

We Must Stand In Awe¹ of God's Word

I Cor. 2:1-16

INTRODUCTION

We've traveled together, My Bible and I,
Through all kinds of weather, With smile or with sigh!
In sorrow or sunshine, In tempest or calm!
Thy friendship unchanging, My lamp and my psalm.

We've traveled together, My Bible and I,
When life had grown weary, And death e'en was nigh!
But all through the darkness of mist or of wrong,
I found there a solace, A prayer, and a song.

So now who shall part us, My Bible and I?
Shall "isms" or schism, Or "new lights" who try?
Shall shadow for substance, Or stone for good bread,
Supplant thy sound wisdom, Give folly instead?

Ah, no, my dear Bible, Exponent of Light!
Thou Sword of the Spirit, Put error to flight!
And still through life's journey, Until my last sigh,
We'll travel together, My Bible and I!

By Charles Sandford

"The Bible is just like any other book of antiquity. It should not be treated any differently." – so says the modernist and the liberal. Sad to say, some so-called conservative textual critics have even said the same; **BUT THIS BOOK IS NOT LIKE ANY OTHER BOOK OF HISTORY OR EVEN OF THE PRESENT AGE!**

It stands in a category all its own!

Psa. 138:2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for **thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.**

I Th. 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it not as the word of men*, but **as it is in truth, the word of God**, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Dear reader, most likely you have near you a copy of the Sacred Scriptures, **the greatest Book in all the world.** You have access to a faithful translation of the *inspired*, the *inerrant*, the *infallible*, the *indestructible* Word of the living God – whole and complete, without error or

¹ Awe: as a noun – a feeling of great respect mixed with fear. As a verb – inspire with awe.

omission! I trust that you have the Word of God for the English speaking people in your King James Version. **BUT**...we face a great danger in many circles today...not of *losing that Book*, for it is **indestructible** (having successfully survived 35 centuries), but of *devaluing that Book* – of allowing the Bible to lose its charm, of allowing it to be ignored, of **losing our fascination with the Word of God**.

Perhaps because we are a “land of Bibles

- we have so many copies of this Wonderful Book;
- Bibles abound in our homes, in our churches, or in our Christian schools;
- For our generation, they have *always been here* and we *see* it so very often – it can easily become ordinary, common, and taken for granted!

This situation reminds me of a verse in the OT that has often intrigued me. It has an application here.

I Ki. 10:27 And the king [Solomon] made silver *to be* in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made *he to be* as the sycamore trees that *are* in the vale, for abundance.

I have often wondered if this statement is merely emphasizing the *abundance* of Solomon’s reign, OR if it is making a “sad commentary” – that the truly rare & the truly exquisite (“silver” & “cedars”) had become *so abundant as to become as ordinary* as stones or routine as sycamore trees?

Could such “commonness” be true of our Bibles?

Think how tragically different life would be if there was no written Word of God or if we had no copy of it!

- We would have no light to lead us.
- We would have no promise to assure us.
- We would have no knowledge of God or of truth.

We need come to a fresh realization of the **AWESOMENESS of the WORD OF GOD** – if we are to be effective preachers, teachers, parents, spiritual leaders, simple Christians! **This truly must become, in our thinking, an amazing BOOK.**

Forty authors wrote 66 books over a period of 1,500 years without comparing their writings one to the other – yet here we have a Book that is unified & harmonious, without one mistake or contradiction, standing the test of time, of enemies, and of persecution alike!

“There’s just one Book,” cried the *dying man*, “Read me the old, old story.”
And the sweet words that can never age, Moved him on home to Glory.
There’s just one Book for the *tender years*, One Book alone for guiding,
The little feet through the joys and fears, The unknown days are hiding.
There’s just one Book for the *bridal hour*, One Book of love’s own coining;
Its truths alone lend beauty and power, To vows that lives are joining.
There’s just one Book for *life’s gladness*, One Book for the toilsome days,
One Book that can cure life’s madness, One Book that can voice life’s praise.

There's just one Book for *the dying*, One Book for the starting tears,
And one for the soul that is going home, For the measureless years.
There's just One Book!

Let us then today consider **the AWE of the Word**, for it truly is an AWESOME BOOK!
And, let this text suggest some of its Wonder to us!

THE BIBLE IS WONDERFUL...

I. IN ITS REVELATION (2:6-10)

The Bible is principally a *revelation* – an *unveiling*. It is a declarative message & an authoritative announcement (vv. 1-2).

Paul called his message *the revelation of...*

- “the things which God hath prepared” (v. 9)
- “all things, yea, the deep things of God” (v.10)
- “the things of God” (v. 11)
- “the things that are freely given to us of God” (v. 12)
- “spiritual things” (v. 13)
- “the things of the Spirit of God” (v. 14)
- “all things” (i.e. all things revealed) (v. 15)

GOD HAS REVEALED TO US *IN THIS BOOK* “the things of God” – ALL THE THINGS that we need to know!

- The Bible unveils **GOD** – Who He is, what He is like, & how/what He thinks.
- The Bible unveils **ABSOLUTE TRUTH**, not *educated guesses*, not *religious hypotheses*, and not *moralistic fantasies*. (This statement makes the skin crawl on the backs of liberals, modernists, and Bible-haters!)

Isa. 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them.

- The Bible unveils **THE PLAN OF SALVATION**.

II Tim. 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

- The Bible unveils **HOW TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE!**
- The Bible unveils the **FUTURE**.

Rev. 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John:

“**We speak wisdom**,” said Paul in verse 6. Though our message is done without “excellency of speech or of wisdom” (v.1) and though it is without “enticing words of man’s wisdom” (v.4), **it is not a message void of wisdom!**

In our text, Paul contrasts “the wisdom of God” vs. “the wisdom of the world,” However, He still makes it plain that the revelation of God – it still is, nonetheless, **WISDOM! BUT, according to verse 7, it is REVEALED WISDOM! (Look at verse 7)**

- “the wisdom **of God**” **not** of man (v.7a)
- “in a mystery” (v.7a)
- “hidden wisdom” (v.7b)

Paul does define a “mystery” in...

Col. 1:26 *Even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but **now is made manifest to his saints:** (i.e. “a previously unrevealed truth”)

Moses says the same thing...

Deu. 29:29 The secret *things belong* unto the LORD our God: but those *things which are revealed belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.

This Book **announces** or **reveals** truth, i.e. “the things of God,” for the simple reason that **spiritual truth cannot be gained any other way!** It (spiritual truth or “the things of God”) is not gained either by **experience** or by **reason** (1:22; 2:9), but by revelation!

Some say...

- “We know the “wisdom of God” by experience!” That is, we *feel* or we *observe* with our eyes or *learn* by our senses. (Charismatic thinking) **INSTEAD OF:** We *interpret* our experiences by the Word of God!
- “We know “the things of God” through reason!” That is, we base what we believe on that which agrees with evidence. (History/Science) (some fundamental leaders even embraced this today) **INSTEAD OF:** We submit our minds to the Word of God, believing what it *says* – then reasoning out from that!

Understand this, my friend, though Christianity is very much *experiential* and though it is profoundly *rational*, **it stands upon none of these.** It rests squarely on “thus saith the Lord.” **IT IS REVELATION!** **Verse 10** states that this Book reveals **the mind of God** – *how* He thinks/*what* He thinks, and **verse 16** states that this is “the mind of Christ” in plain, simple words! Thank God, **we are not in darkness! We have the light of the word! We have “the mind of Christ!”**

Don’t ever lose the Wonder of the Bible’s Revelation!

THE BIBLE IS WONDERFUL IN ITS REVELATION, BUT ALSO...

II. IN ITS INSPIRATION (2:11-13)

This is *a most remarkable doctrine* which belongs to the theology of the people of God – the **inspiration of our sacred Text.** Unlike any other so-called sacred text, our Bible, without any blush or embarrassment, *claims to be* the inspired Word of God! (413 times – “Thus saith the Lord”).

Paul says that God revealed “spiritual things” by the Spirit of God (vv. 10-12); and furthermore, that these “things of God” were revealed “in the **words**...which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (v.13).

Not only do we believe that God has *revealed* truth, but He has revealed that truth *in written form* – **in words**! The revelation has been transmitted IN WORDS – inspired words!

THIS IS INSPIRATION!

II Tim. 3:16 All scripture **is given by inspiration of God**, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Matt. 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word **that proceedeth out of the mouth of God**.

Now...don't get *divine* inspiration confused with *human* inspiration. (One is the elevation of human feeling; the other is the “breathing out” of God's own words.)

We have in our hands a translation that has been faithfully translated into the English language – from those “God-breathed” words. Thus, we have in our hands the very WORD OF GOD for the English speaking world!

This truth of inspiration applies to *every word* of the Bible (*verbal inspiration*, Mt. 4:4 “every word”) and to *every part* of the Bible (*plenary inspiration*, II Tim. 3:16 “**all** Scripture, literally “every Scripture”).

This renders the Bible...

- **inerrant**, i.e. free from errors
- **infallible**, i.e. incapable of teaching error
- **absolute**, i.e. final in all matters of faith and practice

“If contemporary institutionalized Christianity exhibits a profound reluctance to be the salt of the earth and speak out with the voice of authority against the spread of neo-paganism, it is because of a crisis of identity. The institutional churches today, having largely abandoned belief in the Bible as the inerrant, authoritative Word of God, simply do not know who they are, or what authority they possess as the guardians and transmitters of absolute truth.”²

I Tim. 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is **the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth**.

Don't ever lose the Wonder of the Bible's Inspiration!

THE BIBLE IS WONDERFUL IN ITS REVELATION AND INSPIRATION, BUT ALSO...

III. IN ITS PRESERVATION (2:13)

² Waibel, Paul R., *Fundamentalist Journal*, Sept. 1988, “The Retreat from Biblical Authority,” pp. 30+.

Since the emphasis of this text in I Cor. is upon “**the words...**which the Holy Ghost teacheth,” **preservation must be an essential doctrine.**

Notice the biblical emphasis on “the words”:

Matt. 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

John 8:47 He that is of God heareth **God's words**: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.

John 12:47 And if any man hear **my words**, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

John 17:8 For I have given unto them **the words** which thou gavest me...

AND...the Scripture promises the preservation of these words...

I Pe. 1:23-25 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. ²⁴ For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: ²⁵ But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Psa. 12:6-7 The **words** of the LORD *are* pure **words**: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. ⁷ Thou shalt keep **them**, O LORD, thou shalt preserve **them** from this generation for ever.

Matt. 5:17-18 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ¹⁸ For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, **one jot or one tittle** shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Unbelievers have always questioned the preservation of the Bible, seeing it as ridiculous and as impossible as inspiration. However, some fundamentalists even today seem to be questioning preservation.

- They say that *the Originals* are preserved *in heaven*, but that the Word of God is not preserved on the earth.
- They say that preservation has to do, *not* with the **WORDS** of the Bible, but with the **MESSAGE** of the Bible.

That is simply NOT what the Scriptures promise!

Psa. 12:6-7 The **words** of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. ⁷ **Thou shalt keep them**, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

What good is *inspiration* without *preservation*?

If we have **no preserved Word of God**, then inspiration is merely an intellectual exercise and of no real value. If we have an inspired Word of God that is not preserved intact, then inspiration (especially *verbal* inspiration) is hollow, at best, or cruel, at worst.

Bob Ingersoll, the famous infidel of the last century, held up a copy of the Bible and said, "In fifteen years I'll have this book in the morgue." Fifteen years rolled by, Ingersoll was in the morgue, and the Bible lives on! **Voltaire** (a French enlightenment writer of the early 18th cent.) said that in a hundred years the Bible would be an outmoded, forgotten Book. When 100 years had rolled by, Voltaire's house was owned and used by the Geneva Bible Society, housing what was then the largest printing press in the world for the production of Bibles.

Psa. 2:4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

To me, almost of equal amazement to *the doctrine of inspiration* itself is *the doctrine of preservation*. Despite the attacks of the Bible's critics, despite the failures of a copyist here and there, despite the harsh defacers of the Bible who deliberately mangled the text, **GOD HAS PRESERVED HIS WORDS. GOD HAS PRESERVED WHAT HE INSPIRED TO BEGIN WITH!**

Don't ever lose the Wonder of the Bible's Preservation!

THE BIBLE IS WONDERFUL IN ITS REVELATION, ITS INSPIRATION, ITS PRESERVATION, BUT ALSO...

IV. IN ITS ILLUMINATION (2:12, 14-16)

God completes the whole cycle of *bibliology* by making the Bible **understandable** to the Spirit-filled child of God ("spiritual," v. 15 as opposed to "carnal," 3:1-3a).

Every child of God in this room, guided by the Holy Spirit and through careful study, can understand the Word of God.

Read I Jn. 2:19-27

Now, I don't mean exhaustively. We will always be learning or understanding something for the first time or something fresh! And I don't mean that it can be mastered at once. Studying the Bible is a life-time experience, **BUT...** we can **understand** the Bible *as we study it*.

Jos. 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth [i.e. we are not to stop speaking it/teaching it]; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, **that thou mayest observe to do** according to all that is written therein: for **then** thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and **then** thou shalt have good success.

God's Word is *livable*, because it is *understandable*!

AND...it has the power to **utterly transform us!**

II Cor. 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, **are changed** into the same image **from glory to glory**, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

James 1:25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

The Bible *changes us* because it affects and impacts *the way we think*; and, changing our *thinking*, the Bible changes *us!*

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Don't ever lose the Wonder of the Bible's Illumination!

CONCLUSION

We have a remarkable story recorded for us in Luke 24. [repeat the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus]

Luke 24:32 And they said one to another, **Did not our heart burn within us**, while he talked with us by the way, and **while he opened to us the scriptures?**

We can have that same experience today – as we study the Bible and as we listen to it preached! IT CAN BURN WITHIN! This most amazing Book has the power to excite the mind and stir the passions again and again. It is always fresh, always alive, and always relevant! **WHAT OTHER BOOK IS LIKE THAT?**

Let us **REVERE** and **RESPECT** the Bible.

- Treat the Volume itself with respect.
- Listen to it reverently and with hushed attention.
- Do not question the statements of the Bible.

Let us **READ** and **STUDY** the Bible. It is not to be admired like a fine piece of art or like a valuable piece of jewelry. Though its price far exceeds either, it was meant to be READ!

I Tim. 4:13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Let us **REMEMBER** the Bible.

Let the Bible so permeate your mind that you learn to “think Bible.” Allow the Bible to become “*the* filter for truth” in your mind. [meditation]

Turn to the Word of God – FIRST! Be primarily concerned: *What does the Bible say?*

Let us **REPRODUCE** the Bible.

The Lord's churches are the “pillar and ground of the truth.” Therefore, we have a responsibility to publish the Scriptures.

It's not enough to say we love the Bible. It's not enough to say Amen to all that we have heard today. We must see the need to publish the Scriptures. We must get the Scriptures into the hands of as many people as the Lord will allow us.

Never lose your fascination with that Book!
Never let it cease to charm and fascinate you!

THIS IS THE BOOK OF GOD!