

THE WONDERFUL WORD #1 – 2 Tim. 3:16,17

January 10, 2010

Frank Carcione's parents divorced when he was only 5 years old. Now divorce is a hard thing for all children to deal with, but some children handle it much better than others. Frank did not handle his parent's divorce well at all. He would sit for long periods of time in his room just crying his little eyes out. To cope with his inner pain, Frank began to live in a fantasy world. He began to imagine that he was Disney characters and child movie stars. As Frank grew older, his imaginations began to be absorbed into the gruesome and macabre. Frank began to be obsessed with death and frightening experiences. He painted themes of death and horror all over his bedroom walls and illuminated them with black lights.

In his later teenage years, Frank Carcione decided to become an actor. He moved to Hollywood and was quickly picked up in some bit parts of horror movies. Frank's continued imagination throughout his life helped him to be able to play morbidly depressed and deformed characters in a very convincing manner. It wasn't too long before Frank was almost a regular walk on part in Hollywood horror movies.

But Frank had an inner longing that would not be filled. In an attempt to satisfy his inner spiritual cravings, he began to dabble more and more into the psychic world. He even went so far as to open a 6 room psychic house where one could get his fortune told or palm read or have a séance or communication with the dead. Still Frank's inner longings were not filled.

One day Frank picked up a Bible and began to read it. In God's providence, the first words that he read from 1 John was "God is Love". *That's what I've been looking for all of my life*, Frank thought, *someone to really love me*. Frank became fascinated with the Scriptures and read the entire New Testament all the way through. As he read about Christ's atonement for his sin, the Holy Spirit began to open Frank's eyes to spiritual truth. One day, Frank Carcione knelt down beside his bed and asked the Lord Jesus Christ to come into his life as his Savior and Lord. He immediately knew that something new and different had happened in his life.

Frank closed down his psychic establishment and began witnessing of his new faith to his former medium colleagues and Hollywood actor friends. Frank then moved back to the Mid West where he attended the Moody Bible Institute to get further training in the Bible. Today Frank Carcione is no longer that lost orphan who is looking for someone or something to give him love, but he is rather a child of God who has had his inner spiritually longings filled by the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Lord has opened doors for Frank to minister primarily in mental hospitals and prisons throughout Ohio and Illinois.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews penned the truth that the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any two-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing of the soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

In his 2nd epistle to Timothy, Paul reminds this young preacher of this innate power in the Scriptures. In his comments, Paul speaks of 4 distinct ministries that God's word has in our lives. We would like to look at these 4 ministries this morning and 2 Sundays from now, the Lord willing. Notice them with me as I read 2 Timothy 3:16,17:

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,
¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Paul first reminds Timothy of the divine nature of the Bible. The Bible is the very breath of God. This passage along with 2 Peter 1 are very important in understanding the nature of the Bible. 2 Timothy 3 gives the *what* of the Scriptures – what the Bible is as the very breath of God. 2 Peter gives the *how* of the Scriptures – how God gave His word to us.

²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹ 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 word that Peter uses here reminds me of a little game that I used to play as a young boy on vacation after a hard rain. Every year, our family would visit Grandma Rowland in Iowa. My grandma lived in a rural area so she didn't have city water or sewage. She didn't even have indoor plumbing during my younger years. She was very proud of her large 4 seater outhouse although I can never remember 2 people using it at the same time so I never understood why it was necessary to have multiple seats. Because there wasn't a storm sewer, there were ditches along both sides of the road to help with drainage when it rained. I used to look forward to those mid-western storms when I was at Grandma's house because the water would soon fill those ditches so that they would become flowing creeks. I remember making little boats and taking sticks and floating them down those drainage ditches. The current of the water would carry these little boats along. This is the idea of the Greek word that Peter uses here. Holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Just as no two boats took exactly the same route as they floated down the drainage ditch, so there are obvious differences between the writings of Peter or Paul or John reflecting their personalities and training. But just as all of those homemade boats ended up down at the end of the drainage ditch (none of

them ever turned around and flowed back up against the current) so the writings of these Apostles that were inspired by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures reflect exactly what God wanted to communicate to us.

Because God's Spirit superintended over the production of the Bible, we can have the confidence that the Scriptures are the very breath or creation of God Himself.

Now Paul in his last letter to Timothy says that the Bible is useful in 4 major areas of our life. Let's look at the first two of these this morning.

TEACHING:

All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching . . .

By saying that the Bible is useful for teaching, Paul is making the claim that the Scriptures have the ability to lead us into God's truth, to enlighten our minds as to what God wants for us to know about Him, about ourselves and about life in general.

This is the reason for God often using the metaphor of light and darkness in describing His word. God's revelation to us gives us light for living. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." Ps. 119:105.

The Psalmist used 2 words here for illumination. The first one, lamp, refers to the common oil lamp that was used to give light in the darkness. We have all seen these small clay lamps with 2 holes in them, one in which to pour oil, the other for a wick. (Show Lamp).

These lamps were used to give illumination in the house, even though the light cast off certainly was not like a 100 watt bulb, and if one were to walk out in the darkness, there were lamps with little handles on them that could be used to show the way. The second term, light, is the Hebrew word that is commonly used in connection with the light of the sun. It indicates a brightness, a clearness that is found in daylight. It is used in connection with the morning sun coming up to dispel the darkness of night. These 2 words used have led commentators to surmise that the Psalmists point is that the word of God gives direction to us at all times of life. It teaches us all that God knows we need to know about Him, ourselves and life in general. It is the lamp during the dark times of life when trials or suffering seems to obscure the mind of God from us. It is also the bright light of the day sun during those more pleasant times of life when it is so easy to drift off the path of God's perfect will onto those attractive roads of lesser priorities which the enemy always brings into our vision. Very often, we need the light of God's word even more during the prosperous times of life, for we are often less sensitive naturally to the voice of the Lord during these seasons of life. During the times of trials and sufferings, we naturally turn to God and ask him what He is trying to teach us. We need to realize God's word as our guidebook all of the time in order to experience the kind of progressive, systematic growth that God would have for us, in order to make consistent progress along the pathway of life.

Do you have a regular, systematic time when you study the Bible every day? Or are your Bible study habits sporadic? The mature believer is the one who realizes the value of God's word at all times in his or her life. At night, during the darkness of the trial or storm, God's word is a lamp to our feet, to show us the way that God would have for us. During the day, when everything just seems to be going more our way, God's word is still absolutely necessary to show us the best way to live so that we aren't diverted by the many lesser priorities that the enemy would lure us with.

Solomon in the book of Proverbs gave a parallel statement to this verse in Proverbs 6:23. "For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life."

The wise person is the one who realizes that God's word is the way to life, real life, abundant life. The wise person is the one who realizes that the Bible is the life map that God has given to us.

None of us would think of taking a trip to a strange place, one that we have never gone to before without first looking at a map or turning on our GPS unit in the car. But it is not enough to just look at a map, or turn on the GPS, is it? We have to follow the direction. We have to obey the direction. If we follow carefully the directions, we will arrive at our desired location.

So it is with God's word. It is not enough to own a Bible. It is not even enough to read a Bible. We must put Scriptural teachings into practice in our lives if we are to follow God's path through life.

The Bible presents two ways of thinking, two philosophies of life. There is the way of the world. The humanistic thinking that becomes the standard of human wisdom. Once accepted, this learning which can appear very logical at times, puffs one up in pride- he is among the elite, the learned. The Scriptures often speak of the arrogant. This attitude of pride and arrogance then causes the one learned in human wisdom to look down upon those he considers to be naive and ignorant with scorn and contempt. And certainly, the rulers of every day have been controlled by this worldly philosophy. They set the standards and promote it.

The simple fact is that we would know no other way of thinking if it were not for God's truth revealed in his word. God's word gives insights to us- wonderful things not otherwise known. God's statutes are his counselors.

The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 119:18-24:

PS 119:18 Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your law.

PS 119:19 I am a stranger on earth;
do not hide your commands from me.

PS 119:20 My soul is consumed with longing

for your laws at all times.

PS 119:21 You rebuke the arrogant, who are cursed
and who stray from your commands.

PS 119:22 Remove from me scorn and contempt,
for I keep your statutes.

PS 119:23 Though rulers sit together and slander me,
your servant will meditate on your decrees.

PS 119:24 Your statutes are my delight;
they are my counselors.

*Now the examples that could be given contrasting God's way of thinking with the natural philosophies of the human mind are almost limitless.

-the world says that you have to look out for yourself, look out for number 1. You have to assert yourself. If you don't sell yourself, nobody else is going to. So you become successful by asserting yourself, and manipulating as many other people as you can to serve you. It sounds reasonable and logical, doesn't it? But it has led to millions of stress-filled, paranoid individuals who are desperately scrambling up the ladder of life, stepping over as many other people as they can, filled with guilt and exhaustion and feelings of failure. God presents a much different way to success. He says that the greatest in His kingdom will be the person who serves the most, the greatest is the servant of all. Help others be successful, try to meet the needs of others, don't be filled with anxiety about your own progress, but trust in God. The world laughs in derision at such a philosophy. But let me ask you a question. Who are the ones who are most content and happy in life? Those who follow God's ways. And, strangely enough, they are often the ones who become the most successful as well. .

A very dramatic example of the Bible's divine ability to transform men and women involved the famous "mutiny on the Bounty." Following their rebellion against the notorious Captain Bligh, nine mutineers, along with the Tahitian men and women who accompanied them, found their way to Pitcairn Island, a tiny dot in the South Pacific only two miles long and a mile wide. Ten years later, drink and fighting had left only one man alive--John Adams. Eleven women and 23 children made up the rest of the Island's population. So far this is the familiar story made famous in the book and motion picture. But the rest of the story that most people don't know is even more remarkable. About this time, Adams came across the "Bounty's" Bible in the bottom of an old chest. He began to read it, and the divine power of God's Word reached into the heart of that

hardened murderer on a tiny volcanic speck in the vast Pacific Ocean--and changed his life forever. The peace and love that Adams found in the Bible entirely replaced the old life of quarreling, brawling, and liquor. He began to teach the children from the Bible until every person on the island had experienced the same amazing change that he had found. Eventually the entire population of slightly less than 100 on Pitcairn Island became a Christian.

But let's move now to a 2nd very important function of the Bible in our lives – REBUKING.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for . . . rebuking. . .

Because we are all born with a sinful nature that is naturally at enmity against God, and because none of us knows the Bible perfectly, and because none of us even obeys every single commandment and teaching that we do know from the Scriptures, we all fall into sin at times in our lives. The Bible helps us in that it points out these transgressions that are so destructive in our lives. The Bible rebukes our sins.

A person can never truly be happy in life, unless that person is first happy with himself inside. And a person can never be happy with himself if he doesn't have a clear conscience. If a person feels dirty and defiled in his conscience, he will never be happy. But the Word of God cleanses and washes our inner person.

READ 119:9-11:

PS 119:9 How can a young man keep his way pure?

By living according to your word.

PS 119:10 I seek you with all my heart;

do not let me stray from your commands.

PS 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart

that I might not sin against you.

*One of the reasons that I often hear from people as to why they don't study God's word is that they just don't retain much of what they read. "My mind is just like a sieve. I read the Bible, but 5 minutes after I read it, I can't remember what I read". I can't tell you how often people have offered that complaint to me. And it is certainly true that none of us retains as much as we would like to when we read.

But I heard a great response to that complaint one time, and I have never forgotten it- because there is a great deal of truth and wisdom found in this answer. I heard a man agree that when you put a sieve under running water, you certainly don't gather a lot of water in the strainer. But, he added, the running water sure keeps the sieve clean, doesn't it?

*Another of the descriptive phrases that is used concerning the Scriptures in addition to light is that of water. In that great passage in which the apostle Paul compares the relationship of Jesus Christ to his bride, the church, with a human marital relationship, Paul speaks of the goal of Christ for his church - *to make her holy,*

cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Eph. 5:26,27. The word of God like water has a cleansing effect in our lives.

*True, we all would like to retain every bit of knowledge that we read in our devotional times. And I think that we do retain more than we realize. But even if we didn't remember anything, there still is a benefit to reading and studying the Bible. For as the word of God pours through us, it has a cleansing effect upon us. It brings to our minds and hearts areas of our life that need to be corrected, it reveals to us hidden sins, and it just washes our souls of the defilement of this world.

*How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Two very important functions of the Bible – to teach and to reprove. Are you allowing the Bible to perform these functions in your life? In 2 weeks, the Lord willing, we will look at the other 2 functions.