

In Spirit and in Truth: Rooted and Established

Freedom Church of Denton

Devotion to the Word of God

Volume 1, Lesson 7

- **In Devotion** (feel free to highlight, underline, and scribble notes. Take your time, working through the following material over the course of the next week...it would be better for you to get through one sentence with understanding than the whole lesson with no understanding!)

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers
Acts 2:42

Peter's Spirit-empowered preaching yielded about three thousand water and Spirit-baptized souls on the day of Pentecost. This was a pretty good harvest for the man that had just denied his Savior weeks before. It was also a fitting consummation for the Jewish festival of Pentecost that had been commanded in Leviticus 23 to commemorate the welcome of the great wheat harvest and show bountiful benevolence to the Levite, widow, and orphan. That this new company of believers was pregnant with zeal and holy ambition is an understatement. But what were their next steps to be? What should occupy the affections of a fledgling group of covenanted and prophetic people that have been clothed in heaven's redemptive, dynamic, and spiritually reproductive power? Luke supplies the answer in the verses that follow as he records the activities of these original Pentecostals. He states in Acts 2:42 that they:

- 1) continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles,
- 2) to fellowship and the breaking of bread, and
- 3) to prayer

These are three non-negotiable disciplines that must be cultivated in the life of the new believer if he is going to live a life that is separated unto intimate and prosperous communion with God, that transforms not only his own life, but the lives of those around him. We will consider the first of these disciplines in this lesson.

Quite instinctively these early believers persevered in the revelatory teaching of their spiritual parents, the apostles, from whom they had originally received the glad tidings. It was an instinct birthed of the Holy Spirit of course and comparable to that of a newborn baby that naturally knows how to suckle. A strong desire for the Word of God is the proper and natural drive of one that has been washed in the waters of regeneration. It should require as little exhortation and instruction as a

baby does as it begins to single-mindedly pant and flail for the nourishment on which the entirety of its life depends. These Pentecostal infants understood this.

It was the Word of the Lord that had been brought by the apostles that had afforded their salvation, and it was by continuing in the same that they would not only keep and maintain it, but also grow up in all aspects of it. They comprehended this by the precious gift of faith that the Holy Spirit was quickening to them, moment by moment, day by day. There was little thought regarding the future and even less regarding the past. It was a spontaneous faith inspired by the reality of the moment, sustained by the breath of God and His Word, as each moment simply required.

Jesus had promised His disciples that He would lead them and guide them into all truth. The truths that He had originally given in seminal form, He now begins to imbibe more fully into the life of the apostolic church, by the agency of the Holy Spirit through the dynamic teaching of the apostles. It was in this formative stage of the development of the New Testament canon that the progressive revelation of God's Word became the nectar that supplied life to every atom of this covenantal people. They depended on it as steadfastly and as surely as the infant requires its mother's milk. In the same way, we also are called, like newborn babes, to crave the pure milk of God's word.

You and I should let every fleshly demand, every impulse, every breath, serve as a reminder to take in the pure milk of the Word of God. It is as critical in our development as a mother's milk is to the infant. And as in the physical realm, a deficiency in the formative years can lead to developmental problems in the adolescent years. Therefore, it is important for the discipler to train his disciple as early as possible to learn to feast on the Word of God, beginning with the milk and later moving on to the meat. This discipline grows with increasing skill and wisdom, and is at once simple enough that any child can start the process and profound enough that we will spend all of eternity exploring its manifold dimension.

There ought to be a single-minded pursuit and steadfast application; when you rise, as you go, when you recline, and even in the night-watches. We should begin to develop a proclivity toward the simple and quiet life as well as learn to cultivate the habit of aloneness with God. This is Heaven's institute for training the "eyes to see" and the "ears to hear." Learning to hear the Word of God, that not so much feeds the academic mind as it does the sanctified soul. The Scriptures, after all, find their power more in their object than they do their mechanics. And Jesus Himself said the Scriptures speak of Him. We worship the Son and not the method. It is the power of Promise alone that will carry us when all other conventions fail.

This is God's Word to His people, a love-letter of sorts, that reveals all that is essential regarding the Faith and the Way. It is a Word that is sent from Heaven to a people that are consequently sent to the world. It provides instruction in righteousness and redemption and is by nature revelatory. It is also spiritual,

combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. It is a lamp unto our feet, written by the Holy Spirit, in absolute unity and integrity with the nature of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It outlines redemptive history as well as eschatological prophecy. In fact, it is *the* spirit of prophecy, because it is the story and revelation of Jesus Christ, who is the thread that ties the entire tapestry...from the primitive words of the first chapter of Genesis, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*, to the final words of our Savior in the Apocalypse of John, when He says, *surely, I am coming soon*.

It is the same Word of God that acts as our compass as it delineates and discerns the old paths that help us navigate new and perplexing problems. It speaks words of comfort and consolation to our pain and distress, while providing hope, expectation, and promise when the trial and affliction has demanded more of us than we imagined we were able to give.

It is the rule of faith and practice for the believer as well as the church, and has been given for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. It is the primary means of the believer's growth and maturation.

It is the Word of God that quickens one's faith. As we eat the Word of God we feed our faith. When we feed the flesh or feast on the world, we feed doubt. Period. It is a spiritual maxim. Show me a person weak in faith and I will show you a person weak in the Word of God. There are no shortcuts and no exceptions.

And finally, again, to prove the importance of the Word of God in the life of the new believer, we turn to the example of Jesus. We see the parallel in His own life when upon His baptism and reception of the Holy Spirit, He retreated to the wilderness to be alone with God. His sole preoccupation, His only meditation, and His only defense, was nothing more and nothing less than the Word of God. Convincingly, demonstrably, and without exaggeration, He forever etched in the heart of every thoughtful seeker, the priceless and entirely welcome words that *man does not live on bread alone but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God!* Oh, that we may understand more fully, day by day, what is the depth and breadth of this glorious truth!

- **In Meditation**

As you consider the following references, first pray and invite the Holy Spirit to come and teach you as only the Teacher and Comforter can. Admit to him your complete inability to understand anything spiritual apart from his grace and illumination. Then consider each of these verses, taking notes on anything that the Spirit brings to your attention; perhaps a **Sin** to confess, a **Promise** to claim, an **Example** to follow, a **Command** to obey, or a **Seed** of righteousness to sow. If successful, you are learning to read the Word of God with your **S.P.E.C.S.** on!

Psalms 119:11 _____

What does it mean to store up God's Word in our heart? How does this help keep us from sin? _____

John 5:39 _____

In what way do the Scriptures bear witness of Christ? _____

How does this Christ-centered understanding of the Word of God differ from the understanding of the religious leaders of whom Christ was speaking? _____

What does this passage suggest is a proper motivation for devotion to the Word of God? _____

2 Peter 1:21 _____

What does this passage say about the origin and authority of the Scriptures? _____

2 Timothy 3:16-17 _____

What does this passage teach about the inspiration of the Scriptures? _____

Compare and contrast the four purposes or uses of the Scriptures according to this passage. _____

1 Peter 2:2 _____

What does it mean to long for the pure milk? Discuss the ways an infant longs for its mother's milk. What are the characteristics of this longing? _____

Toward what end are we to long for the Word? What is the connection between the Word and spiritual growth? _____

Psalms 1 _____

What are the conditions for blessing as set forth in this passage? _____

Contrast walk/stand/sit and way of wicked/way of sinners/scoffers. _____

2 Timothy 2:15 _____

What does this passage imply regarding the different ways the Word of God can be

handled? _____
What are ways that one can learn to correctly handle the Word of Truth? _____

Romans 10:17 _____

Explain the connection between faith and the Word of God. _____

In Application

Paul admonishes us in 2 Timothy 2:15 to handle correctly the Word of Truth. We begin to do this as we appropriate the Word of God in our lives through at least five ways:

- **Reading the Word** (consistent intake of the Word of God with our eyes)

There is value in maintaining a regular diet of simply reading the Word of God. Practice by getting alone in a quiet place and simply reading at a normal pace through **Psalm 1**

- **Listening to the Word** (consistent intake of the Word of God with our ears)

There is value in simply listening to the reading of God's Word. Practice by getting alone and listening to a recording of **Psalm 1**

- **Meditating on the Word** (consistent contemplation of the Word of God in our heart)

There is tremendous value in meaningful contemplation of the Word of God. Pondering it deeply in the heart. Thinking about what it says about God and man. Thinking about the meaning of every word, the thought progression, the context, the sentence structure, the genre, etc. It is helpful to make as many observations of the passage as possible, that it may be rightly interpreted, and ultimately applied to our lives in obedience. Practice by again taking **Psalm 1** and camping out for a while. Record your observations. Answer the who, what, when, where, and why of the passage. Consider the passage with your S.P.E.C.S. on. Look for comparisons, commands, and key words. Use a bible dictionary if possible to look up key words. Use a concordance to cross reference other related passages.

- **Speaking the Word** (consistent confession of the Word of God with our tongue)

There is effectiveness in verbally confessing the Word of God from a sincere heart full of faith. Practice by boldly declaring **Psalm 1** out loud in your place of prayer. Speak as if you are speaking the very Word of the Lord, because you are!

- **Praying the Word** (consistent relational communication of the Word of God to God from our spirit and in His Spirit)

There is little as powerful as turning your meditation of the Word of God back into prayer. This is especially true when it is done from a sincere heart full of faith. After all, it is the Word of the Lord. There is nothing that will secure our petition more than knowing that our petition is consistent with what God has spoken. Practice by praying through the promises of **Psalm 1**

In Prayer

God, teach me how to not walk in the counsel of the wicked. I pray that I would walk in paths of righteousness for Your name's sake. I pray that I would learn how to give no quarter to the way of sinners and the treachery of scoffers and mockers. Train my heart to delight in Your Word that it might become the preoccupation of all my affection; when I rise and when I go to sleep. I receive the comfort of knowing that you will guarantee the stability of my life, refreshing me with the living water of Your Word that will yield rich fruit in my life in due season.

Sharpening your axe

- **Daily Reading Plan** - Make use of a daily reading plan to help keep you focused and accountable. Freedom Church of Denton is utilizing the M'Cheyne Reading Plan at ESV.org
- **Topical Study of the Word of God** - We should cultivate the practice of consulting the Word of God for all of life's issues. It has been said that, "if you are cut in life, you should bleed the Word of God." Therefore, when we are grieved, we should consult the Word. When offended, we should consult the Word. If we are struggling with a moral failure, we should consult the Word. If we are needing financial counsel, we should consult the Word. One way to begin to do this is by utilizing a topical Bible or the topical indexes at the back of your bible
- **Use of a Concordance** - Get in the practice of having your bible in one hand and your concordance in the other. Understanding grows as we compare Scripture with Scripture. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate author of the Scriptures, therefore it should be interpreted as such. Understanding passages in light of their immediate and greater contexts is critical in correct interpretation