

"The Concept of and Contact with the Word of God"

The Ministry of the Word (pt. 2)

January 12, 2025

INTRO ...to Our 52 Week Journey - To Reclaim the Ground That Needs to be Devoted to the Ministry of the Word

Last Week ...We met a woman who was going through the "Daily Routines" of life (Water from a Well)—and she has an Encounter with the "Ministry of the Word" that changes her life forever!

"The Ministry of the Word"

"The Ministry of the Word" [A phrase from Acts 6] ...It features more of the "activity" and "impact" and "effect" of "THE WORD of GOD" ...This is "about the Bible", but it is intentionally more than that!

"I do not think that our Bibles were given to us that we might merely employ them as telescopes to peer into the heavens, to try to find out what is going to happen in 50 years' time. I am weary with the prophecies and speculations that, as a general rule, end in nothing! I know some brethren with whom one cannot talk about any passage but they say, "Oh, you have not seen the last little book of R. B. S. (those are not the real initials of the good Brother), in which he says that this passage does not apply to us, it is meant only for the Jews." Or else, "That was only for the Church in the wilderness, and not for us in these days." Let us not so misuse the Word of God, but prize it as the bread upon which we are to live! "Man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live."

"But how can we live on words?" asks one. You have spoken well. We cannot live on words if they are the words of men. But there is nothing like the Word of God to live upon! To that Word we owe our life. He spoke us into being, He spoke the soul into our body. By that Word of God we are daily kept alive." **Charles Spurgeon**, "Living on the Word" (Spurgeon's Sermons, The Complete Set (63 Vols.))

...The "Word of God" is a 'something'—a concept, a thing, a person, a communication, ...it is "a REVELATION" that is intended to interact with us in light and life-giving ways!

Jn 1:1-5, 14 ...connects several things to "the Word": God (himself), existence/creation, life, light, glory, grace, and truth.

What is "the Word of God"?

...It's "ESSENCE" (ie, it is revelatory ...it is often "conceptual" ...it is a force that creates, shapes, defines & changes creation/existence)

"...Is the word of God a divine attribute? A divine act? A divine person? An ineffable mystery? A divine book? Some combination of these? ...God's word (Heb. *davar*, Gk. *logos, rema*⁷⁵⁷), according to Scripture, is his **speech, by which he expresses and therefore reveals himself**. Scripture itself is God's Word in this sense (2 Tim. 3:16⁷⁵⁸), but the speech of God is not limited to written revelation. In Genesis 1, God creates all things by speaking, ...God's word, then, is involved in everything God does: his decrees, creation, providence, redemption, and judgment, not only in revelation narrowly defined. He performs all his acts by his speech. ... Further, God and his word are always present together. Where God is, the word is, and vice versa." **John Frame** (Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief)

...The Ministry of the Word is a type of "speech, by which God expresses and therefore reveals himself."

- So... Creation is a form of the Ministry of God's Word ...it is the "Origin of Existence"!!

Gen 1:1-3 ¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void and darkness was hovering over the face of the deep. ...³ And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."

-- It forms, frames, and is the "source material" of what exists!

- It is like an "Echo" of What HE SPOKE Long Ago!!

Psa 19:1-4 ¹ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. ² Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. ⁴ Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

...Notice there is "declaring" and "proclaiming" and "speech" and "knowledge" and "voice" and "words" ...In the Existence & Activity of Divine Creation God is Speaking To Us—About Himself, about Us, and about Life!!

"So God's words are among his mighty acts, and his mighty acts convey his word. ...God's words announce what he will do; then he acts; then by further words he interprets what he has done and announces further actions. For example, in Genesis 6:9-21, God tells Noah of the coming flood. In 7:1-8:19, the flood comes and subsides. Then in 8:20-9:28, God interprets the implications of the flood, initiates a new covenant, and declares future events." **John Frame** (Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief), p. 519

...How Vitally Important is This Kind of "Ministry of the Word"??—We're ALL trying to figure ourselves and our "existence" out!!

"The first Greek philosopher, Thales, is famous for saying 'all is water.' The Greeks, who did not have our modern periodic table, acknowledged four elements out of which they thought everything was made: earth, air, fire, and water. That simplified somewhat the question of what the world is made of... These philosophers asked the question of ingredients, what Aristotle called 'material cause,' ...They were seeking, in other words, to define 'being.' Being, whatever it is, is the most fundamental reality there is. ...if we are to gain a truly complete knowledge of the universe, it seems that we must be able to describe, even define, being itself. ...What is this world, really? Here the philosopher seeks a God's eye view of the world, an ultimate answer to the question 'What is being?' ...clearly, Thales didn't answer that question." **John Frame**, "We are All Philosophers", Kindle loc 74-118

-- What is EVERYTHING Made Of? Where does "Being"/"Existence" Originate? ...The WORD of God!

"the scientist's dream is to develop a 'theory of everything'—a scientific theory that will encompass all the workings of the physical universe in a single self-consistent formulation. ...Fair enough, but there is more to the universe than matter, energy, space, and time. Most of us believe in the real existence of non-material entities such as friendship, love, beauty, poetry, truth, faith, justice, and so on—the things that actually make human life worth living. A true 'theory of everything', therefore, must embrace both the material and non-material aspects of the universe... In these pages I shall review not only the findings of modern physics (my own discipline) but also deep questions of origins. Among other things, we'll consider the origins of the universe; of time; of law in all its aspects; of life; of the human mind; and of morality." **Edgar Andrews**, "Who Made God? Searching for a Theory of Everything", p. 10

...SO... when I go to wrestle with my own existence (what I'm made of, what the world is made of, how I understand "being" and "existing") ...I NEED the Ministry of the WORD!! ...Because, right before there was ANYTHING ...or the "Last Thing to Touch EVERYTHING"—There was The WORD of GOD!!

Jn 1:1-4 ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

"I have argued as the main theme of this book that God relates to creatures as their covenant Lord. We can describe this relationship in terms of the three lordship attributes: control, authority, and presence. ...So, God's word manifests his controlling power, his supreme authority, and his presence with his creatures. Let us consider these further.

... I indicated earlier that God accomplishes all his mighty acts by speech. This includes his eternal plan, the eternal deliberations of the persons of the Trinity (Matt. 11:25–27; John 4:34; 5:19–30; 17:1–26), his work of creation (Gen. 1; Ps. 33:6–9), providence (Ps. 147:15–18), judgment (Gen. 3:17–19), and grace (Luke 7:7–9; Rom. 1:16; Phil. 2:16).

And when the apostles bring the gospel of Christ to the world, they rejoice that it is not only a content, but also a power (Rom. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2:13). Not only is it accompanied by signs of God's power (Rom. 15:19), but the word itself changes hearts and strengthens believers (Rom. 16:25). It is the "word of life" (Phil. 2:16; see also John 1:1), the gospel that brings life and immortality to light (2 Tim. 1:10). ...So the word of God is powerful both in judgment and in blessing. These are the twin covenant sanctions." **John Frame**, (Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief), p. 528

...Consider - "The Ministry of the Word" is God "RELATING" to us! ...it is a "Conveyor", "Revealer", "Imparter", "Clarifier" of THESE TRUTHS (Concepts, understandings, ideas)!!

...The Word of God Brings THESE concepts & thoughts to bear on my life!!—The Information Age DOES NOT!! ...Are These Irrelevant, Out-of-Touch, Not What People Want to Hear??

-- In Some Sense "The Word of God" is God "Relating to Us"—It is God Driving the Conversation ...It is God Talking to us About What God Wants to Talk About!!

Take It and Read!!

The Word of God is like No Other Thing that Exists!! ...It is an Existence Forming, Life Imparting, Light Emitting, Reality Explaining, Witness Bearing "THING"—and it is "On a Mission"!

Is 55:11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Ps 107:20 He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.

...Personally ...in October of 1978 ...I picked it up and began to read it—

John Frame: "the gospel of Christ ... is not only a content, but also a power (Rom. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:5; 2:13). ... the word itself changes hearts and strengthens believers (Rom. 16:25). It is the "word of life" (Phil. 2:16; see also John 1:1), the gospel that brings life and immortality to light (2 Tim. 1:10).

Rom 16:25-26 "Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about obedience of faith"

"Take it and Read" - St. Augustine!

"Adolf Harnack said that he was the greatest man the church has possessed between Paul the Apostle and Luther the Reformer." ... "Christian History magazine says, 'After Jesus and Paul, Augustine of Hippo is the most influential figure in the history of Christianity.'"

Augustine was born in 354 AD, ...And he was in bondage to lust for 16 years. He had a concubine all that time, and had a son with her. He never married in all of his life, but just had sex every day until he was 32 years old." **John Piper**, "For Men: Augustine, Sin, and Sovereign Joy" and "1 Percent of a Book Can Change Your Life"

"I flung myself down beneath a fig tree and gave way to the tears which now streamed from my eyes. In my misery, I kept crying, 'How long will I go on saying, 'Tomorrow, tomorrow?'" Why not now? Why not make an end to my ugly sins at this moment?' All at once I heard the singsong voice of a child in a nearby house. Whether it was the voice of a boy or a girl I cannot say, but again and again it repeated the refrain, "Take it and read. Take it and read."

At this I looked up, thinking hard whether there was any kind of game in which the children used to chant words like these, but I could not remember ever hearing them before. I stemmed my flood of tears and stood up, telling myself that this could only be a divine command to open my book of Scripture and read the first passage on which my eyes should fall.

So I hurried back to the place where Alypius was sitting, seized the book of Paul's epistles and opened it. In silence, I read the first passage on which my eyes fell:

"Not in reveling in drunkenness, not in lust and wantonness, not in quarrels and rivalries. Rather, arm yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ; spend no more thought on nature and nature's appetites" (Rom 13:13-14).

I had no wish to read more, nor need to do so. For, in an instant, as I came to the end of this sentence, it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart, and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled. (from *The Confessions of St. Augustine*)

"And then, at age 32, he turned and never went back. ...And he lived a chaste and celibate life until the end, and became the Bishop of Hippo, not by his own choice but because people saw him soaring in godliness and effectiveness of communication about the sovereignty of grace. So they made him bishop, and he was there until he died when he was 75." **John Piper**, "For Men: Augustine, Sin, and Sovereign Joy"