

The Character of Scripture

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If the Bible is not assessed for what it is at the very beginning, any observations that follow will be maligned. If we do not see it as revelation from God, we may forget to see Him at the center of it all. If we do not see it as a spiritual book, we may lose the full impact of it on our lives. If we do not see it as an authoritative book, we may even dare to place ourselves as judges over it, rather than the reverse. Scripture is not only a historical reality: it is a climax in its own rank. We must know why.

Scripture's Introduction to Itself – Psalm 19

Psalm 19 has long been considered a central text about the glories of God's revelation. It begins with God's revelation in Creation, continues with His written Word, and ends with personal application in light of God's wonders. The header of this psalm is "To the Music Director, A Psalm of David." Thus, it combines both public worship and individual worship. For either, an appreciation for God's disclosure of Himself is absolutely necessary.

The Revelation of God in Creation (1-6). David, by the Spirit, begins this psalm with a message that is unwritten and unspoken, yet unmistakably clear. "The heavens are telling the glory of God." He observed something from God's design that spoke to him, not as an abstract concept, but as a reality that impacted his soul. In the display of God's glory and the work of His hands, there is univocal clarity and unending constancy, for it is "day to day" that they "pour forth speech, and... tell knowledge."

Having said that, David brings us to a paradox: "There is no speech nor words, and their voice is not heard." Yet without audible speech, there is a message – a line that plumbs the expanse of the heavens, and words that reach the end of the world. This message declares a singular Creator. How can silence speak so clearly? An example is given from the sun.

Though the sun was worshiped by pagan cultures, it is here depicted as a mere reflection of an ultimate glory. It is here compared to two things: (1) a bridegroom coming out of his bridal chamber (2) a strong man fulfilling his run. Both illustrate the majesty, strength, triumph, and vigor of the sun. It fulfills its circuit tirelessly and comprehensively, never yielding the power with which its rays shine so widely.

Such is the majesty of our Creator, who is *El*, the Strong One. His glory – the goal of all time and eternity – is constantly spoken to us in the unspoken, unwritten, yet ever widespread message of Creation.

The Revelation of God in Scripture (7-11). Though there was general revelation in Creation, it was not sufficient. Creation only teaches a man of *El* – God as the Strong One. Scripture is needed to teach a man of *Yahweh*, the Self-Existent and Eternal One – the covenant-keeping,

personal God. Whereas Creation could only teach the mind of man, the Scriptures are needed to affect the soul – just as in Romans 1, it is the *knowledge* of God that condemns natural man, while in Romans 3 it is the *believing* in God and His Word that grants God-righteousness. May we never see Creation as being enough to save a man and bring him into a right standing before God. Creation only displays the glory of God, makes man accountable, and condemns him when he rebels. It is only the Scripture that has all the effects which follow.

To highlight the unsurpassed beauty of the Scriptures, this Psalm brings us to six names and characteristics of the Word of God. Just as the psalmist was struck by the glory of the heavens as it impressed his heart, so could he begin to list such wondrous traits of Scripture, perhaps reflecting on its impact in his own life.

1. First, "*The Law of the Lord is perfect* [complete, whole, entire, sound]." In other words, Scripture is everything it needs to be, both in its composition and effects. As a general observation, this tells us the believer needs no other written rule to obey, nor does he need any other source of spiritual knowledge to have sufficient basis for belief. Anything extra-Biblical is sub-Biblical.
2. Secondly, "*The Testimony of the Lord is sure*." Scripture, as God's witness of Himself, is fully dependable, whether as a foundation to build on or as a rock to find shelter on. Man's doctrines and systems come and go, but "the word of the Lord endures forever." (1 Peter 1:25). If the believer's foundation is anything less than the totality of Scripture, desperation will be his.
3. Third, "*The Statutes of the Lord are right*." Nothing can rival the accuracy and precision of this book. It is a book rooted in truth, because it is intertwined with God Himself. It needs no authority to appeal to, for it carries its own authority. It needs no point to reference itself by, for it corresponds to true reality in and of itself. Scripture is right. Period.
4. Fourth, "*The Commandment of the Lord is pure*." In other words, Scripture is without defect, specifically in the eyes of the believer who learns from it and lives for it. There is nothing to detract from its attractive, God-breathed character. Just as the bride would say of her beloved, "He is altogether lovely," so the believer says to this book, "It is wonderful in every way."
5. Fifth, "*The Fear of the Lord is clean*." Here, "fear of the Lord" embodies one's religious duties to God found in His Word, building on the appropriate response of trembling before it (Isaiah 66:2). God's prescription for man's duties as a worshipper is found in totality in Scripture: it will not vary, it will not err, and it cannot be improved upon. The believer will never be deficient in his worship should he wholly commit to Scripture.
6. Sixth, "*The Judgments of the Lord are true. They are righteous altogether*." In other words, when God speaks on an issue, He only must speak once for His statement to be dependable and unquestionable. God only speaks on the basis of His character: thus His judgments and declarations are wholly consistent.

After each of these characteristics of Scripture (except the last), there was given an active element of Scripture emphasized in light of the need which man has. Interestingly, these practical applications only came after the doctrinal understanding of the nature of God's Word.

The same will be true for us. But when we do grasp the impact of this text, we will find the Word to meet every level of need in our lives.

1. *Scripture is a powerful book: it revives the soul.* Thus, it addresses the need of the inner man and has the power to bring life to it again. It is by the Word of God that we are saved (1 Peter 1:23). It is by the Word of God that we maintain quality of spiritual life as well. The condition of a person's soul will always rise or fall based on his absorption of Scripture. The Word of God is perfect; thus the insufficiency of the human soul is met by it. Do you need revival of soul? Love the Book. Live the Book.
2. *Scripture is a practical book: it makes the simple wise.* Thus, it addresses the need of the mind for wisdom. Wisdom is immensely practical, for "When wisdom enters into your heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto your soul; discretion shall preserve you, understanding shall keep you." (Proverbs 2:10-11). There is far too much simplicity of mind in this age – far too much immaturity in faculties of reason. The cause is clear: the Book has been neglected. Philosophy has never touched the brink of wisdom that is displayed in godliness. Yet far too many take man's wisdom over God's and relegate themselves to apparent wisdom, which in eternal perspective is but stupidity. Simple-minded, ignorant, or foolish Christianity should not exist; for Scripture makes us wise.
3. *Scripture is an edifying book: it rejoices the heart.* Thus, it addresses the need of the heart, the seat of the will and emotions. Never does ambition rise so high, never does affection burn so fervently, and never does joy become so unspeakable than when Scripture is the heart's meditation. How often our hearts cry when the answer to its griefs sits right before us.
4. *Scripture is a spiritual book: it enlightens the eyes.* Thus, it addresses the need of the eyes, the receptacle of learning and perception, which is too often dark due to human folly. "The lamp of the body is the eye," says the Lord. "Therefore, if your eye be single/sincere, your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Our perspective changes everything. Scripture gives us God's perspective – the only one that yields a reasonable, meaning-filled, and joyful life. It is the appreciation of and acting upon spiritual realities that make us godly (cf. 2 Kings 6:17 / Luke 24:31-32). Scripture teaches us what this perspective looks like.
5. *Scripture is an eternal book: it endures forever.* Thus, it addresses the needs made by human inconsistency. Man is inconsistent in devotion, in doctrine, in practice, and in standard. The religion of the carnal man sways with the culture. The doctrine of the carnal man sways with new theories. The practice of the carnal man sways with his companions. Humanity desperately needs a foundation outside of itself to maintain consistency. This Book is God's Book – rooted in the consistency of God Himself. We must define ourselves by the Word, regardless of our culture or generation. Let God be true and every man a liar – at every stage of this world's progression.

This survey of Scripture's traits invoked a heart-felt summation from the psalmist: "They are, more to be desired than gold, even much fine gold – sweeter also than honey from the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great

reward.”

At the thought of these traits, he could not but recognize the intrinsic value of the Scriptures. He appreciated, firstly, that they enriched him far beyond, not just mediocre gold, but fine gold in abundance. Yet how often we allow vain pursuits to stifle our joy of the Scriptures. But David appreciated, secondly, that the Word delighted him, even more than honey from its purest source. Gold will be spent, and honey will be consumed. They will have brought joy for the moment, but can anything compare to the Word which endures forever?

Nothing can compare, for it keeps from the depths of evil and lifts to the heights of reward. First, “By them, Your servant is warned.” In other words, whereas our intuition would show levity towards certain trends and actions, Scripture informs it otherwise. We cannot trust self. On the contrary, we need an objective standard outside of self that keeps our service Godward and God-ordained. Second, “In keeping them there is great reward.” Scripture tells us firstly where false rewards live and secondly why it is the only source of true rewards. These rewards are both present and future. Who can estimate the present value of a Scripture-saturated life? This value is seen in its effects on the life in verses 7-9. But who can estimate the future value of keeping the Word? The possession of God's Word is not simply a privilege; it is a stewardship. Stewardships, when handled properly, are objects of God's delight; thus, for every faithful responder to the Word, there will be a “Well done, good and faithful servant: enter into the joy of your Lord” waiting for him. That would be reward enough, but Scripture also speaks of every man having praise of God. The approval of God is found in this book. Surely that would be the greatest reward.

The Revelation of God in Application (12-14). Though Creation is broad in its proclamation of God's glory, and though the Word is sufficient to invigorate the spiritual life, there must be direct help from God Himself to apply what is seen in the Word. It is not the revelation of God in nature that helps a person, nor the revelation of God in an unopened book: it is the revelation of God applied to the heart that changes it. Thus, in these concluding verses we find two primary marks of God's working on the basis of His Word.

The first mark is a consciousness of and a sensitivity toward sin. So concerned was David with the wickedness of his heart that he confessed overlooked sins – sins he may not have realized he committed. He goes further and asks God to keep him from committing flagrant, arrogant sins – sins that would evidence rebellion and would enslave their victim. Scripture makes the true worshiper feel inadequate. But this is a platform for a truer appreciation of God.

This leads to the second mark, which is an enjoyment of God. Having expressed his desire for purity, the psalmist wanted to move even further into having God's approval in both words and thoughts – the two most comprehensive activities of a man. Such was possible, not by the strength of David's own wicked heart, but from his trust in the Rock and the Redeemer, Whom David had experienced personally.

At the beginning of this psalm, God reveals Himself as the mighty One of Creation. In the middle, He is the God Who offers His Word as the basis of service. At the end, God Himself is investing in the lives of His servants, revealing and preserving on a personal level. If God had so much interest in revealing Himself to us, let us not doubt His interest to change us by that

revelation.

Scripture's Titles for Itself

Studies have often, and rightly, been done on the names and titles of the Lord Jesus, because those names and titles are intentionally meant to describe a certain aspect of His nature. So with Scripture, there are a number of different titles, even besides the common designations "Scripture" and "Word."

Titles Communicating Its Authority. Even in our Psalm 19 passage, we saw different titles for Scripture, many of which carried a note of authority with them – titles like "Judgments," "Statutes," "Law," "Precepts," and such. Alone, these titles would still connote authority, but when it comes to Scripture these titles are qualified by being "of Yahweh." This implies three things: (1) Scripture derives its authority from the nature of God Himself, for it is His Word. Thus it is not simply authoritative, but supremely authoritative. (2) God owns the Scriptures, thus making its composition, interpretation, and application thoroughly based on His own intention. Man has no claim on this Book. (3) Because God's personal Name "Yahweh" is used, the Book He has given is personal and brings people into relationship with Him.

Titles Communicating Its Authenticity. Scripture not only derives its authority from God, but its very identity is rooted in God. It is called "The Holy Scriptures," because it is set apart – a wholly unique set of writings, penned by the initiative of God. "Oracles of God" is another name, because Divine communication is the central point of the Bible; "Word of God" and "Word of Christ" are also used. The Spirit of God also emphasizes the veracity of His Book by calling it "The Word of Truth," "The Scriptures of Truth," and even just "Truth." Though many have quibbled and quarreled about the authenticity of Scripture – the extent it is from God or the extent of its truthfulness – embedded in the very names of Scripture is the declaration that this book is wholly of God and inerrant. If a so-called "theologian" wants a partly-inspired, semi-true book, he should get a different book. The Bible is what it is – of God and concordant with His nature *by its very definition*. One does not have the Bible if it is not authentic in every way. One does not have the Bible if it is not central to the Christian faith. View the Book from its own claims, or get a different book!

Titles Communicating Its Nature. If Scripture did not have various aspects of what it is, we could expect only one or two titles; but its vast array of varying titles tells us it has far more depth and impact than most will ever realize. Just briefly, notice the different thoughts contained in these titles.

- As God's Testimonies (Psalm 119:2), Scripture is God's witness of Himself.
- As the Word of Life (Philippians 2:16), Scripture embodies the life-giving and live-reviving message of God.
- As the Burden of the Lord (Jeremiah 23:36), the Word of God is seen to be a weighty and solemn – perhaps judgment-bearing – communication.
- As God's Way(s) (Psalm 119:3) it is God's prescribed pattern.
- As The Book (Psalm 40:7-8), it is God's singular volume of His dealings, past, present, and future.
- As The Word (1 Peter 2:2), it is the embodiment of God's message and communication.

- As The Scriptures (Writings) (1 Corinthians 15:3), it is the God-given written record of His dealings and message.
- As The Prophecy (2 Peter 1:19-20), it is God speaking through men.
- As the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17), it is God's (and our) means of battle.

Features of the Scriptures – Scripture is...

A different way of saying “That man is a father” is to say, “That man leads and cares for his family as the God-ordained leader of his home.” This turns a title into a description or feature of the person. So with Scripture, though there are not names for every characteristic, there are assumptions in several texts which communicate different features of the Bible.

Scripture is Christ-Centered. A proof of this is in Luke 24, when the Lord conversed with two on the road to Emmaus. The text says, “He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” It could only be “all” if the entirety of Scripture is focused toward Him. He admitted such in John 5, “[The Scriptures] are they which testify of Me.” How could one not see him in the types, such as Isaac, Joseph, the Offerings, and the cries of many psalms? How could one not see Him as necessary to complete the Old Testament? How could one not see Him in prophecies? How could one not see Him either by contrast in man's failures or comparison in examples of godliness? Scripture is about Christ. This matter's doctrinally, because it will turn abstract observation into meaningful pursuit of seeing Christ's glory unveiled.

Scripture is a Thoroughly Spiritual and Spirit-taught Book. The text that proves this is found in 1 Corinthians 2. As an apostle, Paul says, “Which things also we speak [truth which we find in Scripture], not in the words which man's wisdom teaches [truth of a higher order than man's mental compositions], but which the Holy Ghost teaches [thoroughly Spirit-guided]; comparing spiritual things with spiritual [thoroughly spiritual in nature].” Many approach the Bible like a “reliable historical document” before they approach it as a book from God. It has to be about history or about science before it is about spiritual things, some would say. (And yet, it *is* fully accurate in science and history, because both are God's). Some say it is inspirational or purposed to boost self-esteem. It is none of these things. It is revelation from God about God to make us like God. If we approach it without understanding its nature, it will cease to hold the same power in our lives as it was designed for.

Scripture is True and Accurate. The Bible is full of statements like, “as God has said” or “as Scripture has said” or “[this is true, because] the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” These convey the assumption that when God speaks, whether written or orally, His statements are true and accurate. They correspond with what really is and with what really will happen. Scripture is not simply a perspective for the cultures “then and there” but timeless truth for “here and now.” God expects to be held to His Word; it is our obligation when reading it to do this. Thus, it is demanded that we not be intimidated by man's “wisdom,” for it has no claim upon the veracity of God's Word. “For truly I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matthew 5:18)

Scripture is Unbreakable and Permanent. When Scripture was penned, it was “set in stone” as it were. God revealed, not random words, but content and a message that are embedded in Himself; thus His revelation endures simultaneous to His own changelessness. So then, we

read, "The Scripture cannot be broken." (John 10:35). In other words, it cannot be undone, reversed, made of no effect, etc. God says in Isaiah that His Word will not return unto Him void, but it will accomplish the purpose for which He sent it. As to permanence, we read, "Forever, O LORD, Your Word is settled in heaven." (Psalm 119:89). In other words, if the Word is established, never to move, in the unshakable dwelling-place of God, nothing of any created order could shake its existence or its nature.

Scripture is Always Profitable and Purposeful. James asks a rhetorical question to his audience that demands a specific answer and a specific assumption to make any sense. He says, "Do you think the Scripture says in vain, 'The spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy?'" The answer has to be no, because it is assumed that Scripture is always profitable and purposeful. Further, we can find Paul saying to Timothy, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..." We live in a world that is full of vanity. Its entertainment is vanity. Its motivations are vanity. Its pursuits are vanity. And all too often believers are fooled into believing that they can profit from the world's things. The spiritual Christian directs his attention to true profiting found in the Word. It will not cease to profit; it will not cease to fulfill its purpose. To any passage we can say, "Does Scripture say in vain...?" and always reply with a resounding, "No!" We must let it have its due impact, for it is from God.

Scripture is The Substance of a Man's Preaching. When Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch, he had a message to give. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." (Acts 8:35). Philip, even in gospel preaching, was an expository preacher. Peter in Acts 2, Stephen in Acts 7, Paul in Acts 17 – all of these men were thoroughly Biblical in their preaching. They had no message of their own: they were burdened to convey the message of God which He had already revealed. "Preach the Word" was the charge of Timothy's ministry (2 Timothy 4:2). Such is the teacher's obligation today. Scripture, by virtue of its depth, empowers the teacher to function as "the utterances/oracles of God" even without merely reading a passage over and over again. Communicating the communication of God is the ideal of every assembly's teaching ministry. The minister of the Word has no right to be anything but that – a minister of the Word. "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." (Nehemiah 8:8).

Scripture is The Content of God's Promises. When God calls people into connection with Himself, He has a goal of blessing in the end for those people. These blessings are made up of promises. To Israel, there were the promises of a Messiah, a Kingdom, restoration, etc. To the Gentiles, there was the promise of the rainbow – a sign that God would never again flood the earth. To the Church, there are the promises of a coming Saviour, a day of reward, eternal union with Christ, glory, and so many other beautiful causes for hope. These promises enliven the hearers, bring confidence in the goodness of God, and grant a source of consistency through life's ever-changing sea of tumult. How do we know these promises? "[The gospel of God concerning His Son] He had promised before by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures." (Romans 1:2). In that the Book is about God, it is about His faithfulness to us; have we enjoyed and lived in the light of such faithfulness?

Scripture is The Believer's Source of Learning, Hope, and Comfort. "For whatsoever things were written in former times were written for our instruction, that we through endurance and

the encouragement of the scriptures might have hope.” (Romans 15:4). Our involvement in the Book will determine our vibrancy in spiritual living. Without instruction, our ignorance will give way to error. Without endurance, our faithfulness will yield to complacency and lethargy. Without encouragement, our strength will be traded for weakness. Without hope, our glorious anticipation will give way to anxiety at the sight of temporal things. Such needs are what God had in mind when He entrusted us with Scripture. “He knows our frame,” and He desires to strengthen it by His vast power. Such power is in the Book.

Scripture's Metaphors/Comparisons of Itself – The Bible and Practical Life

The Bible is full of many types of illustrations, meant to convey spiritual truth in a way that physical beings can relate to. Several metaphors are used of Scripture, and most of them relate to things in life that are utterly essential. These metaphors touch areas of life such as the food we grow by, the tools we function with, and the privileges we rejoice in. Never doubt, dear believer, the radical change this book is capable of bringing to your life. Conversely, never doubt the destruction that neglect of this book is capable of bringing to your life. Scripture is immensely practical.

Scripture is a seed: it bears fruit. The Lord used this metaphor in the parable of the sower, found in Luke 8 and Matthew 13. In that parable, His point was to convey differing responses to the Word of God – illustrated by different growth patterns of different soils. In this parable, any problem was never with the seed, but always with the soil. Thus, if the soil was hardened, shallow, or contaminated; it would hinder the growth of the seed. There was only one soil which bore meaningful fruit; even then, there were differing levels of fruitfulness. Believers are the meaningful-fruit bearers: this comes about by the Word of God. Praise God we received the Word at all! But there is a second matter: how much fruit will we bear for God? Technically, there is as much potential as the Word of God allows for; the factor that hinders us is self. May we ever pursue maximum effect from the Word. After all, its very purpose is to make us pleasing to God. But how much will we please Him? Such a question must remain unanswered, because it is a daily decision that demands a response to the Word – both by immersion in it and obedience to it.

Scripture is milk: it nourishes. Infants, when first born, are on a “mission” to grow with high progress. Such requires their constant desire for milk. It is, in fact, destructive for this to be hindered. In terms of the Christian life, Scripture is our “milk” until “we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ; in order that we may be no longer babes, tossed and carried about by every wind of teaching... but, holding the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, the Christ.” Collectively, our goal as believers is ultimate spiritual maturity. This comes by constant attention, not to the things of “immaturity,” that is, the things of our former days, but rather that element which causes hastened growth. Thus, spirituality without saturation in the Scriptures cannot but have little depth. On the other hand, to be immersed in that which causes swift growth, there *will be* growth to tremendous extents. Spiritual “giants” only ever started as spiritual “infants” who made growth in the things of God their priority and focus. “As newborn babes desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word, that by it you may grow up to salvation, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” (1

Peter 2:2, Darby).

Scripture is solid food: it matures. Though Scripture uses milk positively as a metaphor for itself, it also uses milk negatively, in contrast to “solid food.” While everyone is supposed to be infant-like in their desire for the Word, believers should not long be immature in the understanding of spiritual things. It is just like faith: though it always maintains a child-like aspect, it is never supposed to be childish. To the point, then, Hebrews 5 has this to say:

“We have many things to say [about Christ], and [they are] hard to be uttered, seeing you are dull of hearing. For when presently you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:11-14).

In other words, Scripture is meant to mature the believer so that he comprehends well the things and purposes of God. 1 Corinthians 2 tells us that there is truth “freely given to us of God.” This, revealed in Scripture, is our privilege and responsibility to embrace and understand. There are many things that have to be worked through and struggled with, but this is the characteristic of Scripture that brings spiritual “senses exercised to discern.” Such is what God aims for with His Word. He brought us into a position of sonship so that we could interact maturely with spiritual things. Yet how many are satisfied practically with the basics or perhaps even unfounded clichés? Likely a majority. May we never be satisfied with the basics, but be keen in discernment of deep truth by means of “exercise” in the Word.

Scripture is water: it cleanses. This theme is seen in Ephesians 5, where the Lord is described as cleaning His Church by “the bath of water with the Word.” Scripture in action is the agent by which God removes impurity from His people. This is immensely straightforward. Do you have sin in your life? There is a solution in the Word that has yet to be applied. Many subscribe to the senseless cliché, “I am not a Bible student; I just love Jesus and try to obey Him.” Fine, but will you be *like* Him? Then the Word must become part of your heart and soul. Christian character and fruitfulness are inseparable to abiding in Christ (John 15). “Without Me you can do nothing.” He also said, “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” In addition to that, he correlated abiding in Him with His words abiding in the disciple. Evidently, the embedding of Scripture in the soul (when the soul enjoys and applies it) is tantamount (equivalent) to abiding in Christ. We have the desperate need to be cleansed. We have had a once-for-all cleansing by His blood; we need a continual cleansing by His Word (John 13). If it is not by the Word it will not be by anything else.

Scripture is a mirror: it reflects. James, the advocate for true and undefiled religion, has this to say about Scripture:

“For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: For he looks at himself, and goes his way, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” (James 1:23-25)

While several would read into Scripture pictures of the human life that conform to how they see

things, Scripture always presents a view of humanity that shows its need for divine improvement. It is usually ruthless, because it is always accurate. We cannot afford to miss a true perspective of God and a true perspective of self. In Him is all sufficiency and worth; in self is all weakness and unprofitability. May we never forget to be honest with Scripture, allowing its true point to be made when speaking to us. Truly it must expose the needs of the soul before it can fill it with the fullness of Christ. Do you want an accurate perspective toward your spiritual progress? Here, have a mirror.

Scripture is a lamp: it guides. This metaphor is found in Psalm 119:105 – “Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” A similar thought it expressed in Proverbs 6:23 – “For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.” Whether as a guide for immediate decisions (a lamp to my feet) or a guide for ultimate life direction (a light to my path), Scripture is the Christian's handbook. While it does not contain God's specific will for our lives, it gives God's prescriptive will for our everyday walk. It is in this everyday walk that true spirituality rises or falls. To this, Scripture is our guide, and it never fails to perform.

Scripture is a sword: it pierces. This comparison is made in two places, each with two differing emphases. One is in Ephesians 6, in which the Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. The other is in Hebrews 4, in which the Word of God is that which pierces through the most closely aligned entities, exposing even the subtlest nuances of the heart (cf. Revelation 1:16). One passage emphasizes the edge of the sword for battle. The other emphasizes the tip of the sword for precision and power. One passage emphasizes our use of the Scriptures. The other emphasizes its own vitality and power to impact the deepest parts of man. Whether addressing the schemes of the devil or the needs of the heart, Scripture cuts to the root of the matter and changes things. The devil wins and the heart is overcome only because we have sheathed the Sword. May we ever allow the Word to change self first, then use it to change things around us. It is active. It is powerful. It is the weapon of God's Spirit. How can it not be effective?

Scripture is a fire and a hammer: it consumes and demolishes. In Jeremiah 23, after God addresses false prophets, He restates a timeless principle: “he that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully.” Comparing the false prophecies with the truth, He asks, “What is the chaff to the wheat? Is not My Word like a fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?” In other words, He was exposing the worthless messages of the impostors for what they were: empty. On the other hand, His Word had proven itself in majestic force. As a fire it consumed every false way that stood against it; as a hammer it crushed every objection that stood in its way. A similar vein runs through the New Testament: “The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (1 Corinthians 1:25). If Christianity really believed in the sufficiency of Scripture and the authority of Scripture it would be structured far differently than it is today. Man's word has been allowed to coexist with God's, and this has created Christianized psychology, Christianized philosophy, Christianized politics, and even Christianized paganism. These ideas have stood in opposition to the Word of God which stands on its own with complete sufficiency. We need to unleash the Word against man's false messages and theories; it will prove itself to consume and demolish every false way. What false ways of man have we subscribed to? It is time to unleash the fire, it is time to unleash the hammer, that will destroy anything that is not of God.

Scripture is gold: it enriches. Psalm 19 contains this and the next comparison: "More to be desired are [the Judgments of the Lord] than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." This first one concerning gold places Scripture in a rank of its own. It is not only more desirable than gold, but the best quality of gold. Spiritual reality is true value to the Christian. Even the most basic of physical needs are secondary to the Christian:

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:31-33).

If we are not to think about life's necessities, how much less life's dainties? Get into the book that teaches what true value is. "Unto you, therefore, who believe, HE IS PRECIOUS." This book that teaches us of Him is our greatest possession. Any "fine gold" that we can attain will never touch the value of the humble enjoyment of Scripture. We may have possessions that catch the eye, but are we rich toward God? Do we see ourselves as rich *in* God?

Scripture is honey: it delights. This metaphor focuses, not on true value, but on true pleasure. In the meal offering, there was to be no honey, illustrating that the sweetness of the Lord Jesus was not based on human estimation. So with honey here, we learn that man's sources of pleasure count as nothing in the Christian's eyes. His delight rather lies in words of life that flow from God's mouth. Rather than anticipating the drop of honey from its comb, the believer deliberates for a gem of truth from God's Word. The world only has superficial joy. It has entertainment rather than enjoyment. It has amusement in which the mind is limp, rather than intelligent worship that is rooted in reality. The world spends the life of its victim and leaves him empty, but Scripture enlivens its reader and enriches him. The options are clear, but it takes a spiritual mind to choose the best one.

Scripture is purified silver: it endures. "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O LORD, You will preserve them from this generation for ever." (Psalm 12:6-7). This final metaphor in our list confirms our need to appreciate all that has gone before. Not only does Scripture help us in all the above practical ways, but it helps us every time! Because it is not tainted in the slightest by man's influence or ideals, it remains a constant and even infinite source of spiritual instruction and enablement. Because it is thoroughly of God, it is thoroughly like Him – eternal, consistent, and powerful. If Scripture was not free from contamination in its totality, it would be a book that had the same potential as a psychology textbook. But it is thoroughly purged, by design, from man's wisdom; thus it has the permanent potential which we so enjoy today. So then, in every aspect of Scripture, it is God-like in that aspect and permanently so. This can be your sure foundation: the Word of God!

A question remains, then. This is the Bible, and it does all these things for you. Do you believe it? Do you love it? Do you live it?