

THE VALUE OF THE BIBLE

Lewis Willis

The Bible is the inspired word of God. Paul affirms as much in 2 Timothy 3:16 when he says, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”* Because this is so, we in churches of Christ emphasize that the Bible serves many purposes.

It is a store house of knowledge for people who would be free from sin. Jesus said that truth would make us free (Jn. 8:32). I like a statement from Leslie Diestelkamp which I wrote down several years ago: *“The word of God misunderstood is no more helpful than the word of God unknown!”* Because of the sins of past generations, the Bible is unknown to many. Here in our country, we are rapidly moving in that direction. Because of the corruptions of religious doctrine, many are not free because they misunderstand its profound message.

The Bible is also a guide which shows Christians how to live. David wrote, *“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory”* (Ps. 73:24). The Bible is God’s

counsel, and it is man’s guide. He learns how to live as God wants him to live by reading the Bible. Most of the New Testament is used to outline the responsibilities of those who would serve God.

The Bible is a statement of doctrine which is to be believed. Paul said it is profitable for doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16). I read a statement in an article by Johnie Edwards this week. He wrote of those who would try to make a distinction between “faith” and “doctrine.” Johnie cited Acts 13:7-12 to show that several words were used interchangeably to refer to the same thing — the truth. Those expressions were the word of God, the faith, the right ways of the Lord and the doctrine of the Lord. Men try to make a distinction where God made none. For our purposes, note verse 12: *“Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”* Clearly, this man believed the doctrine.

Another of the functions of the Bible is that it nourishes us spiritually. Note the following passages which refer to it as food and water: (a) *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Pet. 2:2); (b) *“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have*

need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:12-14); (c) *“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water”* (Jn. 4:10); and, (d) *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”* (Jn. 6:51). The Bible is the only source for this spiritual nourishment.

Man is a religious being so the Bible teaches him how to worship. (a) He is to pray (Acts 2:42). (b) He is to sing (Eph. 5:19). (c) He is to observe the Lord’s supper on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7). (d) He is to give of his money on the first day of the week as he has been prospered (1 Cor. 16:2). And, (e) he is to study God’s word, and this comes from teaching (Acts 20:7). There is

no other source provided by God to guide us in worship except the Bible.

Man is a sinful being so the Bible teaches him how to be forgiven. (a) He is told he must hear the gospel and believe (Rom. 10:17; Jn. 8:24). (b) He must repent of his sins (Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30). (c) He must confess his faith in Christ with his mouth (Mt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37). (d) He then must be baptized as the word of God directs (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21). (e) Thereafter a man must be faithful until the time of his death (Rev. 2:10). These are the things specified by the Bible which one must do to be saved. They are certainly not unknown to us anymore. One would have to have help to misunderstand them.

Man is a suffering being so the Bible tells him about the Great Physician (Mt. 9:12-13). The word of God teaches us that God cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7), and that he will never leave us or forsake us, but will be a helper to us (Heb. 13:5-6). When the troubles of life beset us, the words of the Bible are to

be used to comfort and console us (1 Th. 4:18).

Because man is an intelligent being, the Bible is presented to him to instruct him in the ways of righteousness. God's word identifies the good works which man must do (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14). No instruction we receive is as great as the instruction found in the Bible.

Therefore, the value of the Bible is in the things it will do for us, as outlined above. We could have spoken of other things. When we are weak, it supplies courage and strength. It gives us occasions for joy, and comforts us when we are in sorrow. When we are in despair, it gives hope. And, when it is time to die, it tells us about eternal life which is available to those who have served God. Do you know of any other document or book about which all of these things could be said? Is the Bible of value to you?

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THINGS WON'T CHANGE UNTIL HEARTS ARE CHANGED

John Edwards

The basic meaning of the word "repent" (which appears 46 times in my Bible) is to change. God "commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). So, all of us have some changes to make.

Changes must take place in one's heart before any other changes will be seen. Jesus told of a certain man who said to his son, "go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went" (Mt. 21:28-29). What did the son do when he repented? He changed his mind, and went. The change of heart brought about a change of action. This is how it works.

People will not change their **dress** until they change their hearts. Our **speech** will not change until our hearts are changed. **Attendance** will not improve until hearts are improved. **Lives** will not change until hearts are changed. Do you "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Mt. 22:37)?

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