

Greetings. And welcome to session 4 of this series on “Abounding in the Good Works of God.” Today we are going to look at the best-selling book of all time, the Bible. More than 5 billion copies have been sold and distributed. We are going to address why I believe this book is vitally important to our relationship with God, and our ability to carry out and do the good works that he has called us to do.

2 Peter 1:20-21

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.

21 For no prophecy ever came by human will, but people spoke from God, being moved by holy spirit.

Verse 21 describes where the scriptures came from. They were written down by men, but *what* these men wrote were not thoughts and ideas that came from their own head. God, by way of his holy spirit, spoke to the men and they wrote down what he told them to write.

Because the scriptures were written down by men, the words used to convey the message would be those familiar to the men at that time. Therefore, to understand the full meaning of the scriptures requires that we have an understanding of the culture, the use of words and things of that nature that would have been common to the men at the time of the writing. But the most important point that I'd like to make right now is that the scriptures originated from the thoughts and mind of God.

Galatians 1:11-12

11 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the good news that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin.

12 For I did not receive it from any person, nor was I taught it, but I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

We talked about revelation in the previous session. This is information we received that we did not previously know. All scripture came to man by way of revelation. That is, God revealing truths to man and he wrote those things down. Verse 11 clarifies what we learned in 2nd Peter, that the scriptures did not originate from humans.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

*16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
17 so that the person dedicated to God can be complete, furnished completely for every good work.*

We talked about these verses in a previous session, so I won't spend a great deal of time on them now. What I want to look closely at today are the words "All scripture is God-breathed." God-breathed is a translation from the Greek word *theopneustos*. This is the only place in the Bible where this word is used. Let's break it down. Theo means "God" and pneu means "to breathe." When we put these two words together, it means "God-breathed." The testimony we have in this verse is that all written scripture came down to us from the breath of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And we also thank God for this: that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

When we put our trust in the scriptures, believing them to be the words of God rather than the words of men, they will go to work for us. My ministry is called "Bible Application Ministries." My overall goal is that these scriptures, the God-breathed Word, will become living and real in your life and the lives of people around the world.

Revelation chapter 1, verses 10 through 11 provides another example that the scriptures originated from God and not from men. I believe the entire Bible, from Genesis all the way through Revelation, came to man this way.

If the Bible truly did come from God as these verses say, and God is perfect, then the words within the Bible must also be perfect. Therefore, they cannot contradict each other.

Psalms 12:6

The words of Yahweh are pure words, like silver refined in a clay furnace, purified seven times.

The more times you run silver through a furnace, the purer it gets. God's Word is so pure that it is like having been run through a furnace seven times. That is *extremely* Pure!

Although the original God-breathed Word was perfect, I do not believe that any translation of the Bible is 100% accurate. The original words that men wrote down when they were directed to do so by God were authentic. However, those original manuscripts no longer exist. The words from them have been translated over and over again, including into different languages. And, as you know, whether with good intentions or not, when men do things mistakes often happen.

In the future I plan to put together a curriculum to help guide you into doing your own research of the Bible so that you can get back to that original God-breathed Word in sections of the scripture that are important to you. In the meantime, let's be content with acknowledging that, for the most part, the translators have done an amazing job. Much of what we read from the Bible in popular English translations such as the King James Version, the NIV, NASB and many others is accurate.

One technique we can use to identify some of the translation errors in scripture is to use "scope of scripture." As an example, if 98% of the scriptures on a given subject say one thing and 2% of the scriptures on that exact same subject appear to say something different, then I choose to believe that the 98% is accurate and that there's something within the 2% that is either a translation error or something within my understanding of that scripture that needs to be addressed.

Now that we have established that the scriptures originated from God, let's look at some verses that tell us what God thinks about those scriptures.

John 5:39

You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have life in the age to come, and yet those are the ones that are testifying about me.

The word of God will direct us into walking the right way in this lifetime so as to prepare us for the age to come when Jesus Christ will lead us in the Millennial Kingdom. They are also a written testimony of Jesus Christ. How he walked, how he talked and how he thought. We can learn so many great things by reading about his earthly ministry.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even piercing as far as the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and is able to judge the considerations and intentions of the heart.

Every person has to have a center of reference outside of himself for truth. For the Christian, our center of reference is the Bible. It is the Bible that allows us to separate truth from error. When we hear a message from a pastor or another Christian leader, how do we know if what they are teaching us is truth or delusion? We should look at the example given to us by the Bereans in Acts chapter 17.

Acts 17:11

Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with great willingness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see if these things were so.

We should be hungry to hear what Christian leaders have to tell us. However, we should not be gullible. The one sure way we can determine if what they're teaching us is from the true God is to compare what they have taught us with the scriptures.

We should delight in having the scriptures available to us to read and understand God's heart.

Psalms 119:162

I am rejoicing at your utterance, like one who finds great spoil.

The word “spoil” in this verse means treasure. Do you consider the scriptures to be great treasure? Jeremiah described the scriptures this way.

Jeremiah 15:16

Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words were to me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Yahweh, God of Armies.

Do you understand the difference between happiness and joy? Happiness is an emotion that humans feel when circumstances around them are in their favor. That happiness goes away when the circumstances change. Jeremiah did not feel happiness, he felt joy. True joy comes when we

understand and believe the promises of God. These promises are not based on circumstances and, because of that, they don't change or fluctuate. Joy is something we can experience on the inside of us regardless of all the things happening around us, good or bad.

We are much better off meditating our thoughts on the Word of God as Jeremiah did than we are to meditate on the things of the world. If we meditate on the things of the world, we're going to get depressed and miserable at times because surely the things of the world are negative. But if our thoughts are focused on the promises of God, we maintain joy in our life as did Jeremiah.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

16 Rejoice always;

17 pray without ceasing;

18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

According to God, there is never a time that we can't rejoice. And there should never be a time when we can't be thankful. It's by being thankful during negative situations that we can maintain joy.

An abundance of verses throughout the Bible tell us how rich and prosperous our life will be if we will read and meditate on the scriptures.

Joshua 1:8

This book of the Torah must not depart out of your mouth, but you are to meditate on it day and night, so that you can be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Psalms chapter 19 and verse 10 tells us that the Word of God is to be desired more than gold and is sweeter than honey. The Bible is very rich in promises that, when we claim them, God will surely bring them to pass. Here is a promise I cling to when circumstances are dreary in my life.

Psalm 37:25

I have been young and now am old, yet I have not seen a righteous person forsaken, nor his offspring begging for bread.

How comforting is this? To know that God will never forsake us. He promises to always take care of us. He would never allow us to be in a position where we would have to beg for food. Not when we're young, and not when we're old.

Philippians 4:19

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

God does not promise to supply our greed, but he does promise to supply our need. Notice that the wealth God draws upon to supply our needs does not come from within us. It is generated from his riches by way of Christ Jesus. There are a huge number of promises such as this in the Bible that we can claim as ours.

The scriptures were extremely important to Jesus Christ. He studied them as a child. Then, during his ministry when he was tempted directly from the devil, he quoted scripture that he had memorized to overcome those temptations.

Matthew 4:3-4

3 And the Tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

4 But he answered and said, "It is written, Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

He used "it is written" to combat the temptation of the Devil. He did this again in verse 7 and once more in verse 10 in response to other temptations. As he shared in verse 4, the words that come from the mouth of God are to be our life blood, the very sustenance of our being. We need the Word of God just as much as we need physical food.

John chapter 1, verse 18 tells us that no man has seen God at any time. So how is it that we can get to know him? We get to know him by way of the scriptures. In a later session we're going to deliberate in detail about the life of Jesus Christ. Without his coming to Earth, you and I would have no hope of salvation. The scriptures are there to identify all the important details regarding why we need him for salvation and what had to occur in order to make our salvation possible.

A wonderful thing about the scriptures is that we can read them over and over, whenever we want to. Sometimes when I forget an important truth, I go back and reread a passage that is special to me. This causes my heart to become regenerated and electrified as a comforting promise comes back to my memory. And the scriptures are so rich and powerful that every time we read them, we're most likely going to learn something new.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom, and singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

How much is the Word of Christ supposed to dwell in our mind? It is supposed to dwell there richly. How do we accomplish this? We do that by reading it, studying it, memorizing it, teaching it, sharing it and, as this verse says, by singing it!

2 Timothy 2:15

Make a diligent effort to present yourself approved before God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

The words “make a diligent effort” are translated from the Greek word *spoudazo*. It is a combination of speed and urgency. Like when there are two minutes left in a football game and you need one more score to win the game. You play with passion and focus. Or when you're in school and you have an assignment that's due tomorrow. You eliminate the distractions and work hard to get the job done. That is this word *spoudazo*. And that is the approach God is asking us to take towards his Word when we study it.

What is the goal of studying the scriptures? To rightly handle them. This is a translation from the Greek word *orthotomeo*. This Greek word is found nowhere else in the New Testament. It means to rightly handle in regard to the way we use it, with respect to others.

Are we living these truths in our walk? I've heard people teach that what we need to do in order to stand approved before God according to this verse is to study it so as to obtain a vast knowledge of accurate scripture. That is not the case. It is not how much accurate scripture we know, but how much we **apply** in our life that really matters. If we have a knowledge of the

scriptures and we don't live it, then we are not truly right handling it, are we?

Finally, we see from this verse that we do not need to be ashamed. When we have truth, we do not need to apologize for it. Truth will cut against the lies and deceitful teaching that originated from the Devil and was then passed along to people. We use the Word of God to combat those lies. Not with a puffed up, “I am right and you're wrong” type of attitude. We share the Word of God with love and tenderness while remaining humble. But in the end, we need not back down from truth. We need never be ashamed when we publicly proclaim the truth. For it is the truth that will minister to and heal people's lives physically, mentally and spiritually.

In the next session we are going to talk about how important it is for us to maintain and fight for unity within the body of Christ. Until then, remember God loves you and so do I.

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