

**Articles and Sermons :: DIG DEEP articles about scripture****DIG DEEP articles about scripture - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2006/10/4 13:48**

"You all have by you a large treasure of divine knowledge, in that you have the Bible in your hands; therefore be not contented in possessing but little of this treasure. God hath spoken much to you in the Scripture; labor to understand as much of what he saith as you can. God hath made you all reasonable creatures; therefore let not the noble faculty of reason or understanding lie neglected. Content not yourselves with...divine truth...you accidentally gain in conversation; but let it be very much your business to search for it, and that with the same diligence and labor with which men are wont to dig in mines of silver and gold."

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Re: DIG DEEP (scripture) - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2006/10/4 13:51

Our Need of Scripture
by J. I. Packer

“Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psa 119:105).

See the psalmist’s picture. He has to travel. (Scripture regularly pictures life as a journey.) He was in the dark, unable to see the way to go and bound to get lost and hurt if he advanced blindly. (This pictures our natural ignorance of God’s will for our lives, our inability to guess it and the certainty in practice of our missing it.) But a lamp (think of a flashlight) has been handed to him. Now he can pick out the path before him, step by step, and stick to it, though darkness still surrounds him. (This pictures what God’s word does for us, showing us how to live.) The psalmist’s cry is one of praise, thanks, admonition, testimony and confidence—praise that God glorifies his grace by giving men so precious a gift as his word; thanks because he knows how much he himself needed it, and how lost he was without it; admonition to himself and any who might read his psalm always to value God’s word at its true worth and to make full use of it for the purpose for which it was given; testimony to the fact that already in his experience it had proved its power; and confidence that this would continue.

The psalmist would have committed to memory the Pentateuch, the law of Moses in its narrative context, and in his meditations would be working from that. We are privileged to have the entire Bible available to us in printed form. How well do we know it? How much do we love it? Happy are we if we have learned, in defiance of modern skepticism, to make the psalmist’s words and meaning our own.

Some 170 of the psalm’s 176 verses celebrate the ministry of God’s revealed word in the godly man’s life as his source of guidance, hope, strength, correction, humility, purity and joy. Psalm 19:7-14 and 2 Timothy 3:15-17 more briefly do the same thing. Do we know anything of what Paul and the psalmists knew of the power of Scripture to reshape, redirect and renew disordered lives?

Why does contact with God’s scriptural word transform some people while leaving others cold? First, some let the written word lead them to the living Word, Jesus Christ, to whom it constantly points us; others don’t. Second, not all come to the Bible hungry and expectant, conscious of daily need to hear God speak. “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it,” says God (Psa 81:10). The open mouth is a gesture of hunger and dependence. “With open mouth I pant, because I long for thy commandments,” says the psalmist (Psa 119:131). Desire for God, springing from a sense of our need of him, is the factor that decides how much or how little impact Scripture will make upon us. Bible reader check your heart!

What Bishop J. C. Ryle wrote in a tract over a century ago remains wholly relevant:

You live in a world where your soul is in constant danger. Enemies are round you on every side. Your own heart is deceitful. Bad examples are numerous. Satan is always laboring to lead you astray. Above all false doctrine and false teachers of every kind abound. This is your great danger.

To be safe you must be well armed. You must provide yourself with the weapons which God has given you for your help. You must store your mind with Holy Scripture. This is to be well armed.

Arm yourself with a thorough knowledge of the written word of God. Read your Bible regularly. Become familiar with your Bible...Neglect your Bible and nothing that I know of can prevent you from error if a plausible advocate of false teaching shall happen to meet you. Make it a rule to believe nothing except it can be proved from Scripture. The Bible alone is infallible...Do you really use your Bible as much as you ought?

There are many today, who believe the Bible, yet read it very little. Does your conscience tell you that you are one of these persons?

If so, you are the man that is likely to get little help from the Bible in time of need. Trial is a sifting experience...Your store of Bible consolations may one day run very low.

If so, you are the man that is unlikely to become established in the truth. I shall not be surprised to hear that you are troubled with doubts and questions about assurance, grace, faith, perseverance, etc. The devil is an old and cunning enemy. He can quote Scripture readily enough when he pleases. Now you are not sufficiently ready with your weapons to fight a good fight with him...Your sword is held loosely in your hand.

If so, you are the man that is likely to make mistakes in life. I shall not wonder if I am told that you have problems in your marriage, problems with your children, problems about the conduct of your family and about the company you keep. The world you steer through is full of rocks, shoals and sandbanks. You are not sufficiently familiar either with lighthouses or charts.

If so, you are the man who is likely to be carried away by some false teacher for a time. It will not surprise me if I hear that one of these clever eloquent men who can make a convincing presentation is leading you into error. You are in need of ballast (truth); no wonder if you are tossed to and fro like a cork on the waves.

All these are uncomfortable situations. I want you to escape them all. Take the advice I offer you today. Do not merely read your Bible a little—but read it a great deal...Remember your many enemies. Be armed!

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2006/10/4 14:25

"How to Use This Word"

From C. H. Spurgeon, *Spiritual Warfare in the Believers Life*,

(Lynnwood, Washington: Emerald Books, 1993), pp. 77-83.

Notice first that Jesus used the Word to defend His Sonship. The fiend said, "If Thou be the Son of God," and Jesus replied, "It is written." That was the only answer He needed to give. Jesus did not call to mind evidences to prove His Sonship. He did not even mention that voice out of the excellent glory that had said, "This is My beloved Son." No, but "It is written."

I do not doubt but that you have been already subjected to the infernal "if." How glibly it comes from Satan's lip. It is his darling word, the favorite arrow of his quiver. Satan is the prince of skeptics, who worship him while he laughs in his sleeve at them, for he believes and trembles. One of his greatest works of mischief is to make men doubt. "If"--with that sneer he whispers this already in the ear. Never let Satan get you away from the solid ground of the Word of God. If he once gets you to think that the fact of Christ being the Savior of sinners can only be proved by what you can see within yourself, he will plunge you into despair.

The reason that I am to believe in Jesus lies in Jesus and not in me. I am not to say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus because I feel so happy," for within half an hour I may feel miserable; but I believe in Christ because it is written, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). I believe in the salvation provided by Jesus Christ not because it always agrees with my reason or suits my frame of mind but because it is written, "He that believeth on him is not condemned" (John 3:18). Nothing can alter this truth; it stands and must stand forever. Believer, abide by it, come what may. Satan will say, "You know there are many evidences; show me one." Tell him to mind his own business. He will say, "You know how imperfectly you have behaved, even since conversion." Tell him that he is not so wonderfully perfect that he

can afford to find fault with you. If he says, "Ah, but if you were really a changed character you would not have those thoughts or feelings," argue not at all with him but dwell upon the fact that it is written, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15).

"It is written." Stand upon it, and if the devil were fifty devils in one, he could not overcome you. On the other hand, if you leave "It is written," Satan knows more about reasoning than you do. He is far older, has studied mankind very thoroughly, and knows all our weak points. Therefore, the contest will be an unequal one. Do not argue with him but wave in his face the banner of God's Word. Satan cannot endure the infallible truth, for it is death to the falsehood of which he is the father.

Our Lord next used the Scripture to defeat temptation. He was tempted to distrust. There lay stones at His feet, there was no bread, and He was hungry. Distrust said, "God has left you; you will starve; therefore, stop being a servant, become a master, and command that these stones be made bread." Jesus, however, met the temptation confidently trusting God's Word. If you are placed by providence where you think you will be in need and are afraid that God will not provide for you, the dark suggestion will arise, "Whatever it takes, I must find a way to put myself in comfortable circumstances." True, the action would be wrong, but many do it, and therefore Satan whispers, "Necessity has no law; take the opportunity now before you." In such an hour, foil the enemy with "It is written, 'Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed'" (Ps. 37:3). In that way only can you safely meet the temptation to distrust.

Then Satan tempted the Lord to presumption. "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down," said he (Matt. 4:6). But Christ had a Scripture ready to parry his thrust. Many are tempted to presume. "You are one of God's elect, you cannot perish; you may therefore go into sin; you have no need to be careful, since you cannot fall finally and fatally" -- so Satan whispers. If we are at any time tempted to yield to such specious pleadings, let us remember, it is written, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26:41). It is written, "Keep thine heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). It is written, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). Begone, Satan. We dare not sin because of the mercy of God. That were indeed a diabolical return for His goodness. We abhor the idea of sinning that grace might abound.

Then will Satan attack us with the temptation to be traitors to our God by worshipping other gods. "Worship me," says he, "and your reward will be great." He sets before us some earthly object that he would have us idolize, some selfish aim that he would have us pursue. At that time, our only defense is the sure word, It is written, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:30). "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). Quoting such words as these with all our hearts, we shall not fall. We must keep from sin. If Christ has indeed saved us from sin, we cannot bear the thought of falling into it. Those who take delight in sin are not the children of God. If you are a child of God, you hate it with a perfect hatred, and your very soul loathes it. To keep you from sin, arm yourselves with this most holy and pure Word of God which shall cleanse your way and make your heart obedient to the voice of the thrice-holy God.

Next our Lord used the Word as a direction to His way. This is a very important point. Too many direct their way by what they call providences. They do wrong things and they say, "It seemed such a providence." I wonder whether Jonah, when he went down to Joppa to flee to Tarshish, considered it a providence that a ship was about to sail. If so, he was like to so many nowadays who seek to lay their guilt upon God by declaring that they felt bound to act as they did, for providence suggested it. Our Lord was not guided as to what He should do by the circumstances around Him. Anyone but our Lord would have obeyed the tempter and felt it was providence to turn the stones into bread. It was a providence, but it was a testing providence. When you are tempted to do wrong to relieve your necessities, say to yourself, "This providence is testing me but by no means indicates to me what I ought to do, for my rule is, 'It is written.'" If you make apparent providence your guide, you will make a thousand mistakes, but if you follow "It is written," your steps will be wisely ordered.

Nor are we to make our special gifts and special privileges our guide. Christ is on the pinnacle of the temple, and it is possible that if He had chosen to cast Himself down He could have done so safely, but He did not make His special privileges a reason for presumption. While it is true that the saints are kept by the power of God, I am not to presume upon a doctrine; I am to obey the precept. For a man to say, "I am a child of God, I am safe, and therefore I live as I want," would be to prove that he is no child of God at all, for the children of God do not turn the grace of God into licentiousness. That can only be the devil's logic.

Satan tried to make his own personal advantage our Lord's guide. "All these things will I give thee," said he, but Christ did not order His acts for His own personal advantage but replied, "It is written." Well might He have said, "If I fall down an

d perform this small act, all the kingdoms of the earth will be Mine! There are all those poor oppressed slaves; I could set them free. The hungry and the thirsty, I would supply their needs. Indeed, that is the very thing I am about to die for, and if it is to be done so easily by bowing the knee to this spirit, why not do it?" Far, far removed was our Lord from the wicked spirit of compromise. Though the whole world would be at His disposal, He would not compromise. "It is written" was His guide, not His usefulness or personal advantage.

Believer, it will sometimes happen that to do the right thing will appear to be most disastrous. It will shipwreck your fortune and bring you into trouble, but I charge you do the right thing at any cost. Instead of your being honored and respected and accounted a leader in the church, you may be regarded as eccentric if you speak straight out; but speak straight out and never mind what comes of it. You and I have nothing to do with what becomes of us or our reputations or with what becomes of the world or of heaven itself. Our one business is to do our Father's will. "It is written" is to be our rule. With dogged obstinacy as men call it, but with resolute consecration as God esteems it, through the mire and through the slough, through the flood and through the flame, follow Jesus and the Word infallible.

Note further that our Lord used "It is written" for maintaining His own Spirit. I love to think of the calmness of Christ. Christ is not the least flurried. He is hungry, and He is told to create bread, and He answers, "It is written." He is lifted to the temple's summit, but He says, "It is written" just as calmly as you and I might do sitting in an easy chair. There He is with the whole world beneath His feet, gazing on its splendor, but He is not dazzled. "It is written" is still His quiet answer. Nothing makes a man self-contained, cool, and equal to every emergency like always falling back upon the infallible Book and remembering the declaration of Jehovah, who cannot lie.

The last thought on this point is that our Lord teaches us that the use of Scripture is to vanquish the enemy and chase him away. "Go," said He to the fiend, "for it is written." You too shall chase away temptation if you keep firmly to this: "God said it, God promised it; God cannot lie, whose very word of grace is strong as that which built the skies."

How Christ Handled the Word

How are we to handle this sword of "It is written"? First, with deepest reverence. Let every word that God has spoken be law and gospel to you. Never trifle with it; never try to evade its force or change its meaning. God speaks to you in this book as much as if He came to the top of Sinai and lifted up His voice with thunder. I like to open the Bible and pray, "Lord God, let the words leap off the page into my soul; make them vivid, powerful, and fresh to my heart." Our Lord Himself felt the power of the Word. It was not so much the devil who felt the power of "It is written" as Christ Himself. The manhood of Christ felt an awe of the Word of God, and so the Word became a power to Christ. To trifle with Scripture is to deprive yourself of its aid. Reverence it, and look up to God with devout gratitude for having given it to you.

Next have it always ready. Our Lord as soon as He was assailed had His answer prepared: "It is written." Have the Scriptures at your fingertips. Better still, have them in the center of your heart. It is a good thing to store the memory with many passages of the Word -- the very words themselves. Our Savior knew so much of Holy Scripture that out of one single book - the book of Deuteronomy - obtained all the texts with which He fought the wilderness battle. He had a wider range, for the Old Testament was before Him, but He kept to one book, as if to let Satan know that He was not short of ammunition. If the devil chose to continue the temptation, the Lord had abundant defense in reserve. "It is written" is an armor wherein hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. It is not merely one but a thousand, nay, ten thousand weapons of war. It has texts of every kind, suitable for our aid in every emergency and effectual for repelling every attack. Study the Word of God and have it ready at your side when the father of lies approaches.

Endeavor also to understand its meaning and so to understand it that you can discern between its meaning and its perversion. Half the mischief in the world -- and perhaps more -- is done not by an ostensible lie but by a perverted truth. The devil, knowing this, takes a text of Scripture, clips it, adds to it, and attacks Christ with it. Our Lord did not therefore despise Scripture because the devil himself might quote it, but He answered him with a flaming text right in his face. He did not say, "The other is not written, you have altered it," but He gave him a taste of what "It is written" really was, and so confounded him. You can do the same. Search the Word, get the true taste of it in your mouth, and acquire discernment so that when you say, "It is written," you may not be making a mistake. Texts of Scripture out of context, twisted and perverted, are not "It is written," but the plain meaning of the Word should be known and understood. Read the Word and pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit that you may know the Word's meaning, for so will you contend against the foe.

And learn to appropriate Scripture to yourself. One of the texts our Lord quoted He slightly altered. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The original text is, "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God." But the singular lies in the plural, and it is always a blessed thing to be able to find it there. Learn so to use Scripture that you take home to yourself all its teaching

, all its precepts, all its promises, all its doctrines, for bread on the table does not nourish; it is bread that you eat that will really sustain you.

When you have appropriated the texts to yourself, stand by them whatever they may cost you. If to give up the text would enable you to make stones into bread, do not give it up. If to reject the precept would enable you to fly through the air like a seraph, do not reject it. If to go against the Word of God would make you emperor of the entire world, do not accept the bribes. Go as far as the Bible but not an inch beyond it. Though Calvin should beckon you, and you esteem him, or Wesley should beckon, and you esteem him, keep to the Scripture only. If your minister should go astray, pray that he may be brought back again, but do not follow him. Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than this book teaches you, do not give any heed to us -- no, not for a single moment. Here is the only infallibility: the Holy Ghost's witness in this book.

Remember, lastly, that your Lord at this time was filled with the Spirit. Jesus being filled with the Spirit went to be tempted (Matt. 4:16-5:1). The Word of God apart from the Spirit of God will be of no use to you. If you cannot understand a book, do you know the best way to reach its meaning? Write the author and ask him what he meant. If you have a book to read and you have the author always accessible, you need not complain that you do not understand it. The Holy Spirit has come to abide with us forever. Search the Scriptures, but cry for the Spirit's light and live under His influence. So Jesus fought the old dragon, "being filled with the Spirit." He smote Leviathan through with this weapon because the Spirit of God was upon Him. Go with the Word of God like a two-edged sword in your hand, but before you enter the battlefield, pray the Holy Ghost to baptize you into Himself; so shall you overcome all your adversaries and triumph even to the end.