

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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And God

A word is a wonderful thing. Words are often aptly defined as vehicles of thought. Technically, they are a speech sound which has meaning attached to it. So strong is the word attached to the thing it represents that we cannot separate the two. Some have called words signs of ideas—and so they are. They represent something. They are not actually that thing, but they represent it so closely you cannot think of the thing without using the sign that represents it.

Words don't really do much by themselves. They need help from other words. When we string a group of words together to express an idea, we often refer to the result as a train of thought. Notice, if you will, the idea of expressing the thought, like a train expresses its load. An express train, I suppose you'd say.

Words are not the only form of communication; but they are the most efficient and accurate form of it. Written words, properly understood and used, are a very accurate means of expressing

an idea or thought. Spoken language is the most emotional and, probably the most accurate and expressive means of communicating because it combines so many things to bring thoughts from one mind to another. God has always used language—what He says—to accomplish His plans and purposes. He spoke the worlds into existence with words. He sent Christ who is called The Word that he might be understood by man (Jn. 1:1-3, 18). The ability to communicate through the spoken word is one of the ways we were created “in the image” of God.

After God had created him, man became very vain (Gen. 11:1-9). He sought glory for himself. He wanted a name (11:4). Not, mind you, just a monument, but one which would give him a name, a reputation. The impiety of these insurrectionists caused them to make the name-structure reach all the way to heaven, thus the tower of Babel.

How did God treat their rebellion? He separated them by “confounding” their language. He mixed up their speech so they could no longer understand one another. Clever. The result was predictable: there can be no commonality when there is no understanding, no fellowship where there is no comprehension, so they “left off the building.” No wonder—you can’t build with one another when you don’t understand one another.

Scripture states or implies in many places the role of communication in God’s plans. The Bible says, “God said, let there be light and there was light.” He literally spoke the creation into existence. He said, and that which had not heretofore existed came into existence. Jesus is called The Word because He

became the very expression of God. God spoke to man in various ways, but “in these last days hath spoken to us by his Son...” (Heb. 11:2). In John 1:18, John says of Jesus, “...the only begotten son who was in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17 speaks of Scripture being “inspired of God.” The Greek word used here literally means “God-breathed,” an obvious reference to the language factor involved in revelation. Just as creation involved language, inspiration involved language. God’s eternal purpose involves language.

Ephesians 3:1-10 combines inspiration, revelation—both by God— and perception and application—both involving man. Paul says he received by inspiration what he wrote down so that “when ye read ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ Jesus.” Our ability to perceive the will of God—that is, what God expects of His creatures—is inseparably connected to words, words which can be understood and acted upon.

In Romans chapter ten, Paul says, “But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart’ (that word which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you will be saved.” Here, our salvation is connected to our confession—our statement of our belief. He continues, “for with the heart one believes to righteousness and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.” He further asks, “How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?” and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” Faith, according to

the same writer, “comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

At the Pentecost sermon in Acts 2, Peter said, “Ye men of Israel and all ye that dwell in Jerusalem, hear these words...” He then preached about Jesus as the provider of salvation through his death. When they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts and said, “Men and brethren what shall we do?” Peter told them. Communicated information is involved in God’s part in salvation (God spoke to the people in their own languages). It is also involved in man’s part of the process so they said, “men and brethren what shall we do?”

In addition, consider that:

1. We are born again by the word (1 Pet. 1:23).
2. We are cleansed by the word (Eph. 5:26; Psa. 119:9).
3. We are saved by the word (1 Tim. 4:16; Jas. 1:21).
4. We grow by the word (1 Pet. 2:2; Jer. 15:16).
5. We are sanctified by the word (Jn. 17:17).
6. We are enlightened by the word (Psa. 19:8; Psa. 119:105).
7. We are kept by the word (Psa. 17:4).

If a man would be saved he must listen to what God has said. What God has said will make him aware of what he has to do to be saved. Doesn’t that say something about the necessity of looking frequently into His word? Never underestimate the power of words. But especially God’s words.

- Dee Bowman

John's Gospel Message

In John 20:30-31, John says, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." In these two verses, he affirms some things that deserve our attention.

First, he notes "these are written." He did not want people to rely on memory or rumors, which might fade (or grow) with the passing of time. He was an eyewitness (see also 1 John 1:1), and wanted to be sure the report was accurately preserved for others. This he could do with the guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16). So this valuable record has been preserved, accurately, and in detail for all to be able to read!

It was written to convince. That means it was adequate to do the job!

That was John's purpose, to produce a record adequate to convince us of the great truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God! He didn't have to record everything that Jesus did, but he did record an adequate record of the important facts we need. Nicodemus recognized the evidence was there and adequate (John 3:2), as did the man who was born blind (John 9:32). Jesus appealed to His works as proof of His deity (John 5:36; 10:25, 36-37), and also to His character (John 8:46). John's record will

stand! So will the test! He mentions such details as the folded face cloth (John 20:7 who would bother to do this if they were stealing the body before the soldiers caught them?), the delay Jesus intended before raising Lazarus (John 11:39), and the convincing appearance to Thomas (John 20:24-28). These were the same proofs (along with fulfilled prophecy) that Paul used to convince the Jews (Acts 9:22; 17:3). Yes, we have all we need to do the task God has given us!

Not only can it demonstrate these truths, but John intended for us to believe! That means he wrote these truths so we could understand them, become convinced of the validity of his arguments, and form some convictions as a result. Indeed, if the "common people" could understand Jesus' message (Mark 12:37), we are without excuse if we "neglect so great a salvation" (Heb. 2:3).

Sometimes people reason, "But you have to have the Holy Spirit before you can understand God's truths." Did the "common people"? (Mark 12:37). Those of Samaria heard, believed, and obeyed (Acts 8:12-13) before they ever got the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:16)! Those of Berea "searched the Scriptures daily" and as a result, "many of them believed." It doesn't say the Holy Spirit had already saved them, then guided their understanding to a fuller comprehension. John wrote so we might examine, reason over the evidence, and become convinced from the written record! Paul affirmed, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16) and that "faith comes by hearing . . . the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). John had this very motive in mind when he wrote his gospel record.

Lastly, as a result of believing, "you may have life in his name." Not all believers, however, went on to enjoy eternal life. Some preferred the praises of men (John 12:42-43; cf. Matt. 10:32-33). Judas fell away and became the "son of perdition" (John 17:12). But those who believed were granted the right "to become" children of God (John 1:12; cf. Gal. 3:26-27 to get "the rest of the story"). John didn't write just to shut the mouths of the opposition, but to convince and to save. This is the same purpose we are to have (see 2 Tim. 2:24-26; 1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Tim. 3:16). Sometimes it becomes necessary to shut the mouths of the opposition, knowing they have no intentions of ever obeying the truth (cf. Acts 13:6-12), but let us always strive to have the same goal John had in our preaching and not just to "skin the sects."

- Donald P. Ames

The Governor Called

I received a phone call from the Governor a few weeks ago. Well, sort of. It was the Governor's voice, but it was actually a recording. You see, it was election eve and he wanted my vote. I suspect many others got the same call.

The Governor had never called me before. He never asked my counsel on any issue he faced. He never expressed concern about how I felt about any matter. He never thanked me for being a law-abiding, tax-paying citizen of the State.

Even in this call the conversation was one-sided. I had no opportunity to respond. I was not allowed to make any suggestions. The Governor called only when he wanted something, and he gave me no indication of interest in a personal relationship beyond that.

Of course, I understand the situation. I do not expect more from a head of state. It just got me to thinking about another means of communication: prayer.

How often does God hear from me? Is it only when I need something? Am I disposed to do all the talking instead of listening to His word? How interested am I in His perspective? Am I thankful? Might I leave the impression that, despite the contact, I have little interest in a personal relationship with Him? Think about it.

- Frank Himmel

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *“Three Common Traits of Youth Who Don’t Leave the Church!”* (text: 1 Tim. 4:12); Sunday evening: *“JEREMIAH: Suffering Sympathy!”* (part 2 of 2).

SCHEDULE: Our Gospel Meeting will be July 28 – Aug. 2, Sun. regularly scheduled times, M-F at 7:00 p.m., with Tanner Campbell, of Piggott, AR.