck Colson that explained his dramatic transformation from Richard Nixon hatchet man to lover of God and criminals. The story's author concluded, **"prison radicalized the life of Chuck Colson."** Colson then wrote an article in reply that said this: **"What 'radicalized' me was not prison but taking to heart the truths revealed in Scripture . . . It is the Bible that continues to challenge my life today. It is the power of God's word, and it is, by itself, life changing."**

He was right. The Bible, just because it is God's word, is inherently powerful. It transforms our persons and lives, if we're disciples of Jesus, into the image and likeness of Him.

Long for the Word of God

But it does so only if we “**long**” for it, to quote 2:2. The Greek word translated “**long for**” means “**crave.**” According to 2:2, we should crave and feed on the Bible as a nursing infant does its mother’s milk.

That clearly implies more than just reading it. Some sincere followers of Jesus engage it by reading it through in a year. That’s what I did when I was in high school. I read it through four times. But I experienced what Madam Guyon wrote three centuries ago, “**If you read quickly, it will benefit you little. You will be like a bee that merely skims the surface of a flower.**”

Those who just read the Bible don’t grasp its primary purpose. Henri Nouwen had a picture hanging in his home. It showed a woman with an open Bible on her lap, but gazing upward to heaven. The point was that she was looking for God in it. And that’s its primary purpose! Recall what I said. God never leaves it alone. He is always present with and in it. So, our aim in engaging it is to encounter Him.

That’s our aim and Dallas Willard teaches us how to achieve it in his book *Hearing God*. I’ve adapted what he teaches there for our purposes. We do five things to encounter God in the Bible.

First, choose a text that’s rich in spiritual truths. I’d suggest ones like Exodus 20, Psalm 23, Ezekiel 18, Matthew 5-7, Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 13, and 1 John 4, to name a few.

Second, come to your chosen text as a place where you will have a holy meeting with God. Make that your aim and keep it in mind.

Third, find information. Concentrating and using the principles of interpretation we’ve learned, discern the truths the text reveals. After that, we determine other truths that those truths imply. Ask and answer the question, “**If this truth is so, what must also be so?**”

Fourth, personalize the information. Ask and answer these questions, “**What is the world and my life like because this information is so?**” and “**How shall I think, feel, and act, because it is so?**”

Finally, fifth, pray. William Law wrote, **“Therefore the Scriptures should only be read in an attitude of prayer, trusting to the inward working of the Holy Spirit to make their truths a living reality within us.”** We actually pray and ask the Holy Spirit to do that. Make the information we find a living reality within us. We ask Him to make it so in our persons and lives.

When you and I engage the Bible that way, something supernatural happens. God who is always present with it touches and transforms us. His mind impacts our mind. His personality impacts our personality.

Let me illustrate by an experience of mine several weeks ago. First, I chose a spiritually rich text, Revelation 21:1-4. Second, I came to it as a place that I’d meet God. I anticipated meeting Him. Third, I found information. Verse 4 says, **“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”** I interpreted that. Those in eternal life never have a negative experience of any kind and in any degree. I then asked, **“If that is so, what must also be so?”** It’s that every thought of theirs is a positive one, every emotion a fulfilling one, and every sensation a delightful one. Fourth, I personalized that information. I asked, **“How shall I think, feel, and act because this is so?”** My answer related to my wife. If she dies before me (being in my 60’s, I’m thinking about that now), I shall think, feel, and act as if it’s the best thing that ever happened to her, because it will be. And finally, fifth, I prayed. I asked the Holy Spirit to make that information a living reality in me, and He is doing so. He’s giving me great comfort and joy through it.

Conclusion

That illustrates what all of us who are disciples of Jesus desperately need to do, crave and feed on the Bible. Seriously engage it. The infinite God of the universe, who never leaves it alone, will give us a piece of His mind, a piece of His personality if we do.