

**Pastor Paul Bawden
Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, July 5, 2009
Communion Sunday
"When The Word Speaks To You"
Colossians 3:16-17ff**

I was listening to Josh McDowell being interviewed the other evening on a Christian TV station. Josh McDowell many years ago was one who did not believe that Bible was the accurate word of God. He was challenged in college to examine the claims of the Bible about Jesus Christ. He took up the challenge and set out to disprove that the Bible was really the word of God. But the more he researched out the Scriptures, and external evidence, the more it became clear to Him that the Bible was not just like any other book written by man. He eventually accepted the veracity of God's Word, the Bible, and became a believer in Jesus Christ as His personal Savior.

Josh has put his testimony in a small paperback book called, "More Than A Carpenter." Perhaps you have read it. If you haven't, you should. It's a life-changing little book. His full research that he did in trying to disprove the Bible is found in his book, "Evidence That Demands A Verdict," which information that Josh discovered led him to accepting the validity of the Bible and Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

On the program I was watching on TV, the interviewer asked Josh McDowell, "So then, how does one answer a person who does not accept the Bible as the accurate Word from God, but only some nice sayings from different men."

Josh was quick to answer this way. He talked about some of the evidences used to determine the accuracy or reliability of the book or document – they basically come down to three evidences.

Bibliographic Evidence, Internal Evidence, and External Evidence.

1. Bibliographic Evidence – the quality and number of documents.

Here, three questions are asked about the manuscripts or writings.

How many? What kind? How old?

This evidence concerns manuscripts (MSS): the number of MSS, the quality of MSS, the age of MSS, and the time interval between the original writing and the copy. **Bibliographic evidence seeks to answer the question "Is the present text or copy the same as the original author wrote?"** Bibliographic consideration is commonly called textual criticism. The manuscript evidence demonstrates agreement with all the fundamentals of the faith.

(1) Old Testament bibliographic evidence

We do not have as many Old Testament manuscripts as New Testament manuscripts.

The MSS we have are very good quality. The copy tradition is excellent. Both the Talmudists (AD 100-500) and Massorettes (AD 500-900) were meticulous in their copying, care, and preservation of the Hebrew text. Changes of any kind were kept out. The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) found in the Qumran caves verify the accurate transmission and the preservation of the Hebrew Bible. The DSS include thousands of fragments along with many scrolls of biblical and non-biblical literature which were written or copied between 250 BC and AD 50. The Hebrew Bible of the Massoretic period is the same Hebrew text (with few minor variations) that the Qumran scribes were familiar with. Most variations found in the Hebrew texts of the Old Testament are insignificant; none bring any foundational doctrine into question.

(2) New Testament bibliographic evidence:

There are some 24,000 MSS and portions of MSS.

The quality is excellent; the changes are few and minor. No fundamental doctrine is changed by any MSS variant.

Age and closeness in time to the original: There are many MSS that were written within 100 to 400 years after the original. There is a papyrus fragment (John 18.31-33,37-38) in the John Rylands Library that has been dated to the period 100-140 AD—within possibly 50 years of the original.

Besides Greek MSS there are about 15,000 copies in the various versions—that is, the New Testament translated into another language such as Syriac, Coptic, and Latin. In addition, the church fathers quoted the New Testament freely. Almost the entire New Testament can be reproduced from just the writings of the fathers.

The New Testament is clearly the best documented text when compared to other ancient writings. The Iliad by Homer was written in 900 BC. There are only 643 copies. The earliest copy was made about 400 BC. The textual tradition of the Iliad ranks a distant second to the New Testament tradition when you consider MSS numbers, age of documents, and quality of texts. Tacitus was a Roman who lived from about AD 55-117. His two long works are *Histories* and *Annals*. Only four and one-half of the fourteen books of *Histories* survive, while only ten of the sixteen books and two partial books of *Annals* survive. The text for both depend on one ninth century MSS and one eleventh century MSS.

2. Internal evidence—the agreement and support within the documents of each other.

Internal evidence deals with what the text says. The question that internal evidence answers is “Is the author making reliable, consistent, non-contradictory, and truthful statements?”

Involved in this determination is the competence and character of the author, the source of the information, the closeness in time and place of the author to the events, and the presence of other evidence or witnesses who confirm or disprove what he wrote.

Internal evidence supports the nature and attributes of God, the gospel accounts (the Synoptics [Matthew, Mark, and Luke} and John), the inspiration of Scripture, miracles, the resurrection of Jesus, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the creation the heavens and earth and all life—in fact all the statements of the Bible.

There are no contradictions, though some claim that the Bible does contradict itself.

Often, supposedly contradictory statements simply complement each other; an author may choose to exclude some information that another author chose to include; at other times an author’s perspective or emphasis may be a little different from another writer. All present the truth. When added together the larger view is clear. A consistent study of the Bible demonstrates its consistency and cohesiveness.

One false claim is that God is a different God in the Old Testament from the God of the New Testament: in the Old Testament God is a God of wrath and destruction and in the New Testament He is a God of love. The critics say that the destruction of Sodom and the destruction of the Canaanites shows a primitive and weak deity, while the New Testament God speaks of love to one another and turn the other cheek. They are simply showing their presuppositions and faulty hermeneutics (principles of interpretation).

In answer to this claim we can say that

Matthew 22:37 summarizes the Old Testament—love God and our neighbor.

Matthew 9:13 and Matthew 12:7 say that God desired love and mercy more than sacrifice.

Ezekiel 18:23 says that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

Genesis 6:3 records that God gave 120 years for the people to repent.

Genesis 15:16 tells us that God gave the Amorites hundreds of years to repent.

Deuteronomy 7:8 says that God's love motivated His action toward Israel.

Psalms 103:13 and Psalm 103:17 note that God has fatherly compassion and everlasting loving kindness to those who fear Him.

John 3:16-17 teaches God loves the entire world of mankind John 3:36 teach that wrath comes only toward the person who rejects God's love and salvation—the unbeliever.

Romans 2:5-6, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9, and Revelation 6:15-17 all teach about God's wrath—wrath toward those who reject His mercy.

Matthew 23 shows God's judgment of religious leaders who reject Him.

Matthew 10:34 says that Christ had a mission that will divide and bring a sword.

John 3:16 says that God loves the world and that I why He sent His son to win eternal life for all who believe in Him. Christ did not come into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:17-18).

We can conclude that God is very patient and gracious in the Old Testament; He judged only when people repeatedly rejected Him. He is the same in the New Testament. Both sections of the Bible present God as holy and gracious and loving; God is consistent with his character in the way He treats people.

3. External evidence

External evidence is support from sources other than the writings under consideration. This evidence comes from such fields of knowledge as history, archaeology, science, and literature. The question here is "What does other provable data say about the statements made by the writing under discussion?"

For example, external evidence supports the Bible prophecies about the fall of great cities of the past—for example, Tyre (Ezekiel 26), Nineveh (Nahum), and Babylon (Isaiah 13.19-22; Jeremiah 51.24-26) were destroyed exactly like the prophets predicted. Josh McDowell, in Volume 1 of *Evidence Demands a Verdict*, quotes many different historians and archaeologists as they comment about the fall of these cities (Tyre, 274-280; Nahum, 296-302; Babylon, 302-309). The quotes are fascinating.

Ancient history and archaeology confirm the way of life described in the Old Testament—the Bible account of Moses' adoption and training was consistent with Egyptian practice at that time. Just compare Acts 7.22 with the story of Moses in the book of Exodus.

Bibliographic, Internal and External Evidence cause to conclude that the Bible is true and trustworthy in all that pertains to doctrine and practice.

In fact it is the eternal Word of God (I Peter 1:22-25) that has power to bring us salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and to cause us to grow in our spiritual lives to become more like Christ as we obey the indwelling Holy Spirit as followers of Jesus.

But you may be thinking. Why this information about the Word of God, the Bible? I believe the Bible is the Word of God! That is not my challenge today. I'm glad that is true, for neither is it my challenge today.

But, my challenge, and perhaps yours, is to not just agree that it is the word of God, but to let the Word of God move me to action when I read it and let it speak to me.

A brief review of the Scripture's accuracy and authority, I believe, is necessary so that we will be given a heightened realization that it must be obeyed as we let God speak to us through it.

For note what our text says in Colossians 3:16,

"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom and teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Did you notice those words, "admonishing one another." That is talking about having "Heavenly Harmony In Earthly Relationships." Note how this comes about.

1. There is the authority of the Word of God.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

The word of Christ can refer to the living Word, which is Jesus Christ, but it seems to be referring rather to the written Word of God. Paul uses the word, "Christ," for he is writing to those who had come out of Gnosticism, or were being influence by the Gnostics. These people didn't believe in Jesus Christ as God nor did they believe in the cross or bodily resurrection of Christ. They believed that matter was evil, so they didn't even believe in the incarnation of Christ. Paul pens that there is the word, the logos of Christ, the word of Christ alive in Him, and in written propositional truth that should dwell in one richly.

This is the eternal written word of God – the supernatural word of God that lives and abides forever with the power to give one eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ and to cause the believer to grow in Christ.

The Word of God or Word of Christ is the final authority for doctrine and practice, for it comes from God Himself – it is inspired of God, or the very breath of God as Paul tells us in II Timothy 3:16.

2. There is the intake or interchange with the Word of God.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly"

Those words, "dwell within you richly," are choice words, actually, very rich words.

The word, "dwell," is a present imperative, meaning it is a command that should be carried out continually, on a moment by moment basis.

The word, "dwell," means to inhabit or let it be a part of one's life. Someone has said, "to be at home in your life."

The words, "within you," emphasize that the Word of Christ comes to affect our inner attitudes and thoughts, which flow out into our actions.

The word, richly means largely, or abundantly.,

The word of God, then should not be short-changed in our lives by just letting it speak but one area in our lives but to every area in our lives, every room in our lives from the basement, to the kitchen, to the family room, to the bedroom, even the garage.

When we read the Word of God, we should let it speak to our lives in every area of our lives. We should let the Word of God be at home in our lives, and we should be at home in the word of God.

3. There is the effect the Word of God is to have on our individual lives as we live for the Lord.

Note the text again.

“with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another.”

(1) The Word of God provides wisdom.

Since the Word of God comes from the heart of God it is true wisdom, that is, it gives eternal life-changing practical information for daily living. The writer of Proverbs penned, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10). God’s Word is not some pie-in-the sky type of information that has no bearing on how we live our lives.

It is true unchanging wisdom from God Himself.

(2) The Wisdom of God’s Word provides teaching – on-going (a present participle).

The Word of God, then, has an on-going teaching ability. It is not good for just one day of our lives, but for every day of our lives. It is the eternal Word of God. The wisdom of God’s Word teaches us, it gives us eternal content, it provides us true doctrine concerning, God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, how to live for the Lord, a biblical world view of history, while providing us a living hope. The Bible is filled with eternal teaching.

How great is that! The Bible we read and study provides us God’s wisdom for living, with the capacity to have teaching ability at all times whenever we read it, or remember a verse that we have memorized.

(3) The Wisdom of God’s Word admonishes each of us.

This is where the real challenge comes in for each of us who are following Jesus Christ. For it’s easy to say that God’s Word is the eternal wisdom of God and it continually teaches us what God has for us and wants us to do.

We can easily keep the Word of God only in our heads. We are like our little grandson, Ethan, soon to be 4, "Mommy, i'm singing the B.I.B.L.E. song in my head, want to hear it? (Mommy says: "Sure!") [...silence...] then he says.. "Did you hear it?"

But the word, admonish, tells us that the wisdom of God’s Word needs to be more than in our head, it needs to be applied to our individual lives. How so?

****The meaning of the word, admonish.**

The word admonish means to put in mind, to warn, or to put God’s sense into one’s head that is carried out in the shoe leather of life.

I’m not sure about you, but I know I appreciate that the Wisdom of the Word of God is given to put sense in my head, that is to tell me that I need in the Spirit’s power to act like the Lord. I trust that you would agree with me. As followers of Christ we all need the wisdom of God’s sense put into our minds so we can do His will.

So how does the admonishing of God's Word in our minds and hearts, work out in our daily lives. What's the result of God's Word admonishing us on a daily basis?

****The results of God's Word admonishing us.**

Note the text in Colossians 3 again.

Admonishing one another with Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

The first evidence that the word of God is admonishing, God is putting His sense into our minds and hearts is:

(1) A positive spirit of praise to our God for who He is.

The word of God at work in the believer's life will change one from being a selfish complainer to being one who gives God the praise. Whether in the good times or challenging times, God is praised. For in the challenges of life giving God praise releases one from being in control of the situation and acknowledges that God is in control of the circumstances – He is sovereign over all.

That's why a reading of say Psalm 42:5-11, David starts out in despair, but ends up saying, why, O soul, are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, For I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.

Or when we sing the songs here at church on Sunday morning we give praise to our God acknowledging that He is our God and in control. The hymns and songs are to admonish us to praise God in the good times and even when the circumstances are not easy. He is the Sovereign. We are to continue to trust Him.

(2) A spirit of thanksgiving for what God has done for us. All of us have different challenges in our lives at different times. It's easy to become negative as we look at our world. But in the midst of it all perhaps we need to stop and thank God for our blessings, as the song writer as stated, "When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, and you are thinking all is lost, count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done." Things could be much, much worse. Many are in much dire circumstances than I am.

I spoke at the Inspiration Center camp near Walworth, WI, a week or so ago, to a camp for the disabled. I was reminded again of how much I have to be thankful for. I talked to one fellow camper who was telling me how God had used his disability for His glory.

Yes, for the disabled, "It's So Daily." Shirley Locker, a wonderful Christian lady, wrote a pamphlet with that title. She contacted polio in 1954. She lived at the Inspiration Ministries in Walworth for more than 30 years – working as Camp Registrar and editor of the Inspiration Ministries "Seasons" newsletter. Let me quote a few of her words,

"Yesterday my alarm clock awakened me from a dream, and for an instant I planned to fling back the covers, swing my feet over the side and hop out of bed. But I haven't done that for 30 years!

"I quickly remembered my present system. The process I use now is similar to a work project. I have a series of 50 moves (I counted them!) which have to be done in sequence. Some of these moves advance me only an inch, but each move is necessary and I must concentrate throughout the whole procedure in order to get into a sitting position and then maneuver from the bed into my wheelchair. Seven minutes is my best time.

"I am grateful I can do it myself. But it's so daily!"

Then she adds that in all of this she must draw on God's promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9). God's love and strength never run out of supply.

Don't overlook here that as God's word admonishes us, puts God's sense into our minds and hearts, God starts with His admonishing us in our inner selves, in our spirits. Why? The old nature we have inherited from Adam is selfish and negative.

But God gives us His nature, the resurrection life, when we accept Jesus as personal Savior, and we need to let the word of God admonish us to put off that old nature and use the new nature of God which is filled with praise and thankfulness to God.

God always starts with our inner lives first for as we think in ourselves so are.

The believer who has a spirit of praise and thankfulness to God will then fulfill the admonishment to. . .

(3) Have a life of activity that glorifies God in every area of one's existence. (Colossians 3:17ff).

"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

As the Word of God admonishes us to have a spirit of praise and thankfulness, which means our spirit is in tune with God's Spirit, the Word of God admonishes us that our words should be that which build up – administer grace, and our tasks regardless of the size should be done in the Spirit's power, in sincerity in purity (3:22), and heartily (with enthusiasm -3:22), for the Lord and not for men.

That service for the Lord in our words of building each other up in the Lord, and deeds of serving one another, should be evident in our relationships as husbands and wives, in relationships with our children, in our employment, in our prayer life, and in our relationship with those who know not the Lord.

The wisdom of God's Word admonishes us in all of our relationships with each other individually, in our church relationships, in our family relationships, in our work-a-day world, at school, and in our neighborhoods.

(4) God uses teachers to give out His Word to admonish the flock of God, to bring God's sense to those who listen (I Thessalonians 5:12).

"But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and admonish you."

That's why it is so important for those in places of teaching to handle the word of God rightly, and to teach in the attitude of being a servant and not acting as a lord. Those who teach need to shepherd the flock in the example of Christ (I Peter 5:1-4), their teaching and lives need to match – they are seeking in the power of the Holy Spirit to let the Word of God admonish them to do the Lord's will in obedience to Him.

(5) Sometimes it is necessary for a believer in Christ to admonish another believer in Christ (II Thessalonians 3:15). Paul wrote that the person who would not work, and was acting as a busybody was not to be regarded as an enemy, but admonished as a brother. Paul is saying

that talking to another believer who is not living for the Lord needs to be done in love, as one would a brother, in order to help him get back to being responsible for his behavior before the Lord. Such needs to be done in love and with the elders of the church involved – done in the spirit of meekness as Paul told the Galatians (6:1). In fact in writing to the Roman believers, Paul tells them that they are able to “admonish one another.” So, evidently the Roman believers were mature enough to be able to speak to one another in love and encourage each other on.

The wisdom of the word of God, then, is to affect our lives in all areas. We are to be people of the Book, and let the Book admonish us to put God’s sense in our heads so we praise and thank Him, and give Him glory in all we think do and say.

The story is told of the Pastor who visited a family in his church. The little girl was there when the Pastor came and was invited into the home for a visit. As they were talking, the mother told the little girl to go and fetch her mother’s favorite book to show the pastor. The little girl brought back the Sears Roebuck Catalogue. Not much, if any understanding there of the importance of God’s Word in one’s life.

May we let the Wisdom of God’s Word dwell in us richly, be so at home in our lives, and we are so at home in the Word of God, that when it speaks to us admonishing us, we will enthusiastically do what it says! Then our lives will give evidence that we have been with Jesus in His Word!

I know I am grateful for the appreciation for the Bible that was given to me in my childhood as I know my Dad had his daily devotions in the Word of God, and we had family devotions in the Word of God on a daily basis during the week, when we were younger at home.

On this fourth of July Weekend, we are reminded that our country’s freedom was founded on Judeo- Christian principles. Only God’s Word admonishes us that true freedom is found in Jesus Christ through faith in Him, and that a country’s freedom is kept when true principles of biblical righteousness and individual liberty are maintained by those in places of authority.

May we let the Word of God dwell within each of us richly today and everyday!