

The Nature and Inerrancy of the Scripture

Topical

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The Bible is its own defense and God through the years of my teaching the Bible, I have been stunned by how much God says with an economy of words. It takes me so long to say anything and then to wonder whether I got the point across. And in an astounding and supernatural economy of words, God can say everything about something that needs to be said and cover every element of it. And this is that kind of section. Psalm 19, here is God's own testimony to the power and the sufficiency of His Word.

“The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord are true, they are righteous all together.”

Three verses, six statements about Scripture. Let me just give you the overview. Scripture is called by six titles. It is called Law, Testimony, Precept, Commandment, Fear and Judgments. You will find those words used to describe Scripture all through Psalm 119. If you go through all 176 verses you'll see those words repeated over and over and over again, and they're always references to the Scripture. And that's why you have six times of the Lord, of the Lord, of the Lord, of the Lord, of the Lord. Just in case somebody might question the source, the psalmist says it six times.

There are six characteristics of Scripture. It is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean and true. And there are six effects. It restores the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, endures forever and that last line, they are righteous all together produces comprehensive righteousness, is what the Hebrew is saying.

So you have Scripture identified in six sentences, six titles, six characteristics and six effects. This is just sweeping,

comprehensive treatment of the sufficiency of the Word of God. Let me take them one at a time for just a moment.

The Law of the Lord, it views the Scripture, and this is looking at a many faceted diamond, one facet of it. It views the Scripture as God's Law for man's life. This is the manufacturer, if you will, giving you the manual of maximum operation. This is God's Word to man about how to live for maximum blessing in time and eternity. As such, it is perfect.

I remember years ago doing a study of the Hebrew word for "perfect". I spent three or four hours on it. At the end of which I came to the determination that what it meant was "perfect", which is a little discouraging of any hope for some nuance somewhere.

But let me give you the idea of the Hebrew word. It is perfect, not opposed to imperfect, but perfect as opposed to incomplete. So that is to say that this Scripture, this Law of the Lord, this which reflects God's design for man's maximum blessing in time and eternity is so comprehensive as to leave nothing out. In fact, one lexicon put it this way, it is all sided so as to cover all aspects of something. Another way to say that is nothing should be taken from it nor should anything be added to it, it is sufficient in its fullness. The effect, it says, restoring the soul. The word restoring means transforming, totally transforming. The soul, "nephesh", speaks of the inner person. In our English Bible, anything from King James to the NIV and everything else, you're going to find nephesh in the Hebrew would be translated by at least 20 words in English...self, soul, person, heart, mind, it always is nephesh and it always means the "inner person".

So here is God's testimony. *Scripture is totally comprehensive so as to transform the whole inner person.* That is **a very, very important statement.** That's why the writer of Hebrews says the Word of God is alive and powerful and sharper than... what?... *any two-edged sword.* That's why Peter can write, "*We were begotten again by the Word of truth.*" That's why Paul can say, "*I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, it is the power of God unto salvation.*"

One of the things we can never do, either in ministry, or even in personal life for that matter, is lose confidence in the power of the Word. Don't ever think that there's anything that can come

close to the power of the Word. I can listen to a preacher preach a sermon and I can tell you what he really believes about the Bible. Not what he says he believes, but what he really believes because if he really believes in the unique, soul-transforming power of Scripture, then that's exactly what's going to come out of his mouth when he gets up in the pulpit in that desperate hour when you know you stand before God and men to make a difference, and you're never going to use anything that has any less power. If I hear a man say "*I believe the Bible is the most powerful thing,*" and all I hear is a bunch of stories strung together, then I'm not sure what believe or actually means. Personally, I am convinced that the law of the Lord is so comprehensive as to be able to totally transform one's whole inner person.

One day I called the Philadelphia Public Library and I said, "*How many books,*" just kind of testing?... "*do you have?*" And he said, "*About Two Million.*" I said, "*How many books do you have there that you know for absolutely certain are totally true, one hundred percent?*" And the librarian, in an incredulous voice, said "*What? How would I know that?*" I said, "*You do have one and it's the Bible.*" In the world of things that can't be trusted, this can be.

When I was a Prison Chaplain, some men asked me, "*Why do you spend all your time in the Bible?*" Actually, it is because I don't really or fully trust anything else! And the fact of the matter is that I totally trust this! And God says it is reliable, I love this idea...making wise the simple. Now once people have had their lives totally transformed, that's salvation reaching a full extent (of course, one day we'll reach its' ultimate extent when we enter His presence in glory!! We want to move ourselves and others along the path of sanctification, right? And this Word of God makes simple people wise.

The little word "simple" of the Hebrew language is real concrete, not abstract like Greek. Simple comes from a root word that means an open door. And a simple-minded person was somebody whose mind was always open and if somebody came along and said, "*Oh, I have an open mind.*" A Jew is liable to say, "*Well shut it,*" because that was an indication that one didn't know what to retain and what to let go. You have a door to discriminate, right? That's what every door is for, to let some in and keep some out. There's nothing virtuous about being an "agnostic" or its Latin

equivalent “ignoramus” which is less than likely to be the profession of anybody. But the “simpleton” was the person who did not have enough discernment, discrimination, knowledge, understanding or wisdom to know what to accept and what to reject. And the Word of God will teach you how to “close the door”. It will teach you how to be wise. Wise is “chakam” in Hebrew, it means skilled in all aspects of living. It will train you to be skilled in all aspects of living. What else could we possibly want?

Verse 8, *“The precepts of the Word are right.”* Use the Scripture as doctrines, principles, precepts and they are right. Not right as opposed to wrong in the Hebrew, but right path, they lay out a right path. The Word is a lamp, the Word is a light, but it’s also a path. This is the way, walk in it. There is a way that seems right to a man, the end thereof is death. Here’s the path and you walk in this path and it rejoices the heart.

Isn’t this what Jeremiah experienced? You know, nobody listened to Jeremiah, they threw him in a pit and at the end of it all, what did he say in Jeremiah 15:16, *“Thy words were found and I did eat them and the Word was in me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.”* And I confess to you as a preacher that if nobody paid any attention and nobody listened and nobody responded, the great thrill of my life has been to spend my life in this book. It is my unceasing joy. John says, *“I write these things unto you that your joy may be...what?...full.”* If find my joy in the comprehension and the understanding of the Word of God.

I read a ago a book by a fellow who is no real hero of mine decrying the stupidity of expository preaching and this guy was saying,

“What kind of person wants to go to a church service and hear someone explain the Bible? How boring.”

Sure, if you’re unregenerate. I can’t wait to get somebody to explain the Bible to me. This is the Word of the living God and it produces joy in my heart to know what God has said, what God has promised.

And then he adds in Ps. 19:8, *“The commandment of the Lord,”* which views the Bible as mandates and commands and not

suggestions and options. He says the Scripture is “pure”. The actual word in Hebrew means “clear, lucid”. That is to say that this is not to confuse you, this is to eliminate your confusion, right?

The new deal in the emerging church is that the Bible is *hopelessly muddled*. Well that’s a very convenient thing because if we don’t know what it means, then we’re not responsible, right? That’s a convenient way to deal with the issues in your life. No wonder they won’t take a position on homosexuality or any other thing. How could you take any moral position if you don’t know what the Bible means by what it says? But it is clear. It is clear, enlightening the eyes.

I want to be able to see things clearly, don’t you? And the Word of God opens it up for us. We see the world the way it really is.

And then in Ps. 19:9, “*The fear of the Lord is clean.*” This views Scripture as a manual on worship, fear, reverence, awe. If I want to know how to worship God, I go here, right? I’m instructed how to worship Him in spirit and in truth. And so it is a manual on worship. It is all these things. As such it is clean, that is to say it is pure, it is without error, it is flawless. Thus it endures forever. Things die because of...what?...corruption. This lives forever. Not one jot or tittle will ever be passed from this law until it’s all fulfilled and the Word of God lives and abides forever.

And so, when somebody comes along and says,

“It’s out of date. It’s antiquated. It’s socially unsophisticated, psychologically unsophisticated, out of touch with the modern world,”

...that’s not the confession of God about His book. I’ve been all over place over the years and have read books and talked to people from every nook and corner imaginable and I have seen the relevancy of the Word of God in every context and in every application among every kind of social situation and if all you do is open and address the Word of God, it’s amazing there just aren’t any cultural barriers.

The challenge in teaching the Bible is *not* to bring the Bible into modern culture. You’ll **abuse God’s Word** if you do that. The challenge of teaching the Bible is to take the audience back into

biblical culture and let the Word speak in its own environment. That's how you get to the true meaning of it.

And the writer of Psalm finally says, "*The judgments of the Lord are true.*" That's enough for me. The judgments of the Lord are true? In a post-modern world, that's not the popular idea, right? I get condemned because I'm not willing to enter the conversation.

Well there are plenty of things I'm happy to converse and even go a little back and forth about doctrine, but the **truth** of God's Word isn't in that group!! The judgments of the Lord are truth, use the Scripture, judgments is adjudications from the divine bench of the judge of all the earth. When God renders His verdict here, that's the final word. And Scripture is that. It is the divine adjudications of the great judge of all, it is true and it produces comprehensive righteousness.

At the end of the day, folks, I am a believer in the Word of God. And if I say that's what I believe, then I better have the integrity to let it manifest itself into where I put my life and ministry. If I believe that there's nothing as powerful as the Word of God, if I believe that this incredible, heavenly gift, law, testimony, precepts, commandment, if I believe that this which is the manual of worship which are the adjudications of God, if I believe that it is perfect and sure and pure and true and can totally transform and make wise and produce joy and make the dark things clear and be perfect for every generation and produce comprehensive righteousness, that defines what my ministry has to be, right? It has to be a true representation of this book. Use your creativity, use every ounce of creativity...that's one of the things about being made in the image of God, right? A monkey doesn't write a symphony. Use every ounce of creativity you have but every bit of that creativity ought to be looking for ways in which the Word of God can be invested in the lives of people. This is the one thing that cannot...cannot, will not change and God blesses His Word, does He not? And He'll bless your life, ministry, and service for Him!!