

## Sermon

Grace Street Fellowship, Dr. Jim Burgin, Pastor  
Sunday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Cols 3:16-18

### OPENING

1. According to USA today, a new poll shows that “being a better person” is the most popular New Year’s resolution for 2018. This was also true in 2017.
2. We suggested last week – on the first Sunday in 2018 – that we might use the practices of the very first church as a guide. We saw at the end of Acts 2 that the early church devoted themselves to:
  - a. **“The Apostle’s Teaching – God’s Word**
  - b. **“The Fellowship”** – experiencing in and contributing to the body of Christ;
  - c. **Breaking of Bread** – the practice of remembering who we are and why we exist, a special kind of fellowship with the Lord – obediently remembering his sacrifice for us;
  - d. **Prayer** – pray without ceasing (1 Thes. 5:17) – a prayer of humble surrender when you begin your day; A prayer of Thanksgiving in your triumphs, for guidance in your trials, and with faith in and through your sufferings and losses; Pray in your closet alone at home; pray with others anywhere and anytime you can. We pray for God’s will, for God’s glory, and we pray for needs of those around us, even as we pray for our daily bread.

### TRANSITION

1. The hope was that all of us could keep watch on our church, so that the church will be what it must be in order to be effective in this world;
2. The hope was that these characteristics of the early church might be a kind of guide for each of us as we walk through this upcoming year.
3. Today, I would like to lift out just one of these characteristics – the Bible, and talk with you about the importance of God’s Word for our daily living.
4. Approach: Sometimes we seem to make the Christian life like a series of rules and regulations – Reading your Bible then becomes a commandment – something you know you should do, and you feel guilty whenever we talk about it, or something similar. With God’s help today, I would like to point you to the sweetness of God’s Word, and I pray that the positive influence and effect will draw you right to it.

### A PERFECT AND PERMANENT STANDARD

1. Psalms 119:89<sup>1</sup> - the Hebrew word “Nitzvah” here means to “stand firm,” “to be established. It is “settled and fixed.”
2. Isaiah 40:8<sup>2</sup> – says that the grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of our God stands forever – the Hebrew word is “Yaquum,” and it means “to rise.” W.A. Criswell, the former iconic pastor of FBC Dallas understands this verse to indicate that though the Bible is “crushed, though persecuted, though despised, though destroyed, the word of God shall rise, shall stand, shall abide forever”
3. This is true precisely because these words come from God Himself. John connects God’s Word with Jesus Christ, his son, telling us that you can’t separate God’s message from God himself.— John 1:1<sup>3</sup> These words come from God’s very heart.

<sup>1</sup> **Psalms 119: 89** – “Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.”

<sup>2</sup> **Isaiah 40:8** – “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”

<sup>3</sup> **John 1: 1** - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

4. Isaiah 55:10- 11<sup>4</sup> – reminds us that God’s Word has a power to accomplish God’s Will in an unstoppable way. It never returns empty. Never.
5. Illustration - Emperor Diocletian (303 AD) - decreed that every Bible should be destroyed, and the people who possessed them should be slain/martyred. The onslaught was merciless, and after a couple of years, they believed they had eradicated the Bible from the face of the earth and the Christians too. Diocletian observed, “They are a people of the book, and if you destroy their book, you’ll destroy the people.” He built a column that had this triumphant claim in Latin “Extincto nomine Christianorum.” The name of Christians is extinguished. Nine years later, Constantine leads the Holy Roman Empire. He replaced the Roman symbols on soldier’s shields and standards with the cross of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

### METAPHORS FOR SCRIPTURE

1. Food for the Soul<sup>6</sup> – John had an experience with God’s Word that I think it is important to hear. In Revelation chapter 10, John takes a portion of the Bible from an angel, and he is told to “take and eat it” (vs. 9). It will be sweet as honey in your mouth, the angel says, but it will sour your stomach (vs. 10). That is exactly what happened. There is a sweetness to God’s Word. The truth it brings 1) about yourself or about 2) the world around you, however, may sour your stomach.
2. Surgical Instrument<sup>7</sup> – Hebrews 4:12 – The picture is of God as the surgeon with a scalpel. He uses this scalpel (God’s Word) with such precision in order to heal. His Word can pass the mind, the emotions, the will, and make it deep into the core of your being to bring about healing. There are two points here: 1) It can reach through and into your mind and heart; 2) God can use it to heal the deepest of wounds.
3. A Wise & Loving Teacher – Paul teaches Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16-17<sup>8</sup> that God’s word is “God-breathed” and when appropriated will prepare him, build him up for every good work.

### LIFE LESSONS

1. We see God’s lessons for us in the life of Adam & Eve, Noah, Joseph, Abraham, and on it goes.
2. We understand God’s heart for us – a love letter on every page –
3. We learn his will for our lives and how we should seek it (Jeremiah 29:11)
4. We learn how to deal with stress, fear, worry; We find God’s guidelines for relationships, marriage, business dealings, honest living, work, and so much more.
5. We also hear repeatedly God’s love and God’s redemptive plan for people.

### LESSONS FOR LIFE’S LOSSES

1. John Claypool was a Baptist pastor when his ten-year-old daughter “Laura Lu” was diagnosed with acute lymphatic leukemia. She was a bright, exuberant child, full of life and joy as she finished the second grade and participated in two recitals in one day. She was tired afterwards, but then she stayed tired and her ankle began to swell. She began receiving medicine immediately and went into remission quickly. 11 days after the diagnosis, John preached from Romans 8:28-39 on the “basis of our hope.”

<sup>4</sup> **Isaiah 55:10-11** – “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

<sup>5</sup> Reported by W. A. Criswell in a sermon on Isaiah 40:8 preached Nov. 29, 1965 titled “The Preservation of the Word of God.”

<sup>6</sup> **Rev 10: 9-10** “So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, “Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.”

<sup>7</sup> **Hebrews 4:12** – “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

<sup>8</sup> **2 Timothy 3: 16-17** – All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God maybe thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2. After 9 months of Normalcy, and the hope that the doctors had misdiagnosed the disease, , Laura Lu awoke in severe pain on Easter Sunday morning. The cancer was back. With this relapse, John preached from Isaiah 40:27-31 on the Strength not to Faint.”
3. Another period passed, and then 2 weeks after Christmas day, Laura Lu passed away. Pastor Claypool couldn't preach for months, but when he did preach again, his first sermon was titled “Life is Gift” taken from Genesis 22.
4. He published these stories in his book “Tracks of a Fellow Struggler: Living and Growing through Grief.” His book was a huge hit, because that which is deepest in us is also has the broadest application.

### OPEN YOUR HEART

1. Now we turn to our text for today.
2. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. How?
  - a. In order to dwell in us, it has to enter. You must read it and/or listen to it.
    - i. There must be more than that. It has to travel through the heart and not just in one ear and out the other.
    - ii. If you read a portion of the scripture every day, but do not appropriate it for yourself, then there is a step missing. It is too easy to forget what you have read or heard. This does not say let God's Word pass by my door or look in your window, but let it dwell in you.
    - iii. Let it saturate you. Let it affect you, stir you up.
  - b. Once it enters, let it remain there.
    - i. Let us say you give someone access to your house for a week to take care of the dog, and they even lend a hand by cleaning the dishes and making the beds, and doing the laundry. They could do all those things but you would not say they live there.
    - ii. It is so important for God's word to be inside of us, to spring up from our soul, to affect our minds and hearts, and to shape our behavior.
  - c. Let it occupy your whole being.<sup>9</sup> Do not push it up into a corner of your thought.

### WHAT IS THE RESULT?

1. You will have wisdom enough to teach and admonish others (verse 16)
2. You will have a song in your heart and on your lips; (You will sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs)
3. And your heart will be filled with gratitude (Vs. 16).

### ILLUSTRATION

Once upon a time in land before there were any cars or modern machines — a time when horses and carriages and wagons were common on the dirt roads — there was a blacksmith shop with a large, heavy, well-worn anvil. One day a little farm boy, who had never left the farm, came with his father to town for the first time. Everything was new and different. As he walked with his father down the unpaved main street, he heard a loud clang . . . clang . . . clang. He said to his father, “What's that?” His father said, “Come, I'll show you.” He took his son to the door of the blacksmith's shop. And there the boy saw a huge man, a strong man, lifting a big, heavy hammer with a long handle and a large head on it high in the air, as if to chop down a tree, and then crashing it down on a glowing piece of metal on top of the anvil. He hit the anvil so hard that it made

<sup>9</sup> Charles Spurgeon makes these points in his message on Col. 3:16.titled “Christ's Indwelling Word,” No. 2679. Preached April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1881 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

the boy wince with every blow. His father explained to him that this was a blacksmith who made all kinds of metal pieces for wagons and carriages and plows and tools and horseshoes.

But the little boy was fixed on one thing: the long, heavy hammer and the great metal anvil. They met each other with such a loud sound and with such a force that he thought surely this anvil could not last long. The big, strong blacksmith paused for a moment to catch his breath, and saw the boy standing in the doorway. "Aren't you going to break that thing?" the boy asked, pointing at the anvil. But the blacksmith smiled and said, "This anvil is a hundred years old and has worn out many hammers."<sup>10</sup>

### CLOSING

I spoke with Aaron Taylor last night, one of the young men in our congregation – a little younger than me. Aaron struggles with diabetes, and has for some time. He lost a portion of his foot last year. He is independent and strong, and he loves the Lord. He misses church, but it is difficult for him to get here.

The physical therapists have been working with Aaron, and next week he was supposed to get his prosthetic device. He would be able to walk on two legs again – without the help of a crutch. Can you imagine his anticipation, his eagerness & excitement?

When he went to be fitted for the new leg, the doctors discovered a bump. Just a minor setback? Or, is it possible that the diabetes is inflamed again – ultimately leading to the loss of more of his leg. How would you feel? Aaron felt that way too, until he opened God's Word, and began to listen to the sweet whisper of God's love being poured into his soul. Aaron is at peace again today, whatever happens. I would like to tell you that God told Aaron everything would be alright, but he didn't. Through His Word, God let Aaron know that he was right there beside him. It was enough. This kind of love is available for you too.

### INVITATION

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<sup>10</sup> I found this story in John Piper's message on Isaiah 40:8 from the Desiring God Website ([www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org)) titled "Thanksgiving Toward the Past, Faith Toward the Future: A Parable of the Anvil." From Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>, 1999.