

Zac Poonen:

1. In Psalm 119:105, the Word is likened to light. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." When we walk through unknown terrain in the dark, we use a light in order to see our way. That is a picture of what the Bible does for us in a world that lies in the pitch darkness of sin. It shows us the path to God. We can know nothing of God's way of salvation apart from the Bible. Furthermore, the Bible gives light to the Christian on the pathway of right doctrine, showing up at the same time the pitfalls of false teaching alongside the road, so that he may not fall into them. Without that light, he would never know what was false and what was true. The Holy Spirit commended the believers at Berea, because they did not receive even what the apostle Paul preached in them until they had themselves checked it with the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). Only then did they accept his message. (Was it because of this attitude to the preachers who came to them that Paul had no need to send an epistle to the Bereans correcting false doctrine, as he did to so many of the other churches?). People who search the Scriptures diligently are not easily lured into false doctrine. They know the truth that has made them free.

2. In James 1:22,23, the Word of God is likened to a looking-glass. We need a mirror to see whether our faces are dirty or clean and whether our hair is disorderly or combed. Without one, we cannot tell how we look. If James had been writing his epistle in the twentieth century, he might perhaps have gone a step further and used a more modern symbol-the X-ray-to illustrate this effect of God's Word. An X-ray film shows me the conditions of the interior organs in my body, which I cannot know otherwise. The Bible does something similar in that it shows me the condition of my heart before God. It corrects me and reproves me so that I might be perfect and fully equipped to serve Him (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Many people today are deceiving themselves about their spiritual condition, thinking that there is nothing wrong with them. Why? Because they have never subjected themselves to the X-ray of God's Word. It is possible that, even as believers, we may be unaware of sins of which we are guilty before God. I have often found during times of meditation on the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit has made me aware of some sin-some selfishness of motive, perhaps, in my actions-of which I was totally unaware until He made it known. We need to subject ourselves to a daily examination through the mirror (or X-ray) of God's Word if we are to avoid spiritual stagnation and decay. Not a day goes by in our lives without our examining our faces in a mirror. May not a day go by either without our examining our hearts.

3. In Jeremiah 23:29, the Word of God is likened to a fire. Fire, in the Bible, is used as a symbol of that which purifies or burns up. Gold put into the fire is purified, whereas wood is consumed. The Word of God, similarly, has a purifying effect upon our lives, eliminating from them what is un-Christlike. It not only shows us our faults, but it also makes us holy. No man can ever hope to be holy without spending time every day at the Lord's feet, for that alone can purge away all the dross from his life. But it is also terribly true the same fire will burn up the one who rejects the Word (John 12:48). Our attitude towards God's Word determines whether it will purify or destroy. If we submit to it, it will purify us. If we ignore or spurn it, then it will surely consume us.

4. In the same verse of Jeremiah 23 we see the Word of God likened to a hammer that breaks the rock into pieces. If you want to make a road on a mountainside, you have to break up rocks. In these days we use dynamite for that purpose, whereas in Jeremiah's day they used hammers. The Word of God is His dynamite, capable of removing huge obstacles out of our way. We all face trials and problems in our lives-situations in which the mountains have closed in upon us and it appears as though we have reached a dead-end. Often we have remained in such situations, discouraged and defeated, not knowing what to do or where in turn. Our ignorance at such times of the promises that God has given us in Scripture has prevented us from claiming them. Otherwise, like dynamite, they would have blasted away the obstacles in our path and taken us triumphantly through the mountain barrier to the other side. How much we have missed by not knowing the Word!

5. In Luke 8:11, the Word of God likened to seed which, when sown into the ground, produces fruit. 1 Peter 1:23 states that our new birth itself is a result of that seed sprouting in our hearts. Only as we are fruitful can God be glorified through our lives. Is there, in your life and service, fruit for the glory of God? Is it manifest, in your own life first of all, in terms of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness (meekness), and self-control? (Gal. 5:22, 23). And then, do you find fruit in your service, in the shape of sinners turning to the Lord and believers being drawn closer to Him? If not, perhaps the reason is that you are not regularly receiving the Word of God into your own heart as seed "having life in itself." Psalm 1:2, 3 tells us that it is the man who regularly meditates on God's Word, who alone will be like the fruitful tree, prospering in all that he does.

6. The Word of God is also likened to food in Psalm 119:103. The same symbol occurs again in Jeremiah 15:16

and in 1 Peter 2:2. The prophet Ezekiel and the apostle John are each shown too in Scripture as "eating" a book (Ezek. 3:1-3; Rev. 10:9, 10). We have here a picture of men assimilating and digesting the Word of God. Food gives us strength. Our bodies cannot be built up without it. A person who is under-nourished will be skinny and weak in his constitution, and therefore unable to resist disease. He will also be unable to defend himself if physically assaulted by another. A small push will often be enough to knock him down. In exactly the same way, one who neglects the Word of God will be spiritually under-developed, and consequently unable to resist temptation and to withstand the Devil's onslaughts. Only those who regularly meditate on God's Word grow into strong virile Christians (1 John 2:14). Mere reading of the Bible will not make you strong, but meditation upon it allows the Word to penetrate into the very core of your being and thus to become a part of you, hidden in your heart (Psa. 119:11). Job said that he esteemed the words of God's mouth more even than his necessary daily food (Job 23:12). By listening to God daily he built up a tremendous reserve of spiritual strength. This, no doubt, accounts for the man's remarkable resilience in the face of Satan's fierce assaults. He did not lose his faith in God, in spite of all the adversity he faced. His wife, who obviously did not have the same regard for God's Word as her husband, was ready to curse God as soon as calamity struck. Not so Job. His example gives us an idea of the tremendous strength that God's Word, if received daily, can give us to face every trial in life.

7. In Deuteronomy 32:2, the Word of God is likened to dew. Dew, in the Bible, is a figure of God's blessing. When God blessed Israel, He gave them the dew and the rain. When Israel sinned God withheld them, as He did in 1 Kings 17:1. This symbol teaches therefore that God's blessing comes through His Word upon all who receive and obey it. Proverbs 10:22 declares that that blessing can enrich us, making up for all our shortcomings. What an encouragement that is! The blessing that comes to us through His Word makes up for all our lack. You may be lacking in talents and unable to preach or sing or pray like others, but when the dew of Heaven falls on your life, notwithstanding all your natural limitations, God can still make you a channel of blessing to thousands. So, wait upon the Lord daily with His Word in front of you. Do not rush away from His presence until His dew falls upon your soul. But dew is more than blessing. It is also a symbol of freshness. Here is another thing that the Bible gives us, namely, renewal. Listening to the voice of the Lord day by day keeps our Christian life continually fresh. It saves us from becoming stale, with all that that implies of corruption and decay. Mouldy bread will not make anyone's mouth water. Even so, the staleness displayed by many believers cannot be expected to draw anyone to Christ. Is your Christian life fresh every day? It can be so only if you feed daily upon the heavenly manna from beneath the dewfall (Exod. 16:13-15; compare verse 20).

8. The Word of God is further likened to wealth in Psalm 119:162-or to gold, as in other passages of Scripture. Money cannot make you truly wealthy. You may acquire qualifications which give you great earning power and thus may reach a position where you can earn plenty of money; but that will give you only a wealth which passes away. Nothing but the Word of God can make you really wealthy. A truly wealthy man lacks nothing. He has enough and to spare. A poor man on the other hand, has to go around begging from those more fortunate than himself. The Word of God can make you so wealthy that you will never be at a loss. It will not only give you enough for your own needs, but will enable you to meet the needs of others too. There is not a single situation that you can ever face in life for which the solution is not found somewhere in the Bible. The answer will always be there in the experience of some Biblical character that parallels your own, or in some teaching of Scripture. If you know your Bible, you will find in the time of crisis that the Holy Spirit brings to your remembrance the appropriate passage and from it gives you His answer.

9. In Ephesians 6:17 we find the Word of God is there called the sword of the Spirit. The Christian life is a constant battle with a cunning foe, whose method of attack is often to cast doubt upon God's love, God's justice, even God Himself. This sword can defeat his every move, provided we know how to use it. Discouragement is one of the Devil's strongest weapons. With it he has knocked down many mighty men. Moses, Elijah and Jonah each trembled at its shock, but each one of these men overcame his own depression by listening to the Word of the Lord. You and I may be able temporarily to tide over our discouragement by occupying ourselves in some way that provides a diversion, but only by the Word of God itself can we ever overcome it completely. Jesus Himself overcame Satan in the wilderness solely through His use of this Sword.

May the Lord imprint this message deeply on our hearts.