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The benefits of having the Bible

[The slightly enlarged substance of a message preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, 31st March 1991 by the then minister, Rev Ivan Foster.

At the service Bibles were distributed to the children of the congregation to mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Free Presbyterian Church on March 17th 1951.]

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple," Psalm 119:130.

As a church we revere the Bible. It is given a prominent place in our services and in our lives. We preach its doctrines and contend for its truths. To mark the fortieth year of our church we can think of no better memento to give to our children than a copy of the Bible.

The word BIBLE comes from a Greek word BIBLOS = The BOOK. This is the BOOK for us in Kilskeery. We hope it will become the BOOK of all the children and young people here tonight.

My text is one suited to this occasion. Please consider its teaching.

I. THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD.

Here is why we revere the Bible. It is the Book of God. Let me tell you some things about this Bible.

1. It is the record of God's law. "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing," Hosea 8:12. God's moral law for all men in all ages is found in the Bible and in the Bible ALONE. It must govern our views, our thoughts, our words and our actions. The anarchy of today stems from the abandonment of God's Word in pulpit, pew and parliaments.

2. It was given by the Holy Spirit. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Peter 1:21. The penmen were mere humans but the One Who 'moved' them to write the Holy Scriptures was the Third Person of the Trinity - God the Holy Ghost.

3. It is eternal. "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you," 1 Peter 1:25. What changes a lifetime brings! What changes we have seen in the affairs of the nation. Men whose words gripped and thrilled the populace have passed away and their words are forgotten. But not the Word of God! That which gave hope to the prophets, the apostles and the reformers gives hope and comfort to poor sinners still today.

4. In hearing and reading it there is a blessing. "But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it," Luke 11:28. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand," Revelation 1:3. Some books please some people while providing nothing for others. But this BOOK is one with universal appeal and blessing for all who will believe its simple truths. It provides a blessing, oh such a blessing to all of every tribe and nation, who embrace by faith its sweet and precious doctrines.

5. Every word is true. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," John 17:17. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2 Timothy 3:16. Men have sought since sin made its entrance amongst them to find an error, a contradiction, a lie in the Bible.

Hallelujah, man has utterly failed!



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Books that proven to be false soon fall in popularity. The Bible remains at the top of the 'Best Sellers List.' Were it a fraud and a deceit that would not be the case

6. It is God's means of giving life. "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls," James 1:21. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," 1 Peter 1:23. The sowing of the seed of God's Word within the soul brings forth new life. What life it produces! What a change is wrought through the influence, the wonderful working of the seed of God! "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," 2 Corinthians 5:17.

7. It is the Book which shall judge men. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works," Revelation 20:12. The Bible is the BOOK OF LIFE. Men will be judged by that book one day. Whether or not we believed its message, humbled ourselves before its revelation of our sins, will determine our eternal destination. Hear Christ's invitation. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matthew 11:28.

Heed the Bible's message of salvation tonight.

II. FOR THE BIBLE TO BENEFIT US IT MUST GAIN ENTRANCE TO OUR HEARTS.

Read the parable of the Sower in Mark 4:1-20. Only the seed that entered into the good ground bore fruit. The benefits of the Gospel are for those who receive it into their hearts.

1. The Word has to be received. "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost," 1 Thessalonians 1:6. The word 'received' means 'to take hold of, to grasp with the hand'. Make sure you get a hold of God's Word by faith tonight.

2. It must be received no matter what the consequences or pressures. The Thessalonians received the Word of God amidst much affliction, trial and persecution. But receive it they did to the saving of their souls. The devil will try to steal, man will persecute, and the world will allure all with the purpose of robbing you of eternal life by hindering you receiving, believing God's Word.

3. It is received by believing the message. The old definition of 'Faith' taught to children in the little chorus stands true: "Faith is just believing what God says He will do."

We see the words 'receive' and 'believe' used interchangeably in John 1: 11-12. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." To receive the Lord Jesus as your Saviour is to believe what the Bible says about Him.

III. THE BENEFITS THE BIBLE BRINGS TO THOSE WHO GIVE ENTRANCE TO ITS MESSAGE.

'Light', 'Understanding'.

1. There is a coming into the light. Light is "given." What a light has come into those nations which have received the Bible! The course of human history is a record of the benefits that the light of God's Word has brought with it.

2. We gain an understanding of God. How little we know about God by nature! It is the Bible alone which reveals God for it is His self-portrait. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not," John 1:10-11. The Saviour said: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" John 14:9. The Lord Jesus is the revelation of the Father. He is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," Hebrews 1:3. Christ is God



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"manifest in the flesh." (1 Timothy 3:16).

3. We gain an understanding of ourselves. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9. That picture, a true picture of man's corrupt heart is given us ONLY in the Bible. The philosophies of men regarding the curing of mankind's ills are based upon a false diagnosis. Man is not seen for what he truly is. Only the Bible gives that picture and men generally reject its wisdom. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man," Matthew 15:19-20.

This diagnosis is one men do not wish to receive and thereby they miss God's cure for sin.

4. We gain an understanding of salvation. The Bible points us to Christ. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. Salvation is not found in a church or in a creed but it is found in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12. Paul said: "But we preach Christ crucified," 1 Corinthians 1:23.

That is the message of the Bible. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name," John 20:30-31.

This blessed BOOK is the key to life. Obey it and it will reward you well. May you heed its call to Christ tonight!

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