

The Power of the Word

Acts 20:32

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 1-18-2009

Introduction

Most of you know the writings and lectures of Ravi Zacharias. He told a story one time about his personal translator in Vietnam, a man by the name of Hien Pham. Ravi was a missionary to Vietnam back in 1971 and travelled all over the country with Hien and developed a close friendship with him. When Ravi had to come back to North America, he lost contact with Hien, assuming that he had been captured or killed. For seventeen years he heard nothing about him. But one day Hien called Ravi out of the blue. And the moment he said, “Brother Ravi,” Ravi Zacharias said that he knew exactly who it was, and entered into an exciting conversation catching up on what had happened.

Apparently Hien had been imprisoned for helping Americans, and while he was in prison he was subjected to intense brain washing and indoctrination. Every day for years they pumped atheistic propaganda into Hien until he began to have doubts about God’s existence. One day he thought he would do an experiment and not pray the next day. The next morning he was assigned the dreaded chore of cleaning the filthy prison latrines. And let me pick up the story with Ravi’s own words:

As he cleaned out a tin can overflowing with toilet paper, his eye caught what seemed to be English printed on one piece of paper. He hurriedly grabbed it, washed it, and after his roommates had retired that night, he retrieved the paper and read the words, ‘Romans, Chapter 8.’ Trembling, he began to read, ‘And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him. . . for I am convinced that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ Hien wept. He knew His Bible, and knew that there was not a more relevant passage for one on the verge of surrender. He cried out to God, asking forgiveness, for this was to have been the first day that he would not pray. . . . After finding the Scripture, Hien asked the commander if he could clean the latrines regularly, because he discovered that some official was using a Bible as toilet paper. Each day Hien picked up a portion of Scripture, cleaned it off, and added it to his collection of nightly reading. . . . What his tormentors were using for refuse — the Scriptures — could not be more treasured to Hien. Eventually he was released from prison and fled to Thailand. Today he is a businessman in the United States, a radiant

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Christian and a living testimony ... to God's Word and its transforming power.

And that's going to be the subject of today's message – The Power of the Word. If you can once understand the incredible power of the Word of God, you *will* treasure it like Hien did. You will do anything to get it.

This whole verse speaks of the power of God's Word. In the English it may seem like it is speaking of two things – being commended to God and being commended to God's Word. But as C. K. Barrett explains in his commentary, "This is an example of hendiadyoin" (p. 980), a special form of grammar where two parts of a phrase represent one concept. We don't really have this in English. In my English major we studied a similar concept in Shakespeare's plays. For example, in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare uses the line, "sound and fury" as a more colorful expression than furious sound. Another author says, "'The kingdom and the power and the glory' (from the Lord's Prayer) extends the principle, transforming the idea of a "glorious, powerful kingdom" into a sequence of three nouns joined by conjunctions." That's similar to what's happening here in the Greek.

Let me give you one more definition of this grammar. This one also comes from a kind of hendiadyoin in Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*. George Wright says,

"We frequently join adjectives on the pattern of *nice and warm, good and loud, big and fat, sick and tired, long and leggy*. Each of these pairs represents a single concept in which the general idea contained in the first adjective is explained or specified or opened up by the second; and, insofar as such expressions may be continually invented, the pattern seems the closest thing to adjectival hendiadys in English."¹

That's a big grammar lesson, but what's the bottom line? What difference does it make? Well, the commentary points out that the phrase "I commend you to God" is exactly the same as the next phrase "I commend you to the word of His grace." It goes on to say, "In fact it is the word of God, God in his word, who is able to build up the elders themselves and the church that they serve." This grammar indicates that you can't separate God from His Word since He works through His Word, and you can't separate the Word from God since it is an attribute and expression of His being. To think of this as simply a book from a printing press, is to make a big

¹ George T. Wright, "Hendiadys and Hamlet," *PMLA*, March 1981

mistake. God always backs up every letter of this Word to accomplish His purpose. *This is God speaking, and God's Word that rolls off this page has just as much power as God's Word had when He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." Every phrase in this verse is describing the power of God's word.* In the Greek, the first clause is a powerful expression of that fact that the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. So let's break the verse down.

I. A reconciling power to make enemies brethren (v. 32a)

Paul says, "**So now, brethren...**" The ones who were being commended to the Word were already products of that Word. They were once enemies, but now they are brethren. When Paul came to Ephesus in chapter 19, he was constantly preaching the word of God. Why? Because Paul knew that his own testimony and his own opinions would not convert anyone. It is the Word of God that transforms and changes people. As Psalm 19 words it, "**The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul...**" and he goes on to show other powerful aspects of that Word. There is a reconciling power in God's Word.

We don't often think of this book as having power. We know that the Lord's Table has power to bring weakness, sickness and even death, and it has power to bless us in every way. But the same is true of Scripture. Over and over again the Scripture affirms that the words on these pages have an enormous power to accomplish God's purposes. That's why we are commanded to tremble at God's Word. The Scriptures are likened to a hammer that breaks resistance, to a fire that purifies silver, to a sword that can pierce through the toughest defenses. But we need to have a confidence in the power of God's Word when we are talking to unbelievers. Only God's Word has the power to speak regeneration, new life, and reconciliation into existence. And sometimes, the change is instantaneous. You can think of the thief on the cross. One hour he is making fun of Jesus just like the other thief did. He's a hardened criminal who is utterly insensitive to Christ's agony. *But* God's Word breaks into his heart and changes him into a friend, and he repents, begins to rebuke the other thief, and with remorse ask Jesus to remember him when Jesus comes into His kingdom.

I think of the famous story of Mutiny on the Bounty. It's a fun story, but the film and book leave out the best part. Captain Bligh was a tough captain to get along with, and nine mutineers rebelled against him. They took along some captive men and women from Tahiti and made their way to Pitcairn Island, a tiny dot in the South Pacific that is only two miles long and

one mile wide. The men were so drunken and rowdy that the women and children built a fort to keep the men out. After ten years of drinking and fighting with each other, only one man was left alive – John Adams. But there were eleven women and 23 children. But what the film does not show is more remarkable. When only one other man was alive on the island, they found the Bounty's Bible in the bottom of an old chest. That man knew how to read, and he taught John Adams how to read using the Bible. When that man died, John Adams was the only man left on the island. He started reading the Bible, and God turned his life upside down. It was like a miracle had taken place. The peace and love that he found replaced the quarreling, brawling and liquor. He began to teach the Bible to every person on the island, and they began having the same changes so that the entire island became a Christian nation and remained a Christian nation for about 150 years. It's only nominally Christian now, but the changes to that island were nothing short of spectacular. And the only difference was the Bible of God and the God of the Bible. It not only reconciled John to God, but also reconciled John to the women and children.

Don't lose hope in your friends and relatives. As long as they are exposed to the word, they are vulnerable to the powerful Word of grace. Paul speaks of the Gospel in the Word as the **power of God unto salvation**. Colossians 1:18. One of the more remarkable conversions that I have read about was of the matinee idol, Alexander Rostovzev. He grew up in a Greek Orthodox home, but he rejected it and became an atheist. He was part of a blasphemous play entitled Christ in a Tuxedo that was playing in Moscow, Russia. He was supposed to read two verses from the Sermon on the Mount, remove his gown, and cry out, "Give me my tuxedo and top hat!" And that would be the cue for the other actors to come in. Let me read you what happened:

But as he read the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," he began to tremble. Instead of following the script, he kept reading from Matthew 5, ignoring the coughs, calls, and foot-stamping of his fellow actors. Finally, recalling a verse he had learned in his childhood in a Russian Orthodox Church, he cried, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!" (Luke 23:42). Before the curtain could be lowered, Rostovzev had trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.²

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J.K. Johnston, *Why Christians Sin*, Discovery House, 1992, p. 121

Some of you have relatives and friends who are just as lost as that atheist, Rostovzev. They seem impervious to the Word of God. Romans 8:7 explains why: **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.”** This has been true of every carnal mind that has ever hit the earth. It can't be subject to God's Word, until the God of the Word takes the Word and plunges it as a scalpel into that person's spiritual chest to give a heart transplant. We can't just slide over the words, “So now brethren.” Those words speak of many miracles that had taken place over the past three years in conversions.

II. A protective power (v. 32b – “commend”)

There is a second thing that we see about God's Word in verse 32. Paul said, **“I commend you to God and to the word of His grace.”** The words, “I commend you,” carry the idea of entrusting to the protection of someone or something. So this speaks of a protective power that the Scriptures have. Let me give a couple dictionary definitions of this word. “to entrust for safekeeping” (BDAG), to “entrust someone to the care or protection of someone” (NET Notes), “to deposit (as a trust or for protection)” (Strongs).

I think we could understand how these Ephesians could be entrusted to the protection of *God*, but how do the pages of a bible protect you? How does Paul entrust them to the protection of the Word of grace? Again, it is important to realize that you can't separate between God and His word. As John Frame points out, the bible affirms about itself every attribute that is given to God. When God speaks, He backs it up. Of course, Romans 10:8 says that the Word must be in our mouth and in our heart, and it is as we confess with our mouth that we begin to see its power having its effect. I have seen this when dealing with demons. The demons don't leave simply because I whip the Bible out. No, I have to verbally confront them with this Word. The power to make them flee comes as I affirm Scriptures of victory over these demons in the name of Jesus. This is exactly what Jesus did. Satan did not flee from Jesus until He affirmed Old Testament Scriptures and used them as a sword. This is why Revelation 12 speaks of a verbal affirmation of the Word against Satan. It says, **“they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony...”** (v. 11). Scripture has to become our testimony before it becomes an effective sword in our hands. Jeremiah 23:28-29 says, **“He who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully...Is not My word like a fire?... and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”** He speaks of the incredible power of the Word, but indicates that this power is manifested only as we

speaking His word faithfully. Our speaking the Word of God by faith is bringing into space-time history the things that God has prepared for us. When we speak the Word, it is *He* speaking. That's the amazing thing. You are speaking as the oracles of God.

So it is not surprising to see that the Bible is said to protect us from every imaginable kind of trouble. Psalm 119:11 says that when we hide it in our heart, it protects us from sinning. Verse 25 says it protects us from backsliding. Verse 28 says it protects us from discouragement. Verse 50 says that it gives us life. Verse 105 says that it protects us from stumbling. But Scripture says it protects us physically as well. 2 Peter 3:7 says that the only thing that is protecting this earth from immediate destruction is the Word of God's promise. Wow! These Scriptures have power to protect this sinful earth from burning up in judgment. Deuteronomy 6:24 says that God's laws give physical protection and life. Joshua 1 says that the Word that we meditate on prospers us in every area of life. Deuteronomy 29:9 says much the same. In our scientific era, we tend to be skeptical of such promises. But there is a protective power in God's Word that we can bank on more surely than we can bank on Glock 45.

So my question is, "Are you skilled at protecting your family from demonic attack through Scriptural affirmation?" Have you laid claim to God's promises of provision to protect you from starvation; His promises of safety, angels, and other things? Have we harnessed the incredible power of the Word?

III. A divine power (v. 32c)

The third thing we see is that this Word is a divine power. Paul said, "I commend you to God." If that is the same thing as the second part of the clause "I commend you ... to the word of His grace," then it means that the Word is by definition a divine power. These are not simply the words of men.

And here is where some people get confused. They know that men wrote the sixty-six books of the Bible, and yet the Bible claims that these books are the very word of God. 3808 times the Bible says that every portion of Scripture is the very word of God. How can that be? How can it have human characteristics and still be the word of God? And the best analogy theologians can give is of the incarnation of Jesus. I've given a chart in your outlines that helps to see the parallels.

For example, Jesus was not two Persons. He was not a human person and a divine person. He was a divine person who took to Himself a human

nature. So he is fully God and fully man, yet still only one person. This person existed before the incarnation and was eternal, yet in the incarnation this perfect Person took to Himself human characteristics. One Person in two natures. In the same way, God the Word took to Himself human vessels to communicate His will to us. This eternal Word is incarnated (as it were) in human language, grammar and historical context, yet without in any way giving up its totally divine nature. Man's will did not originate any portion of the Scripture – only God's divine will did.

So let's look at some Scriptures so that you can see this divine nature of the bible. Turn first of all to 1 Thessalonians 2:13. When you come to the Bible, you are coming to God, and you must reverence God by how you come to His Word. So look at 1 Thessalonians 2:13. **“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”** Notice that Paul denies that this is the word of men. Though it has a human nature (after all, it came through Paul), its origin is divine. He said, **“...you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”** Though Paul spoke it, it was God's Word. So I think it is appropriate to speak of the Bible as the Word of God in human form. Can you see that it is like the incarnation?

Turn next to 1 Thessalonians 4:8. **“Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.”** This is the logical implication of the previous verse. Even though Paul is the vehicle through which these words are written, and even though they contain human characteristics, emotions, grammar and color, they still represent God's will, not man. To reject any portion of the bible is to reject God, not man.

Turn next to 2 Peter 1:20-21. This is a verse that describes how every portion of the Scriptures came into being. **“...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation [or as the margin says, “origin”], for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”** These three Scriptures rule out several heretical teachings about the Word of God. The second heresy listed in your chart is thinking that some of the Bible is divine and some of it is human. This heresy teaches that you can trust the divine portions but you can't necessarily trust the human portions. But notice that

this verse says that prophecy never came by the will of man. Never. Though it is men who give it, and therefore it has human characteristics, it is divine in origin, just as Jesus was divine in origin. And just as Jesus’ human will was in perfect unity with the divine will, the prophets’ wills were totally moved by the divine will when they wrote Scripture.

The Divine Nature of the Bible (1 Thes. 2:13; 4:8; 2 Pet 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; etc)

Parallels between the Incarnation of Jesus and the nature of Scripture

Error on Incarnation	Error on Scripture
Saying that Jesus two Persons. (Failing to realize that the Divine Person of God the Son took to Himself a human nature, not a human Person.)	Treating the Bible as being both the Word of men and the Word of God (contrary to 1 Thes. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:20-21; etc)
Saying that Christ’s human will could operate independently of His divine will.	Saying that we need to distinguish what parts of the Bible are simply man’s will and ideas and what portions are God’s will and ideas. (For example, some feminists reject as “wrong” Paul’s statements about women as not reflecting the divine will.)
Saying that Jesus could have sinned (peccability)	Saying that Scripture has error. (The true faith has always maintained the inerrancy of all of Scripture.)
Saying that you can divide the human and divine natures (a Schizophrenic Jesus)	Saying that you can separate what is human and what is divine in the bible.
Failing to distinguish between human and divine natures	Failing to realize that the grammars, vocabularies and personalities of the authors do not come through.
Failing to realize that any resistance of Jesus is resistance to God, not simply man.	Denying infallibility to certain portions of Scripture.
Docetic heresy, which says that the human nature is illusion.	Treating the writers of Scripture as a dictation to passive scribes.
Nestorian heresy made Jesus a God-bearing man rather than the God-Man.	Barthians claim that the Bible contains the Word of God but deny that it is the Word of God in every letter.
Apollinarian heresy denied that Jesus had a human spirit.	Failing to see the human emotion and spirit of the human prophets.
The error of thinking that Jesus was a human person who had a divine infusion.	The error of thinking that Scripture is words of men that somehow have some divine extra added to them.

In fact, if you think of the incarnation of Jesus, you will be able to correct just about every heresy on Scripture that is out there. Look at the third comparison on the chart. Jesus was human, but His incarnation kept him totally without sin. In the same way, though men wrote the Bible, the Spirit’s inspiration kept the Scriptures totally without error. To say that it would have been possible for Christ to sin is to deny the incarnation. This is the error of those who teach the peccability of Jesus – that He theoretically could have messed up and sinned, and that even the angels were worried and didn’t know what would happen. But that is false. His incarnation guaranteed that Jesus could not even theoretically sin, even though He was

tempted. Likewise, to say that the Scriptures can be in error (even theoretically) is to make exactly the same incarnational error. God cannot make a mistake, and every jot and tittle of the Bible came from God.

Just as Jesus was not two persons, the Scriptures should not be seen as a tension between the human and divine. Both are united and indivisible.

However, just as each nature in Jesus was distinguishable, you can distinguish between the human grammars, vocabulary and personalities of each of the various books. They are obviously human characteristics.

But just as each nature was indivisible in Jesus, you can't divide between the human characteristics in the Bible and the divine origin of the Bible. They are knit together perfectly. In fact, one doctrine of the two natures of Jesus is called the *Communicatio Idiomatum* – that what is true of either nature can be affirmed of the whole Person. For example, Scripture speaks of God shedding His own blood (Acts 20:28). In the same way, even the human aspects of this perfect revelation are still called the Word of God. It is very important that we understand the nature of the Bible.

Just as resisting Jesus was indeed resisting God, resisting the Scriptures at any point is resisting God. If we lose the infallibility of the Scriptures, then we lose the infallibility of Christ. Both were incarnations.

I give another comparison – that of the Docetist heresy. Just as the Docetic heretics denied that Jesus was human, saying that his form was an illusion, there have been some who claim that the writers of Scripture were mere typewriters, taking a direct dictation from God, and that they weren't involved at all creatively in the crafting of the books of the Bible. This is actually the Muslim view of how they got their Scriptures. But that's not how the Scriptures came to be. The human dimensions must not be ignored.

On the other hand, just as Nestorians made the mistake of saying that Jesus was merely a God-bearing man rather than a God-man, heretics today try to say that the Scriptures only contain the Word of God (or become the Word of God in our experience), but that the Bible isn't the Word of God in every jot and tittle. This was the error of Karl Barth. We have Barthians all around us in Omaha. They are Nestorians in a sense. Barthianism is a heresy.

Apollinarianism denied that Jesus had a human spirit. They said that the Logos replaced it. Well, that not only denies that Jesus is fully human, but it also makes nonsense of Scriptures that speak of Christ's soul being crushed, sorrowing, or being overwhelmed. It makes nonsense of Jesus

saying that there were some things that he did not know. As God He always knew all things, but chose to not use that knowledge in the incarnation, instead having Jesus receive knowledge from the Holy Spirit. As God, Jesus was all-powerful and could have done every miracle by His own divine power as God the Son, but He chose to restrain His power and have Christ do miracles by depending upon the Holy Spirit. So the church rightly rejected Apollinarianism. But we make the same error if we do not recognize (for example) that Paul by inspiration records that he does not know whether he will be coming to Rome right away. Though God's Spirit moved Paul to write everything he wrote, God moved Paul to write in a way that showed his human character, emotions and limitations, but kept him from error.

So the bottom line is that the incarnation of Jesus is a great analogy for explaining the way Scripture came to us. The word is eternal and divine and it was incarnated in human clothing. That's what gives the Bible its power. Just as Jesus wasn't a human person that took on divine nature, but a Divine Person that took on human nature, the bible is not human words that have divine something breathed into them, but it is a Divine Word that is clothed in human form. When you come to the Scripture, you must consciously think of yourself as coming to God Almighty, not simply to Paul, though Paul was involved. To quote 1 Thessalonians 2:13 again, Paul said, "**when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.**" That's why it is effective; that's why it is powerful. It is the divine Word of God.

IV. A gracious power (v. 32d)

The fourth point is that the Scripture is a gracious power. Verse 32 goes on to say: "**I commend you to God and to the word of His grace.**" It is the Word of His grace. Psalm 19 indicates that even God's laws convert the soul and bring grace. And thus, Ernest Kevan, back in 1965, wrote that famous summary of the Puritan view of the law, titling his book, *The Grace of Law*. God's word has a gracious character that transforms people from the inside out.

Steve Auterburn recorded the story of a Wycliffe Bible translator who translated the opening chapters of Genesis and distributed them to the people. So the only portions of the Bible that these Christians had read for themselves were the first chapters of Genesis. And yet, almost overnight their attitude toward women changed. And the translator was kind of blown

away – he hadn't even addressed their horrible treatment of women yet. Auterburn says,

Without even hearing this concept developed, these people immediately grasped the ideas of equality between the sexes and began adjusting their behavior. The people heard. They believed. They obeyed. They changed. Just like that.³

It has a gracious power to work. This is why it is so shameful for pastors to read one verse and never refer to the Bible again during their sermon. That sermon is worthless. It has no power without the Word. This is why taking the Scriptures out of the public sphere in America has been such a disaster. It's not simply the doctrine that changes behavior. In fact, people will just think your doctrine makes you a nut; makes you different. It is the Scripture that changes people. This is why I won't ever distribute Warfield's popular book, *The Plan of Salvation*, to anyone. It is a remarkable summary of doctrine, but there isn't a single Scripture to back it up. It isn't our rhetoric and stories that change people. It is God's Word alone that has that power. This is why Locke's secularizing of Biblical political theory so that it would be acceptable to the masses was such a disaster. Yes he has some great concepts, and in one book he even backed them up with the Bible, but by removing the Bible from the theory in his popular writings, he destroyed its effectiveness. I think we are destroying our effectiveness in politics when we remove the power of the Word of grace from our culture and simply refer to moral, ethics, conservative principles, etc. If you remove God's Word from anything, you end up removing God's grace as well. Remember always, that if you want the gracious power of the Word, you must bring the Word to bear. Don't be embarrassed by it.

V. A strengthening power to build up (v. 32e)

The fifth characteristic that we see in God's word is that it has a strengthening power to build people up. Verse 32 says, "... **the word of His grace which is able to build you up...**" If you read through the Bible every year, you will be amazed at the growth you experience – simply by prayerfully reading the Word. Read the book *Self-Confrontation*, by Broger, which is absolutely packed with Scripture, and you will grow.

Michael Billester was a Bible distributor who visited a small village in Poland shortly before the outbreak of World War II. He gave a Bible (his only one) to a villager before he left the country. That villager was converted simply by reading the Bible. He in turn passed the Bible on to others. The

³ Steve Auterburn and Jack Felton, *More Jesus, Less Religion* (Sisters, Oregon: Waterbrook Press, 2000), p.116

cycle of conversions continued until 200 people had become believers through one Bible. When the Bible distributor returned to Poland in 1940, he was astonished to find a thriving church that was remarkably mature. They asked him to preach, and he suggested before he preach that people in the audience recite any Scripture verses that they had memorized. One man stood up and wanted to clarify how much of the Bible that the evangelist wanted recited. Apparently these villagers had memorized entire books of the bible in the short time that Billester had been away. Thirteen people knew Matthew, Luke and half of Genesis. Another person had memorized the Psalms during the brief time he had the Bible in his cottage. And others had memorized huge chunks, because they knew they wouldn't be able to have the Bible in their hands again for a long time. But what he soon discovered is that hiding God's Word in their hearts had so transformed this congregation that they were strong in the Lord. They were built up. We don't need all kinds of programs – we need the Scripture. You can't be fully built up if your only exposure to the Word is on Sunday. If you want to be built up and see your family built up, don't neglect the powerful Word of God. Saturate your family in it. Paul commends you to that Word of grace.

VI. A securing power to guarantee an inheritance (v. 32f)

The sixth feature of the Word is that it has a securing power to guarantee an inheritance. Verse 32 again, “...**is able to build you up and give you an inheritance**...” The Bible is able to give you an inheritance. Every promise of Scripture is a bank check that you can cash from your spiritual bank account. Ephesians 1:3 says that you have a massive bank account in heaven. But until you know what you have in the Scripture, you can't have faith to claim it, and until you make affirmations of faith based upon God's Word, you won't bring it from heaven to earth. This Bible is not an empty, powerless book. It is able to build you *and* it is able to give you an inheritance. When we neglect it, it is as if we are missing incredible treasures.

I have a Reader's Digest story by John T. Spach that tells of his son leaving for Duke University. Spach gave his son a Bible and told him to read it, and it would be a great help to him. The son promised to do so. Later in the semester his son wrote asking for money. John wrote his son back telling him to read his Bible, citing chapter and verse. He would reply that he was reading his Bible, but that he still needed money. When he came home during a break, his parents told him they knew he was not reading the Bible. How? The father had tucked large bills of money into the pages where he had cited Scriptures to read. The son had missed the treasures by failing to

read the Word. And we miss far greater treasures when we fail to read, memorize and claim the Words of Scripture. The modern church is a powerless church in part because it is a Scriptureless church. And that is such an irony when you consider that we have more bibles per Christian household than any other nation, yet we have less Scripture knowledge than the churches of many underdeveloped nations. Are you powerless? This verse may be giving you a hint as to why.

VII. A sanctifying power, to set them apart (v. 32g)

The last power that you will find in the bible is a sanctifying power. Paul said, **“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”**

Jesus said, **“Sanctify them by Your truth; Your word is truth.”** (John 17:17). You will never grow and be sanctified if you do not turn on the switch of Scripture. George Mueller once confessed,

“The first 3 years after conversion, I neglected the Word of God. Since I began to search it diligently, the blessing has been wonderful. I have read the Bible through one hundred times and always with increasing delight!”

Ben Lueders was telling me three weeks ago that he has noticed the greatest changes have come when he has quoted the Scriptures to friends. He said that it is almost like a power is present that is not present without the Scripture. He has noticed the same thing in his own life. When a friend encourages him in his fight against sin to read a verse, it is in the actual reading of that verse, sometimes without desiring to read, that God breaks through. The Word of God has a power to sanctify.

Conclusion

So my concluding exhortation to you is to realize the value of the Word of God by looking at its power. Ask God to give you a hunger for the word. Evangelist Robert L. Sumner, in a book titled, *the Wonders of the Word of God*, relates the incredible hunger that one young man from Kansas City had to read the Bible. The victim’s face was badly damaged from an explosion. He lost his eyesight and the use of both hands. He was a brand new believer, and one of his greatest disappointments was that he would not be able to read the Bible. He heard about a lady in England who had learned to read the Bible with her lips. He tried to do the same, but the explosion had totally ruined the nerve endings in his lips and he had no feeling. He just could not read. One day as he brought the brail Bible to his lips to try yet again, his tongue happened to touch a few of the raised characters and he

could feel them. Excited, he quickly learned to read Brail with his tongue, and at the time Sumner wrote his book, this gentleman had read through the Bible four times using his tongue. If you can once taste the power of God's Word, you will spend more time in it than you do in TV. You will see what a treasure you have.

Treasure the bible. I commend you to its care, protection, provision and transforming power. We have only scratched the surface of what a blessing the Bible is. But let me end by reading a summary written by an unknown author. He (or she) said,

This Book is the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding; its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's character. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. Follow its precepts and it will lead you to Calvary, to the empty tomb, to a resurrected life in Christ; yes, to glory itself, for eternity.

Value the power of God's Word. Amen.

The Power of the Word
Acts 20:32
 By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 1-18-2009

Introduction

- I. A reconciling power to make enemies brethren (v. 32a)
- II. A protective power (v. 32b – “commend”)
- III. A divine power (v. 32c)

The Divine Nature of the Bible (1 Thes. 2:13; 4:8; 2 Pet 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; etc)
 Parallels between the Incarnation of Jesus and the giving of Scripture

Error on Incarnation	Error on Scripture
Saying that Jesus two Persons. (Failing to realize that the Divine Person of God the Son took to Himself a human nature, not a human Person.)	Treating the Bible as being both the Word of men and the Word of God (contrary to 1 Thes. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:20-21; etc)
Saying that Christ’s human will could operate independently of His divine will.	Saying that we need to distinguish what parts of the Bible are simply man’s will and ideas and what portions are God’s will and ideas. (For example, some feminists reject as “wrong” Paul’s statements about women as not reflecting the divine will.)
Saying that Jesus could have sinned (peccability)	Saying that Scripture has error. (The true faith has always maintained the inerrancy of all of Scripture.)
Saying that you can divide the human and divine natures (a Schizophrenic Jesus)	Saying that you can separate what is human and what is divine in the bible.
Failing to distinguish between human and divine natures	Failing to realize that the grammars, vocabularies and personalities of the authors do not come through.
Failing to realize that any resistance of Jesus is resistance to God, not simply man.	Denying infallibility to certain portions of Scripture.
Docetic heresy which says that the human nature is illusion.	Treating the writers of Scripture as a dictation to passive scribes.
Nestorian heresy made Jesus a God-bearing man rather than the God-Man.	Barthians claim that the Bible contains the Word of God but deny that it is the Word of God in every letter.
The error of thinking that Jesus was a human person who had a divine infusion.	The error of thinking that Scripture is words of men that somehow have some divine extra added to them.

- IV. A gracious power (v. 32d)
- V. A strengthening power to build up (v. 32e)
- VI. A securing power to guarantee an inheritance (v. 32f)
- VII. A sanctifying power, to set them apart (v. 32g)

Conclusion