***God's Promises
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We continue this morning with the subject of The Destiny of Good, segment number 6, based upon Romans 8:28-30.

We have found from this segment of scripture that there are three levels of divine good which are promised to church-age believers as summarized in Romans 8:28. These are incorporated, furthermore, into our daily experience, these levels of good, via the faith-rest technique. The faith-rest technique of the Christian life is explained in Hebrews 4:1-3. The first verse points out the availability today of God's rest from the point of salvation to the various circumstances of life that we face. Verse 2, we have found, points out the failure of the Exodus generation of Jews in their entering the promised rest in the land to which God is leading them. Then, verse 3 of Hebrews 4 taught us that we today have a completed rest which is still available to us.

**A Summary of the Faith-Rest Technique**

In Hebrews 4:4-9, we next have a summary of the history of faith-rest in the Old Testament. And we'll just briefly run through that. Verse 4 says God's rest from His creation work is the pattern for us today to rest from all of our efforts to meet the trials and to meet the goals of our lives when we come into the situation where those are beyond our capacity to deal with. Verse 5 says that God declared the promise rejecting Jews would not enjoy the rest of the Promised Land. Then, verse 6 says God has others now to enter His rest in place of the Jews who would not mix faith with His promises.

Then, verse 7 of Hebrews 4, and here he quotes Psalm 95:7-8, where King David, centuries after the Exodus generation of Jews, points out that rest is still available to those who are ready to receive it. It's not something in the past tense. And then, verse 8 says even Joshua did not lead them into total rest in the land because the Jews fell short of, again, believing God's Word. Then, verse 9 expresses the conclusion that this rest is available for us as believers today.

The faith-rest technique is what is referred to here. It is available to us as, indeed, it was to the Exodus Jews. The good which is promised in Romans 8:28 to all of those who are in the family of God is secured through the faith-rest technique in a midst of a world which is still under God's curse. There is available to us then, as individual believers, no matter what your situation in life is, a Sabbath-like rest in the soul. That is, the cessation from self-efforts and a capacity to wait upon God.

The faith-rest lifestyle has certain characteristics, and last time we began looking at these, which we find in the rest of the fourth chapter. We've already looked at the first characteristic, which is that a believer abandons the works of his sin nature in trying to meet his needs and his personal desires.

Verse 10 says, "For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His." The Christian is through with his own human works capacities as God rested and ceased from His creation work capacity. Rest in the soul thus means the end of all those frenzied efforts to make it on our own capacity pointlessly knocking ourselves out to achieve what only God can achieve for us. Faith-rest means counting on God our Father to keep His various promises to us and so utilizing those promises as we need them.

**Examples of God's Promises**

These promises in the Bible are for our use today. They are worth nothing in eternity, and they indicate God's complete provision for us. Let me give you a few examples of what we're talking about.

Here are some of these in the Old Testament, a lot of them in the Old Testament. Someone has counted (I have never counted them), but someone has counted the promises of the Bible and has said there are seven thousand of them. Now, of course, a lot of these promises are to Israel, so they don't apply to us directly, but others are of a general nature in reference to the character of God that they do apply to us, even in the Old Testament.

Psalm 4:8 says, "I will both lie me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." "I will lie down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." Do you go to bed at night claiming the promise that God will keep you safely through the night? That's what He says He will do. Or do you go to bed at night and set your alarm clock every hour so you can walk around the house and see that all is well, and then you go to sleep and you set it for the next hour, and you walk along the next hour, the next hour. Is that the kind of night you spent? All concern? Or do you say, "Lord, if I need to be awakened, you will awake me. If not, I'll sleep through the night."

Many months ago, over in the parsonage, suddenly in the middle of the night, there was a noise. It was a raspy noise and startling. And I love this promise, and I hate to get out of bed in the middle of the night, but Mrs. Danish did. She walked in the kitchen, comes back in the bedroom, and says, "We've got a fire." And there, by the refrigerator, out of the wall outlet, was a fire. [Shooting noises.] Something in the wiring had caused a vibration that caused an enormous sound that you just couldn't help but be awakened. So, we got up and put the fire out. Next day, called the electrician and we found that it had gone all up into the wall, and everything was charred inside right up to the attic. And at the right point, we had been alerted to get up and to put it out.

"I will both lie me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." And if He doesn't enable you to dwell in safety, there's no other promise that will do it. But that'll do it every time.

Let's look at another one. Psalm 37:4-5, "Delight thyself also in the Lord: and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Do you believe it? Do you use it? What is it you are delighting yourself in? What is it that preoccupies your mind, your attention? Delight thyself also in the Lord. Preoccupy yourself with His thinking, and He's going to give you the desires of your heart that are legitimate.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Well, what are you trying to do? What ambition in life are you trying to realize? What goal are you trying to reach, in whatever area? Have you committed it to the Lord? This psalmist said that if you commit it to Him, He'll lead you either away from it or He's going to lead you to the success of realizing it. That's a terrific promise!

One more in the book of Psalms 56:3, "When I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." Now, that's a promise well worth remembering. "When I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." When somebody has broken into your 7-Eleven store and points a large-caliber gun into your nose and tells you what they want, now that's a time to be afraid. But the promise of God says, "I will trust in Thee." And that promise you may be sure will be executed as per the integrity of God.

Matthew 6:33-34, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these [material] things shall be added unto you. Be therefore not anxious about tomorrow: for tomorrow will be anxious for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is its own evil." Here is a promise that we have that if we are devoted, first of all, to God's service, He will make provision for our daily needs. He will not necessarily make us luxuriously provision, but He will give us logistical grace. He will give us the logistical provision to make it day-by-day. Those who go about seeking to invest their lives first of all in God's service are those that can count on basic material provision. It's a promise that you can count on.

So, there are going to be times when you are going to be faced with making a decision between Christian service and going out and earning some money. You have an option in the situation. That's the time you come back to this verse, and you wonder, "What should I do? How shall I spend my summer? Shall I spend it in investing in Christian service like summer camp, or do I get a summer job when I'm a teenager? How do I invest my summer activities?" Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and godly walk with Him, and you may count on all of the provisions you need for all those things in life that you think you have to have that you need going to school, earning money for this, for that, for the other thing. Now, either you believe this, or you don't. It's up to you.

Matthew 21:22 is another promise that you may want to consider. Matthew 21:22 says, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Here is a promise that says if you ask God, treating prayer as a functioning technique of the Christian life (that's what it means by believing prayer, not like you're going through some motions, some ritualistic repeating of prayer, but you are praying because you believe there's a God who hears and who will respond), that kind of prayer brings results. And we know from other scripture that God guides those results as per His sovereign plan for us. But He does say, "I won't do it for you unless you ask me." And if it's within the pattern of the plan, you trigger that into action by asking me. That's what the promise is all about: asking God.

And please do not be intimidated by some character that comes along and says, "Oh, you should not be selfish when you pray, asking for this thing and asking for that thing. Do you want to be a ‘gimme’ Christian?" Yep, that's the kind of a Christian I want to be because that's the kind of a Christian the Bible says you should be! You research through the Word of God, you'll discover that prayer is asking God for things, and you will be receiving what you ask. And there's no putting on a front. There's no formal, no ritualistic, no magical formula.

Most churches, when you get to the part of the service where's there's the pastoral prayer in the profession of the ministry, pastors write out their prayers ahead of time. And most of them have them lined up for six months in advance. So, all they do is pick up that particular Sunday, and that's the one they read. And, of course, it's very flowery, it's very exuberant with all kinds of dramatic words.

I often think of poor Peter when he was walking upon the water and found that he was having an exhilarating experience of walking on water. Man, that's better than bringing you to summer camp. They can't do that there. And here, suddenly, out of the blue, a big wave comes toward him, and he begins to get scared, and his faith is withdrawn from the promise that the Lord gave him: come out and walk on the water. Implicit in the promise: you'll stand on it; you'll be alright. He withdrew his faith. The promise then reverted back to God, and he starts sinking.

And I can just see Peter saying, "Oh, Almighty, Thou God of the universe, Thou who doest watch upon us and Thou who doest hear us, Thou who are in this great outdoors, Thou who are here upon this great expanse of the water. [drowning noises, laughter]." By the time he got all through with all of that nonsense, he'd have been drowned!

But nope, Peter knew what it was to pray. He says, "Lord, help me!" That's it. "Lord." He had to know whom to speak to. He had to address, and then ask, "Help me!" "You want to be helped? Ok." Reaches out, picks him up. That, folks is prayer. Don't go for this nonsense that prayer is not asking God. It is asking, but don't treat it like it's soap bubbles floating in the air that are meaningless and are going to pop and disappear and not amount to anything. Matthew 21:22. That's a good promise, and it's worth remembering and using.

One that we find much in need of is John 10:28-29. John 10:28, "And I give unto them [those who have trusted in Christ as Savior] eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, who gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

Here is a promise from God that once you place your trust in Jesus Christ, no matter what kind of a rat you become in the Christian life, no matter how deep you may descend into sin, you are still a child of God. You have eternal life. You have experienced a birth. You cannot reverse your new birth. You are in the family of God. You never lose it again. And sometime when you may swerve off from the straight and narrow path deep into sin, this verse is going to be a lot of comfort to remember and to claim the promise that when you're trying to find your way back to the real world and back to spiritual illumination, that you are still the child of God.

As the prodigal son, when he lived in the depths of his immortality, when he was elbowing the other pigs out of the trough to get something to eat, he was still the Father's Son. And finally, when he came to himself, he could claim the fact that His Father was still waiting for Him, He was still his Father, and he could still go back. So, this verse is a great promise that we should have in reserve to mix with our faith upon the appropriate occasion of need.

1 Corinthians 10:13 is another significant promise. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make the way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." There is no temptation to evil that is greater than the spiritual Christian can resist and for which he can find a divinely-provided way of escape. So, don't go around telling us that you have done something you should not have done because the devil made you do it. You made yourself do it. You made yourself do it by the fact that you permitted yourself to come into a status of spiritual disarray and of spiritual disorientation so that Satan could come and make an appeal on what you bid on.

And I'm not talking about all the gross evil, vile sins that we can all think of. I'm talking about the simple little thing of coming into your life, a productive Christian life, and dangling something in front of you that you bite on that jerks you out and puts you off into a sidetrack for many, many years.

One of the shocks that many Christians will experience at the judgment seat of Christ, I am confident, is going to see the chronological pattern as the chronology of their lives is run through before them and the reward factors are marked at certain points that many Christians are going to discover a point where suddenly there was a point in time when their rewards just peter off to nothing. And they'll look at that time, they'll remember in their lives, "That's when I got off into this great cause. This is when I got off hustling into this thing that I felt I should pursue that was better than that simple little stuff I was doing at Berean Church." That's the kind of temptation that you really have to be on your guard against.

But the Word of God says even that kind of an appeal for a Christian who stays close to the Lord who stays subject, who isn't muscling God but who is acting in submission to the Word of God and to the opportunity of instruction that He has, that kind of a Christian is going to find a way out. It is, of course, the point of Christian wisdom that you do not put yourself in a position of temptation. And that's what a lot of Christians do; they put themselves in a position where the temptation is at its maximum.

The Word of God also tells you, "Flee youthful lusts." The Word of God tells you to resist the devil and he will flee from you. And the Bible tells us we have a capacity to resist. So, don't put yourself in the place of temptation. That's the first provision that God has made for you to escape it.

Philippians 4:6-7, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." A very great expression of faith-rest. Take your problem, take your need, take your difficulty to the Lord, and leave it there, and you will enjoy the personal peace that passes anything that you can understand or other people can understand how you can be so calm and stabilized with what you're going through at the moment. So, instead of worrying, a Christian can resort to thankful prayer, resting in peace while waiting on God to work out the matter.

In Philippians 4:13, we have this verse, "I can do all things through the One who strengtheneth me." There is no task greater than a spiritual Christian can accomplish with God's enablement. So, there is nothing that is greater that God calls upon you to do than you can handle with His capacity, and His capacity is there. And that's a good promise to remember. There is nothing that is beyond your capacity to execute.

Philippians 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." All the necessary, material needs of life are provided for the believer, because God is faithful to His logistical grace promises.

1 Peter 5:7 says, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." God is interested in carrying our burdens for us. Why not cast your care upon Him? Faith-rest takes your burden to Him and has Him carry it.

And, of course, we're all acquainted with 1 John 1:9 which is one of those promises that you do know and that most of you frequently use. 1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins [maybe you will, maybe you won't, but if you do], he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Every time we make confession of known sins, God the Father restores us to temporal fellowship. The pattern of blessing is wide open to us then. The pattern of every good thing in life that God has prepared for us is right there at our grasp, to reach out and take it. This is a promise that we frequently need to use.

Well, this is just a little, short example of the kinds of things we're talking about of promises of God that we believe, we mix with our faith, and the consequences then are enormous to our blessing. So, make a list of the promises of God as you come across them, and keep them in reserve.

**Personal Diligence Involved in Faith-Rest**

There is a second thing that faith-rest includes now that we should look at. Faith-rest includes, first of all, our abandoning of our human sin nature works and casting ourselves on the promises of God. Secondly, Hebrews 4:11 tells us that faith-rest involves personal diligence. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

The word "labour" looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's "spoudazo." "Spoudazo" actually means "to be diligent." It connotes a spirit of eagerness. At any point, when you need relief from a certain problem, to be personally diligent to take charge of this with the faith-rest procedure. This is a subjunctive mood which expresses an exhortation. This is something that we are being exhorted to do.

And what is that, that we should be diligent, we are told to enter into? "Eiserchomai." This means "to come into something." At the point of one's need, you exercise your volition to come into God's purpose. It's an infinitive mood; it's expressing its purpose to come into what? We must take the diligence, we must take the eagerness, we must have the eagerness to enter into His rest, His "katapausis," which means "into God's repose."

So, verse 11 says, "Let us be very diligent, therefore, very eager to enter into the repose that God has for us, lest any one of us fall." The word "fall" is the Greek word "pipto," and "pipto" here means "to stumble." Instead of moving solidly, you get your feet all twisted up. It connotes failure to follow the right course. At some point, you need a peace in your life, you don't follow the right course by resorting to the promises of God. You do this by your choice.

Again, this is subjunctive mood. It's always potential for we as Christian to be kneading the issues of life in the wrong way. We resort to sin nature capacity, to sin nature cleverness. And we beat our brains out, and after we become bloody enough and have enough failures, we may have enough sense to set back and to sit down and to start thinking about what it is that God is trying to tell us to do. And we may discover that, indeed, we have needed to long since turn the thing over to Him for His evolving of His plan for us.

And here, we are told that we should not fail to enter into God's rest after the example, that which was shown us of unbelief. The word "unbelief" is the Greek word "apeitheia." "Apeitheia" means disobedience. It doesn't mean just unbelief. That's not really a good translation in the King James; it's disobedience. That we do not follow that pattern of disobedience demonstrated by the Exodus Jews when then faced the crises of their lives. What this word connotes is to have an attitude where you are persuadable. The people who get in trouble in the Christian and who go off on a tangent are people who we can't persuade. We just can't talk to them. We just can't appeal to them on the basis of the Word of God. They're all so smart. They're all so cocky. They're all so arrogant. They've got it made, and you just can't appeal to them.

Now, the Word of God says, "Don't be the kind that cannot be appealed to, because that leads to disobedience." Christians are to be concerned, then, that they do not follow the bad example of the Exodus Jews when they meet the crises of life, that they do not follow their pattern of obstinacy to the will of God.

So, verse 11, we would translate, "Let us, therefore, be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall by following their same example of disobedience." And then, verse 12 tell us something else that's involved in faith-rest. Not only abandoning our old sin nature capacities, not only being diligent in our applying of the technique, but it also involves the Bible.

**Characteristics of the Word of God**

And here, we come to that famous Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The word "for," introducing this sentence, may be translated as "because." It says do not, in the previous verse, follow their example of disobedience.

Why? Well, because they foolishly mistreated the Word of God as if it were the Word of man. When God says it, then it is significant, and you can act upon it. It gives the reason for faith in God's promises which are recorded in the Bible in order to produce rest in one's soul. The use of faith-rest, you see, requires a knowledge of the Bible. The less a Christian knows about the Bible, the fewer promises he is acquainted with that He can claim when he needs them.

But when it says, "Word of God," you understand he is referring to the Bible. Do not be trapped into the expression that the liberals like to say that the Bible contains the Word of God, because what is wrong with that expression is that they say it that way to leave the door open so they can say, "Some of the Bible is not the Word of God." No, the Bible does not contain the Word of God. The Bible IS the Word of God. The Bible makes it clear, itself, that it is not merely the word of man from human reason. Christianity does not consist namely in a code of external conduct, but it consists in the Word of God functioning in one's soul.

The Bible is the Word of God, and so it does express the mind of God. As such, the Word of God, it has five basic characteristics here. First, we are told that the Word of God is living. "Zao." This word refers to the possession of an inherent life, a life which causes things to happen. This is in contrast to a condition of death which has no influence. A dead thing doesn't cause anything to happen. But a thing that is living has the capacity to cause things to happen. So, the Bible contains, we are told, the very words of God which convey His thoughts. This we have upon the doctrine of inspiration of the original manuscripts. The Bible is current in its principles in every generation because it is the Living Words which never die.

So, when it says that the Bible is living, it is present tense. It tells us this is always true of the Bible. It is never a dead Bible. It is active; it is a characteristic functioning in the Bible. It is a participle in its mood which tells us we have a spiritual principle here for us to believe.

All genuine translations of the Hebrew and the Greek in which the Bible was originally written was also, in all practical effects, the Living Word of God. Paraphrases of the scriptures are not the Word of God. A paraphrased Bible is not the Word of God, and you should be well-aware of that important distinction. Paraphrases of the Bible are commentaries of a human author upon the Word of God. That's the difference. A paraphrased Bible is a human author using his words to convey what he believes that particular scripture is trying to say in ways that you will understand it in modern, updated language.

Now, we paraphrase scripture all the time. You hear us doing that here in our sermons. We put together a thought which we have put in human words to convey the idea which is in God's Word. But when we paraphrase, when we give you our human words, they are in no way to be considered to be the Word of God. So, don't call a paraphrase a Bible, and don't call it a Living Bible. If it is anything, a paraphrase is a dead Bible, because it has the words of men, and the words of men are never said to be living - only the words which come from God. And when I say that, I mean that God actually led the writers of scripture in the very word they were going to put on the manuscript. He led them to pick the right word. That's why we study the words of scripture, because they are illuminating. They tell us exactly what God is thinking at any particular point.

So, the Bible is the Living Word because it is conveyed to man by God the Holy Spirit, and thereby, it is conveyed in an inerrant manner. The two key verses that you may look up on your own, of course, are 2 Timothy 3:16 which tells us that the content of the Bible came from God, breathing it into the author, and 2 Peter 1:21 which tells us how it was recorded in the Bible (that is, that God the Holy Spirit took what God had breathed into these men and then guided them in putting it down on the paper in exactly the right words). For this reason, the Word of God is living. It is the words which come from the Creator, Living God.

Secondly, we are told that the Word of God is powerful. The word is "energes." This word actually means "active." You can see from "energes," we get the English word "energetic," and that is exactly what it is conveying. It connotes that the Bible is effective when it is applied. The Bible pronounces condemnation on evil, and it brings conviction to the mind. When you bring the Bible, it comes in, and it does its work.

I was listening to Bob Larson on the radio yesterday on his talk show yesterday as I drove along, and he was talking to an atheist. And the atheist was challenging the truth of the scriptures and the truth of the whole idea that there was a God and the whole idea that there was salvation. And he was doing it by picking out places in the scripture in the Old Testament that have some very severe guidelines for dealing with certain sins, for dealing with certain diseases, for dealing with certain alien cultures, and so on. And he's quoting these scriptures trying to prove his point. And it was interesting that Bob Larson sat there almost as if he had no audio connection to what the man was saying.

The man would say something about, "Have you ever read in the Old Testament about this? How are you going to get all those animals on the ark? And Bob Larson knew that with an unsaved person, you do not go off on a tangent discussing what he wants to discuss. And so, Larson would say, "The Bible says, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.'" "Well, have you ever read about how to deal with the pagan culture," and here he quotes the scripture, and he says, "John 3:16 says, 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only.'" He goes on and he quotes the verse.

And everything that the atheist thought, Larson comes back with a verse on the Gospel. The Gospel. The Gospel. And I thought, "That's really great. He's right on track, hitting the person with what he needs to hear." Which is what? The energetic Word of God. And if that man listened, the Word of God which was planted in his mind is going to pound away at his brain, and God the Holy Spirit has a basis now for bringing conviction. That's what it means when it says that the Bible is energetic. It is active in its effect. The Bible cannot be dismissed as irrelevant in daily life. And when you plant it, it is going to have an effect.

Furthermore, we are told that in the third place, the Bible is sharper. This is the word "tomoteros." This is the comparative degree of the Greek word for sharp. It means "sharper," and it denotes here to a cutting edge. This is used in this place in comparison as an analogy to the fact that the Roman infantry soldier had a short, 18-inch blade sword which revolutionized close infantry combat, which is what you had in the ancient days and which made the Roman legions absolutely superior to any army that the ancient world was able to field just because they came up with the great idea of a short, 18-inch blade that had an extreme, razor-sharp cutting edge on both sides. It was almost impossible, when you got up close, with such a short instrument not to bring your enemy down. So, it was a tremendous weapon.

And here, we're talking about the Word of God as the Sword of the Spirit. It's a cutting instrument that cuts through all of the ignorance, the hypocrisy, the arrogance of the mind of man to expose its evil. The unsaved man with his high IQ thinks that he is really sharp, but the Bible, because it truly is sharp, cuts away all of the pretense and exposes him for what he really is: devoid of spiritual enlightenment, and so, with his high IQ, nothing more than an ignorant intellectual. The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It cuts through to the reality.

In the fourth place, we are told that the Word of God is piercing, has a piercing quality. "Diikneomai." This means "to penetrate." The Bible has the capacity to penetrate to the problems of life. It has the capacity, because it is the Word of God, to penetrate within our very immaterial being. As you know, we are material beings and bodies. We are also are immaterial beings, and what is inside these bodies, which is a human soul and a human spirit. And so, here, we are told in Hebrews 4:12 that the Word of God has a piercing quality about it so that it is able to show the difference between what is spiritual of the Holy Spirit within us and what is soulish of the sin nature within us.

The human mind can't tell the difference. A lot of Christians are conned be soulish presentations. They come along with all the con techniques that appeal to the sin nature, and people think they're having a wonderful experience with God. They think they're in the presence of miracles. They think they're in the presence of the power of God. That's, all that's soulish. That's appealing to the sin nature. And that's the Greek word for "soulish," which means "appealing to the sin nature."

Now, when it says that the Word of God pierces into the issues of life and it cuts and separates what is of the human spirit from what is God the Holy Spirit and what is soulish from Satan through our sin nature, it, in short, is saying that it distinguishes between what is human viewpoint and divine viewpoint in man's thinking. And that, sometime, is not so easy to discern. You bring the Bible in, and boy, it just stabs you, and it exposes you.

I was listening to the radio program yesterday for a while, the "Point of View" program. Many of you are acquainted with it. Generally, that program has a lot of good information on it. I'm acquainted with the master of ceremonies of that program. He is a charismatic, and he is a devout charismatic, and he promotes this Pentecostal, charismatic view. Yesterday, he did not have a speaker, so it was an open-line program, people calling in and asking questions. One man called in and said, "I'd like you to give me your view on this widespread practice of women being pastors of churches and of standing up in pulpits before a mixed congregation and preaching, as per what the scriptures say about that. And I'd also like to ask you." He gave another question, I forgot what that was. So, he says, "I'll hang up and listen to your answer."

So, the master of ceremony said, "Now, the question of women pastors and preachers has been debated for quite a while back and forth, and I just wouldn't touch that with a ten-foot pole. Now, as to your other question." And he proceeded to expostulate considerably on that. As he had been answering questions in great degree from the Bible, question after question, no hesitancy, and controversial issues. He took his stand. Now, I knew exactly why he was not going to touch that question with a ten-foot pole, because the Bible is very explicit in condemning women as priests or women as pastors of churches standing before an official gathering of the local congregation and being instructors where men are present. The Bible clearly condemns female leadership in spiritual things over male leadership. And so, he knew that.

But that was not enough for him to come and say, "Well, here's what the Word of God shows us." Implicitly, by implication, and explicitly, by clear statements. Why couldn't he not do that? The Bible pierced immediately to the answer of that question. It was very clear. Easy question to answer. He had some that were harder to answer.

The reason he couldn't do it is because, as W.A. Criswell at First Baptist Church in Dallas, said, "If you took the women preachers and the women leadership out of the charismatic, Pentecostal movement, it would collapse overnight." And he knew that movement is built on women being in prominence of leadership over men, and he couldn't dare to keep the large following of financial support and backing that he does for his program and his "Point of View" ministry if he dared to say, "Yes, what we are doing is condemned by the Word of God."

But he couldn't get away with that by anybody who knows anything about the scriptures, because the piercing quality of the Word of God has separated that distinction so that it's clear to anybody that's not trying to turn his head and look the other way. This piercing quality is also compared to the work of the skilled physician who divides the joints and the marrow of the human bone structure with a scalpel. So does the Word of God, as a sharp scalpel, divide what is human viewpoint under the guidance of the sin nature through Satan, [from] what is divine viewpoint under the guidance of the human spirit directed by the Spirit of God?

There is one thing more, what God says about His Bible, and that is that it is a "discerner." The Greek word is "kritikos." "Kritikos." This is an adjective. It means "able to judge." You can see, we get the English word "critic" from this. It is declaring that the Bible is the true critic of human thoughts and intentions. Bible doctrine provides us with frame of reference for evaluating a person's true character and his thinking in contrast to the front he puts on.

People are always putting on a front with you, but you listen to them long enough, you watch them long enough, and you will see what they really are, and you will catch what they really think, and the Word of God is your frame of reference for evaluating that person. That's what this means. The Word of God is a discerner. It is a critic of the thoughts and of the intentions. It reveals how depraved is the thinking of the unbeliever and how evil are his personal plans, most of them human good type of activates that he's pursuing.

The word "heart," here, of course, is referring to the mind. It is referring to the mind which directs the emotions and the will in the soul. It directs them in a way that seems right but that the Word of God condemns as the pathway to death. The society such as we live in today, which is detached from the Bible, has simply no basis for judging conduct, and so moral evil is treated as acceptable conduct. Our society cannot look at the Word of God and the standard of morality and be able to judge it because of its goodness or badness, its value or not. And so, man rejects that standard, and our conduct is immoral. But, because the Bible is a critic, it discerns what is true morality and what is false morality, and it exposes that evil for what it is.

So, this is a tremendously wonderful thing: that we have a Bible, and why we study it, and why we pursue it, and why it's important for you to be out at these services Sunday morning and Sunday evening to take advantage at least once a week of some authoritative, well-prepared instruction in the Word of God to give you a broader picture and grasp of the mind of God.

Because when you get that, you've got something that is living. You've got something that is active. You've got something that is razor-sharp. You've got something that pierces to the real issues. You've got something that actually can discern between that which is evil, that which is good. That which is the mind of God, that which is not. That which will prosper you and that which will bring you nothing but grief. What a wonderful thing to have the living and active Word of God.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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