

The Power of the Word, Study 4

The Divine Purpose of the Word, Part 1

In previous lessons we have looked at both the lofty superiority of the Word of God and the necessary priority of the Word. But why should God's Word be a priority in my life? Is it just because it's God's Word? Well, that would be reason enough. But God tells us in His Word several very compelling reasons why spending time in His Word is so important. Before beginning this study, take some time to pray, asking God to reveal His reasons for asking us to take time out of busy schedules to be in His Word. Ask Him also to use those reasons to bring divine conviction into your life that will lead to life and time commitments (yes, even lifetime commitments) to make His Word your priority.

Turn again to II Timothy 3:14-15 where we saw the origin of the Word and the importance of lifelong immersion in the Word. In these verses we are given the main overarching reason for reading and studying God's Word.

What does vs. 15 tell us the Scriptures are able to do for us?

The Scriptures do not give us salvation, but they show the way to salvation; they give us understanding or illumination about how to obtain salvation. We often think that this is the message of the New Testament—and it certainly is—but when Paul explained God's great plan of salvation in the book of Romans, he quoted extensively from the Old Testament. The four Gospels also use numerous quotes from the Old Testament. The Old and New Testaments are one cohesive whole, pointing to one way of salvation: through faith in Jesus Christ, as it says here in II Timothy 3:15.

Consider the story Jesus told of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31.

Where did the rich man end up after death (vs. 23)? _____

How is that place described (vs. 23)? a place of _____

Where did Lazarus end up after he died (vs. 22)? _____

How is that place described (vs. 25)? a place of _____

What did the rich man beg Abraham to do (vss. 27-28 & 30)? _____

Why is Abraham unwilling to fulfill his request (vss. 29 & 31)?

because they have _____

This phrase is another way of saying, "They have the Old Testament."

Abraham goes so far as to say that if they won't listen to and believe the Old Testament, neither will they be persuaded if _____.

Why would Abraham say that? Even today we are tempted to think along the same lines as the rich man, aren't we? If God would just do some miracle—like a miraculous here-and-now answer to prayer—then so-and-so would see it and believe in Jesus. But the Lord has shown me through this story that such thinking is faulty.

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In this story of the rich man, what is Jesus saying is sufficient to lead us to salvation?

We don't usually use the Old Testament to try to lead someone to salvation. But Paul is saying the same thing in II Timothy 3:15. Remember, in Timothy's day, that's all they had. Even the Old Testament is sufficient to lead a person to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament and the New Testament speak the same thing.

In telling the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus is very clearly warning us about the reality of heaven and hell. We don't mind talking about heaven these days, but we don't like mentioning hell. It's not only an unpleasant topic, but it's also a societally inappropriate topic nowadays. We might say that hell is "politically incorrect." I find myself avoiding the subject. But Jesus didn't. Perhaps you've heard it said that Jesus talked about hell more than heaven or more than any other subject. Well, that's not really accurate. Check out this blog about hell and Jesus' teaching:

<https://medium.com/@edelliott/did-jesus-talk-more-about-hell-than-he-did-heaven-7e6100b4df82>.

This article gives an excellent perspective showing that, yes, Jesus did talk about hell (more than any other person in the Bible), but it wasn't the primary focus of His ministry as we are sometimes led to believe. In fact, the author states, hell only comprised 3% of all His teachings while the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life made up 10% of Jesus' teachings. The other 87% focused on how we live our lives here on earth in relation to God and to others. With those statistics in mind, let us look at what Jesus did say about hell:

Matthew 5:22: What is hell like? What descriptive word does He use? _____

Who does Jesus say in this verse is in danger of it? _____

Matthew 5:29-30: What is Jesus warning against? _____

What does He suggest would be better than going there? _____

What is He saying causes a person to go there? _____

Matthew 10:28: What does Jesus say we shouldn't fear? _____

What does He say we should fear? _____

Matthew 18:8-9 is very similar to Matthew 5:29-30. How does Jesus describe hell in verse 8?

Matthew 23:15-33: Read verse 33 first, then read verses 15-32 to answer the following question: What is Jesus saying will bring upon them the condemnation of hell?

Mark 9:43-48: How does Jesus describe hell in these verses?

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- 1) _____
- 2) _____

The repetition in these verses is a quote from the Old Testament: Isaiah 66:24. In that verse, what brought about their condemnation to this fate? _____

As we've already seen in Luke 16, the place the rich man went to was a place of torment.

Matthew 25:31-46: In verses 31-32, it is clear that Jesus is speaking about the final judgment of all peoples. What is His description of hell in verse 41? _____

In this verse, Jesus says an interesting thing about hell. Who was hell prepared or designed for? _____

I don't know about you, but this was a revelation to me. God didn't create hell for *people*. It was for the devil and his angels. However, Satan has been trying since the Garden of Eden to drag people there along with him. As we've seen from the previous verses, SIN is what condemns people to hell. Sin is nothing more than choosing to believe the lies of Satan instead of trusting God's Word on any given matter. Choosing Satan's way will just as certainly lead to Satan's domain and his same condemnation as choosing God's way will lead to the Kingdom of Heaven and everlasting life with God. Read Revelation 20:10. Who is cast into hell in this verse? _____

What is hell like according to this verse? _____

Now read Revelation 20:11-15. How is hell described in verses 14-15? _____

- Who and what are cast into it? 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Hell is **not** a threat from God, it is a *warning*. Jesus came to warn us, telling us the truth. He certainly believed in hell and knew of the reality of its existence. This is why Jesus calls people to follow Him—rather than the evil ways of our own sinful hearts, which is really allegiance to Satan and following his ways. When we follow Jesus, He rescues us from the fires of hell because He leads us in paths of righteousness instead of the paths of sin. Righteousness can no more lead to hell than sin can lead to heaven. Check out Romans 6:22-23. For most Christians, verse 23 is very familiar. But we take it out of context and misinterpret its meaning.

What does Romans 6:22 say we've been set free from in Christ (for being in Christ is the context of Romans 6)? _____

What does that verse say we have become? _____

In other words, obedient followers of God.

And what does that develop in us? "the fruit of _____"

And where does that lead or what is the end result? _____

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Before we move on to verse 23, we have to first go back to Romans 5:17 to find out what God's gift is. According to Romans 5:17, what is the gift of God? "the gift of _____"

This was an eye-opener for me. Now go to Romans 6:23 with that understanding and fill in the "equations" below:

The _____ for _____ = _____.

The _____ of God, which is _____, = _____

I don't know about you, but this radically changed my perspective. Sin leads to eternal death; righteousness leads to eternal life. God offers us His own perfect righteousness through Christ as a free gift. All we have to do is take it—well, actually, He is asking for an exchange:

Read II Corinthians 5:21.

Jesus took upon Himself our _____, and He gives us His _____.

This is the deal of the ages, the best bargain in all of history! Give Him your sin and He will give you His righteousness. What an exchange! Once that transaction has been made, there's no way His righteousness could be consigned to hell. You see, Jesus isn't offering us a ticket in our back pocket to heaven or a "get-out-of-hell-free" card. He's offering us something FAR better: a complete transformation, a resetting to His original design, the perfection of Christ. And that is the subject of the next study!

But before we close, look at Romans 10:14-17. There is a 5-step progression to faith in Christ in verses 14-15. Paul starts with the end result in verse 14 and works his way backward to the initial cause. Let's write the progression the other way around beginning with the initial cause in verse 15a:

- 1) Someone is _____ (vs. 15: "unless they are _____")
- 2) That someone _____ the Word to others (vs. 15: "how shall they _____")
- 3) The person preached to _____ the Word (vs. 14: "how shall they _____ without a preacher?")
- 4) The hearer _____ in Christ (vs. 14: "how shall they _____ in Him of whom they have not heard?")
- 5) Once they believe, they _____ upon God (vs. 14: "How shall they _____ on Him in whom they have not believed?")

This whole process is summarized in vs. 17. And this is Paul's main point. Write it out:

Only by hearing the _____ of _____ are we led to _____.

