

L I T T L E
B O O K
O F
B I G
W O R D S

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CHAPTER 1

The Power of Bible Words

In 1924 Adolf Hitler started writing his book *Mein Kampf*, which means 'My Struggle'. Some people ignored the book and some laughed at it, but for every word in *Mein Kampf*, 125 people died in World War II. Never underestimate the power of words. A judge speaks, and a man is condemned or set free. A physician speaks, and a person has surgery or he goes home from the hospital. A government official speaks, and millions of dollars can be spent or withheld.

In our own personal lives we know the power of words - words that can bless us and words that can cut us and hurt us. Never underestimate the power of words. It is very important for us as Christians to know the meaning of Bible words. We need to understand these words and how they apply to our

lives. Words such as justification, sanctification, propitiation imputation and mediation - these words make up the technical vocabulary of the Christian life and are very important.

Our younger son is an electronics engineer. He designs those little chips that run the computers. And he had to learn a very special vocabulary to do his job. My two older brothers were involved in mechanics, and they could run machines and fix things. They also had to learn a special vocabulary in order to do their job. I'm a pastor, a Bible teacher. I had to learn a special vocabulary to be able to handle the Word of God.

Some Christians say, 'Don't bother me with doctrine; just give me the beautiful devotional thoughts of the Bible.' But if the devotion is not based upon correct doctrine, it is shallow, and it is not going to accomplish anything. It is merely shallow sentiment. In this first chapter I would like to explain why it is important for us to understand these key words of the Christian life.

The reason is very simple: when you understand these words, you are able to live what they teach. When we understand these key words of the Christian life, then we know what a Christian is, what God has done for us, and what God *wants* to do for us.

God's Word is Light

Perhaps the best way to approach this would be to introduce some of the pictures of the Word of God found in the Word of God. When we understand what God compares His Word to, then we'll know how important it is for us to know the meaning of Bible words and how they apply to our lives.

Let's begin with a very familiar picture of the Word of God – God's word is light. 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.' (Ps. 119:105). What does a light do? A light enables us to see. When we understand these key words in the Bible, they are like lamps that guide us throughout all Scripture and throughout the Christian life.

God has revealed truth to us *in words*. 'We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words' (2 Cor. 2:12–13). In other words, God has revealed these things to us in words.

Revelation is simply God's work in communicating truth to us, truth that we could not discover any

other way. Sometimes God revealed His truth in dreams or in visions; sometimes people heard a voice; sometimes they saw God in action. We today have God's Word, and we have God's words in the Bible. God has revealed His truth to us 'that we may understand what God has freely given us'.

These words in the Bible are *inspired* words. Revelation is God's work in communicating truth to man, truth that man could never discover by himself. Inspiration is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the writers of the Bible, enabling them to produce a trustworthy, written revelation. 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Inspiration means that the Holy Spirit of God so worked upon the writers of the Scriptures that they wrote a trustworthy revelation from God.

2 Peter 1:20-21 adds something to this: 'Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.' The Holy Spirit of God has given to us a dependable, trustworthy

revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures, and God has revealed himself through words.

In chapter 2 of 2 Peter we have a warning about false prophets and false teachers, and verse 3 makes an interesting statement: 'In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up.' Those words 'made up' mean pretending, counterfeit. The Greek word gives us our English word 'plastic'. Peter warned us about 'plastic words'. What are plastic words? Words that you can twist around to mean **anything**. Those who are false prophets and false teachers like to use our Christian *vocabulary*, but they do not use our Christian *dictionary*. They will talk about salvation, being born again, being justified and use the words that we use, but they don't use the same *meaning*. They twist words around to mean what they want them to mean in order to make merchandise out of you. You must be very, very careful of these religious counterfeiters who are out to get something out of you instead of put something into you from the Lord. And they do it with plastic words.

God's word is light; it enables us to see. If you want to know what's really going on in your life, in your world, then you'd better study the words in your Bible.

God's Word is Food

Second, God's Word is not only light, but God's Word is food. 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Mt. 4:4). Food enables us to grow. As you grow in your knowledge of the Word of God, you can grow in your Christian life. 'But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Pet. 3:18).

It is possible to grow in knowledge and not grow in grace. I have met people who have a great deal of Bible knowledge, but nobody can get along with them. They run from church to church, creating problems and trying to be important. It is possible to grow in knowledge but not grow in grace. However, when we are growing in knowledge, taught by the Holy Spirit, then we have to grow in grace. The same Holy Spirit who wrote the Word of God *writes* the Word of God in our hearts and enables us to reveal the fruit of the Spirit.

It is so important for us to grow by feeding on the Word of God. When you understand Bible doctrine – what it means to be justified, what it means to be sanctified, what propitiation means – appropriate it into your own life, then you grow and mature in your Christian life. We read in Jeremiah 15:16 'When your

words came, I ate them.' Job said, 'I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread'. In Hebrews 5:1–14 we are told that God's Word is milk and meat. And so we need God's Word as a light to guide us and as food to nourish us.

God's Word is a TOOL

Third, God's Word is a tool for building. "'Is not my word like fire,'" declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"' Sometimes God's Word has to break down before it can build up. Sometimes God's Word has to burn before it can warm. But God's Word is like a hammer – it is a tool for breaking down the old life and building up the new life. It enables us to build the Church. Paul said, 'Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified' (Acts 20:32). If you want to build your life, you must use tools, and the greatest tool of all is the Word of God. The better you understand the meaning of key Bible words, the more tools you'll have in your 'spiritual workshop' for getting the job done in building your own Christian life and helping to build the Church.

Church history proves that when the Word of God was given its free course, when there was

faithful preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the Church grew with a strong missionary and evangelistic outreach.

The Word of God is light, it enables us to see. The Word of God is food, it enables us to grow. The Word of God is a tool, it enables us to build.

God's Word is a Weapon

The Word of God is also a weapon, it enables us to fight. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is 'living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword'. Ephesians 6:17 reminds us that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit: 'Take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God'. You have discovered that the Christian life is not a playground, it is a battleground. There are false prophets and false teachers around us. There are false religions that are trying to make merchandise out of you. Satan is out to get you. The world is out to get you. Satan is a liar, but God is the One who gives us truth.

It is important that you and I understand the words in the Word of God as weapons to fight battles. When Satan comes with one of his lies and tries to tell you that you have lost your salvation, you will be able to refute him. When you are going through a period of despondency and discouragement, you will

be able to reach into your armoury of weapons and fight the Devil.

If a doctor or a lawyer or an engineer has to learn a technical vocabulary to do his job, how much more important it is for us who have eternity in view! How much more important it is for us who are trying to win lost souls to know these Bible words and use them the way God wants us to use them.

My prayer is that this series of Bible words will give all of us more light. I trust we will grow as we receive the spiritual food and that we will lay hold of the tools and the weapons for building and battling. It is my heart's desire that you and I shall grow in our spiritual intelligence as we understand the meaning of Bible words.