

The importance of The Word

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Date: 01 October 2017

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[0 : 00] Scripture now, and there are two readings, the one that was advertised, but also, first of all, in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 24, and there at the 22nd verse.

This particular narrative is about the day that two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, and Jesus himself drew near, although they didn't recognize him.

And this is what they are saying. Moreover, some of our women amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and they did not find his body.

They came back saying they had even seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said.

But him they did not see. And Jesus said to them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

[1 : 12] Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Verse 44. Then he said to them, These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scripture. Then turning to Paul's letter to the Corinthians in chapter 14, reading some verses there from verse 26.

1 Corinthians 14 and verse 26. 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 26.

1 Corinthians 14 and verse 27.

[3 : 14] The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace.

The Lord had his blessing to these readings from his own word. May he be to his praise and to his glory. We sing again. You're the word. What is it then, brothers and sisters, when you come together?

Each one has a hymn, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speak in a tongue, let there be only two or three at the most, and let one interpret.

Now, when we read this chapter, we find that in the preaching of the contemporary church, it's hardly mentioned in churches that would be classed as non-Pentecostal.

But I believe that there are principles built into this chapter which we are worth to consider. I'm not going down the road of whether there should or there should not be a gift of tongues operating in the church.

[4 : 25] I'm looking at this on a matter of principle. Corinth stood on a bridge of land between the Adriatic Sea and the Aegean Sea.

You can see it very clearly on any Bible map. And in Corinth, there was a great hill called the Acropolis.

On that hill stood the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. In there, there were a thousand priestesses who were sacred prostitutes.

And after they'd finished applying their trade in the temple, they descended to the streets of Corinth to enact more business there. So the first century proverb was, it is not every man that can afford to go to Corinth.

Now, in this temple was practiced something which has been called the mystery religions. In our day, the nearest we get to it is the New Age movement.

[5 : 46] But the problem with this mystery religion, the temple of Aphrodite, was that some of these issues that were in the temple were now coming into the church.

When we look at chapter 11 in 1 Corinthians, you find it's all about Christian worship. And this theme is carried on in chapters 12 to 14.

Indeed, it's introduced by the word concerning. 1 Corinthians 12 verse 1. So that this is another topic that the apostle is dealing with, which the Corinthians have raised with him, concerning spiritual gifts.

So let's think, first of all, about the gathering of the assembly. What is it then, brothers and sisters, when you come together?

And we need to explore this idea further to establish how it is that the Corinthian believers were motivated to worship God.

[7 : 13] In a previous occasion, I looked at 1 Corinthians 12, 1 to 3. And this is the only epistle in which Paul talks about the previous religious experience of any people prior to their conversion.

And this is what he says. Concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

You know that when you were pagans, you were led away to dumb idols, however you may have been led. Now, what he means by this dumb idols is that their leading to worship these idols in the temple that I've already described that stood on the Acropolis, this was inspired by demons.

Listen to what he says in 1 Corinthians 10, 20. I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they offer to demons and not to God.

I do not want you to be partners of demons. So that's a verse that relates to the previous worship experience of the Corinthians.

[8 : 42] So what is it that's now motivating them to gather in the house of God? He's now saying, you're no longer led by demons.

You're led by the Spirit of God. Now, in the epistle to the Romans, he makes this clear. Romans 8, 14, 15. All who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons and daughters of God.

You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

And that's not only true for Rome, not only true for Corinth, but true for us. We are being led by the Spirit of God in our act of Christian worship.

So when the apostle says, when you come together, he's not talking about an incidental experience of gathering, but one that is motivated and called and prompted by the Spirit of God.

[10 : 05] Jesus himself said, God is a spirit. Those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth.

So this motivation of the Spirit is not one that provides disorder, but one that provides order and peace in the church of God.

He's already heard, as we saw in chapter 1, from the household of Chloe, believed to be a lady who lived in Ephesus who had Christian slaves.

And these Christian slaves had informed Paul of the deep divisions that existed in this church. So he says in 1 Corinthians 14, 33, God is not a God of confusion, but of peace.

What a wonderful word that is. In Greek, it's the word irene. And irene has coined itself in English to the female name Irene.

[11 : 18] Peace, harmony, and order. So when the believers like you and I are being led to worship God, what is dominating our thinking is our peace, our harmony, our order that we have in God's house.

Now when Paul directs their attention to these spiritual gifts, gifts, he does so on the basis of the Trinity. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So we read in chapter 12, verses 4 to 6, now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service but the same Lord.

There are varieties of working but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone. So if we concede this morning that there is harmony and unity in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit who each have a different part to play in our redemption, that is equally true for the church of God.

We are conducting and dominated by order, harmony, and peace. So this is what he's saying.

When you come into God's house, your motivation has to be peace, it has to be harmony, and it has to be one that glorifies God.

[13:00] So at the very end of the chapter he says, let all things be done decently and in order together. And that is an appeal that extends not just to this chapter, but indeed to all the chapters in 1 Corinthians.

The contribution. What is it then, brothers and sisters, when you come together, each one has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.

Let all things be done for edification. In other words, here are a number of contributions that the assembly can make, and there's five of them.

A psalm, presumably to be read in public or sung in line with what Paul says in Ephesians 5.19. Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

A teaching. That is, the preaching of God's Word in an expository fashion, so that all may be taught of God. A revelation, which may be a prophetic revelation, since reference is made in the chapter to prophets who are in the receipt of revelations.

[14:30] A tongue, which may be a reference to the gift of tongues, which this chapter is concerned. An interpretation, which may be a reference to the interpretation of any messages in tongues, although the apostle doesn't actually specify that that's what it's for.

Now, of these five elements that are going to be brought, what I discovered was that item D, that of a tongue, is in fact missed out of a great number of manuscripts.

So, in that sense, it only occurs in some. When we look at this list, what is it that the apostle is talking about?

And the way I understand this is this, that the first three terms refer to parts of the Holy Scripture, the Old Testament, that the believers were accustomed to.

Now, that is why we read from Luke 24, these are my words, said Jesus, when I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms, must be fulfilled.

[15:58] What is it that he's talking about? He's talking about the Hebrew arrangement of the Old Testament, which is different from the English, because the English follows the order of the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

In the Hebrew, you get the law of Moses, Genesis to Deuteronomy. Then you get the former prophets, Joshua Judges, Samuel Kings, the latter prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve, but not Daniel.

And in the third division, you get everything else, including Psalms, Daniel, and concluding with Chronicles. So in that sense, if we take this reference to a psalm, it may be taken as a reference to the book of Psalms, which Jesus referred to in his teaching in Luke 24, 44.

When we come to the second term, which is teaching, teaching, it's represented by a Greek noun, didache, and that refers to either a body of teaching or instruction, such as found in the law of Moses.

So I take that term, teaching, to refer to that. The third term is revelation in Greek, apocalypsis, which means a revelation or disclosure of the divine will, such as found in the prophetic books of the Old Testament.

[17:43] So this term refers to the prophetic books of the Old Testament, and indeed the name apocalypsis is applied to the very final book in the New Testament, the book of Revelation.

So, we have the law of Moses referred to as teaching, we have the prophets referred to as revelation, and we have the Psalms referred to as Psalms.

Then we have another word, which is hermenia, which is interpretation. Like many Greek words, it has produced an English word called hermeneutics, and hermeneutics is the science of the interpretation of Scripture.

Indeed, the associated verb to that noun occurs in a Scripture that we read earlier on in Luke 24, 27. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So, what is clearly in the mind of the apostle here is that when all are present, collectively, they will have a correct and sound interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures that they were accustomed to read every day.

[19:16] Why is that important? Because the flood of iniquity was stemming from this temple, the goddess of love.

it was coming into the church. The book of Isaiah tells us that when evil comes in like a flood, I, the Lord, will raise up a standard against them.

And the standard that God has raised up for the Corinthians, for you and for me, is the word of God. It is a powerful weapon.

If you ever doubt that, look how Jesus answered the temptation of Satan as recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Is it not written?

Is it not written? Well, here is one that we can build on. When Christianity started, they started meeting with the Jews in the Jewish synagogue.

[20 : 34] And you find that referred to in James 2.2. If a man with gold rings and fine clothing comes into your assembly, the word assembly in Greek is the word that you get synagogue from.

So that refers to what was going on in the synagogue where Christian worship was also taking place. And in Paul's journey, we read in Acts 13, on the Sabbath day, they went into the synagogue and sat down, which followed, and following on from that, we had the reading of the law and the prophets.

So this is something that is absolutely vital and central to get the Corinthians back onto an even keel.

Emotion will not do it. Advice will not do it. But God's word will. What is it when you come together? Each one has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. So what he's now saying is this.

[21 : 54] When you come together, your collective aim should be the upbuilding of the house of God and the work of God.

Let's see how this works out. The first part of the Old Testament he refers to is the Psalms. And you can find that in the book of Psalms the early church used it quite a bit.

Not because of its devotional appeal, but also because of the fact that preachers found in it prophecies regarding the coming Messiah.

And the fine example of that is to be found in the sermon that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, the first sermon in the Christian church. And in that sermon he quoted from Psalm 16. And this is what he says, proving the resurrection of Jesus. I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken.

[23 : 05] Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced. Moreover, my flesh will dwell in hope, for you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your Holy One see corruption.

You have made known to me the ways of life. You will make me full of gladness with your presence. So here's a real point in turning to the Old Testament.

It speaks about the coming Messiah. It tells of his death in Psalm 22. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

They have pierced my hands and my feet. But furthermore, it also tells of Psalm 16, proving the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

And the effect of that sermon was that 3,000 souls were turned and received Christ at that very moment. what a majestic statement that is of what God's word can do.

[24 : 18] Paul writing to Timothy, 2nd Timothy, the last thing he wrote, this is the advice he gives. All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

You don't need any other resources than holy scripture to achieve the task. It's God breathed. That's what inspired means.

It's an unusual word. In fact, it only occurs there in the whole of the Greek language. But it's saying something very profound about the nature of the scripture that you read.

it is alive. God breathed. J.B. Phillips was one of the first people to get into the act of translating the New Testament into ordinary language.

This desire that he had started in the Blitz in 1944 where he had his young people in the underground stations in London while the Blitz raged above.

[25 : 38] And they would say to him, hey mister, see this block Paul? We don't know what he's on about. And the idea to translate the New Testament into English was bombed.

He later wrote a little booklet which you can still get in paperback called The Ring of Truth, a translator's testimony. And his testimony is that when translating the New Testament it became alive in a way that he never experienced it before.

God has set certain ministries and they find that in Acts 2 the effect of those ministries is this. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers.

Peter has used Joel 2 and Psalm 16 to explain the events of the day of Pentecost and the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

So now he wants people in Corinth to adopt the same practice. In referring them to the teaching in the Law of Moses, the prophecies in the Prophets and the Psalms, he is giving them advice and counsel as to how to defeat the wiles of Satan coming from this temple.

[27 : 18] he has noted in chapter 14 verse 3 the effect of the ministry of prophecy.

He who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding encouragement and consolation. And that's what the ministry of prophecy, which includes preaching, is all about.

It has this effect of upbuilding you in your faith. When we come to think, just temporarily, about the prophets in the Old Testament, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, where they got their inspiration from was, yes, from the Spirit of God, but also from the Law of Moses.

Moses. Their ministry in prophecy is in ethical demand that the people should live according to the Law of Moses.

Now, here's a little example of this. In Ezekiel, he talks about the people should have a just apath. what's that mean?

[28 : 42] Well, an apath is a weight, and by referring to having a just weight, what it means is that when you go into the shop, the shopkeeper will not shortchange you in his favor.

It's an ethical demand. It comes from the Law of Moses, and God has put ministries in the church to that effect.

His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the building up of the body of Christ.

So, here we have it. Is this a history lesson to only refer to first century Corinth? No, it doesn't.

It refers to now. The New Age movement is with us. We don't need a slick operator to give us the answer to it.

[29 : 50] The answer that we need is in God's holy word. word. This word of God will cause the Corinthians to grow and develop that their collective presence in the body of Christ should be a productive witness to the gospel of forgiveness.

And that should be our aim today. Every person who hears about what's going on here should realize that we have a productive witness to the gospel of forgiveness.

So, the apostle concludes the chapter by saying all things should be done properly and in order.

And the way that that happens is by his resource and his insistence on the effectiveness of God's word.

We take that stand today. Amen. We sing Break thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me.

As such, it's a prayer. And we're asking God to open his word to us that we might be productive witnesses to the gospel of forgiveness.

[31 : 23] Amen. Amen.