

LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORD — 1

LIFE AND HEALTH IN THE WORD

Sometimes we make it too complicated. Knowing who God is, our response to Him is essentially to *hear His word* and *obey* it. Psalm 119 is rich with frequently quoted verses about the Word — for example:

Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. v89 (NKJV)

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. v105

The unfolding [or entrance] of your words gives light v130

Fundamentally, we're talking about the Bible (2 Tim 3:16,17). But the Word can come to us specifically through reading, through prayer, through sermons, through prophecy, and in other ways.

At this time of the year, I often find myself in the book of Proverbs. Consider these verses from Proverbs 4:

²⁰*My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words.*

²¹*Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;*

²²*for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body.*

Pay attention to the words, listen closely to them, keep them in your heart — why? The answer is verse 22.

Results of God's Word

They are LIFE — to those who *find* them.

We can literally *live* by the Word of God. Jesus in the midst of the temptations declared, "*It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*" (Mt 4:4). He also explained, "*The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.*" (Jn 6:63).

Towards the end of his life, Moses wrote a song and recited the words in the hearing of the people. He then told them to take to heart all these words, and declared:

"They are not just idle words for you — they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess." Deut 32:47

Not empty words or idle words — they are your *life*.

And they are HEALTH — to a man's whole body.

God's Word can bring *healing*, as very many testimonies will bear out. But it's not just for healing; it's truly *health*. Constantly being in the Word can lead to health, wholeness and soundness.

It's been said that 60% of pastoral problems disappear when God's people start to read their Bibles. A pastor friend of mine was amazed several years ago to find that his regular counselling workload virtually vanished when he started systematically teaching his people the Word. "Get in the Word" can therefore be good pastoral counsel.

God's words "*are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body.*"

Receiving God's Word

The text says, "Pay attention to what I say." Don't take it lightly, as if it were simply one of the available opinions. Sometimes we consult opinions: "What does the politician say?"; "What does the scientist say?"; "What does the expert say?"; "What does the pastor say?"; "What does God say?". This last question should never be on a par with the others. Opinions may be *our* best attempt at expressing truth. God's opinion *is* the truth!

Years ago I saw Colin Urquhart's Kingdom Faith Teaching Course, and was impressed that each page of the accompanying notes had a footer: "*It's not my opinion that matters, Lord, but what You say in Your Word.*"

"Listen closely to my words." Have you ever found yourself in a conversation or in a meeting, and not really hearing what's said? You may get something, but you miss so much.

My pastoral experience has frequently found me counselling someone with the preached word from the previous Sunday. The person concerned was there in the meeting, but somehow didn't listen to the word — or didn't *hear* — and missed the personal application.

In Job we read: "*For God does speak — now one way, now another — though man may not perceive it.*" Our attitude therefore needs *not* to be, "If the Lord wants to speak to me, He will", but rather, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." (See 1 Samuel 3:10) And in this way we *receive* the Word of God, which is then at work in us who believe (1 Thess 2:13).

Keeping God's Word

Again Proverbs 4:21 says, "*Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart.*" It's possible to *have* the word, and then *lose* it. In the parable, the sower sows the word. Some of the seed of the word falls beside the path, and the birds of the air come and steal it away. It was right there, but then it was lost. We can deliberately *hold on* to a word, or we can open our hand and allow it to be stolen. But then we lose the benefit.

Moses was dead, and Joshua had the word that he would lead the people to take the land. He also had a word of encouragement and exhortation concerning being strong and courageous, not terrified and not discouraged. (See Joshua 1:1,2,6,9) How was he to *keep* this word? The answer is verse 8:

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Joshua 1:8

The word "meditate" here means to murmur or mutter half out loud. That's how we keep the word to obey it. Now link it with these words, quoted in Romans 10:8, but found in Deuteronomy:

... the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so that you may obey it. Deut 30:14

In the mouth by meditating, in the heart by believing, we keep the word to obey it.

All the words we have — words we receive while reading privately, things God speaks to our hearts during sermons, prophetic words we're given — don't lose them! It usually helps to write them down. The shortest pencil is better than the longest memory!

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16

"My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words." — **Receive** God's Word — *"Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;"* — **Keep** God's Word — *"for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body."* — By receiving and keeping, let's go for the **results** of life and health in the Word.

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Note: All Bible quotations are NIV unless otherwise stated.