

God Speaks
April 25, 2021
Ecclesiastes 12:9-14
Clint Pressley

***9****Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.****10****The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.*

***11****The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.****12****My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.*

***13****The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.****14****For God will bring every deed into judgment, withevery secret thing, whether good or evil.*

*(Pastor prays)*

Today after church, a few of us will drive 3 1/5 hours to Rocky Mount, N.C., where I will participate in the ordination of Matt Johnson, one of our former staff members. And I’ll use as my text 1st and 2nd Timothy that speaks of the authority and inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, the Word of God. And it made me think of the paragraph in front of us. As *Qoheleth*, the preacher, Solomon brings this short book to a close, and he does so with a hammer statement about the Bible and its authority.

This is an amazing paragraph to find in the Old Testament because it is vitally relevant for today’s Christian. And if we don’t get this right, our minds and hearts will be swept away in a tidal wave of moral confusion. If we are not rock solidly confident in what we believe and why we believe it, we will not be able to stand up to the gathering storm around us – whether it’s gender confusion, critical race theory or the erasure of genuine objective truth. Thankfully, God has not left us without hope to look to, our ground to stand on. He’s given us His word and, as Solomon strips away all the false crutches of life under the sun, he leaves us with the inerrant word of God to stand on.

In this passage, we are sobered up and reminded that to be Christian is to be a person of the Book. Now this text is strong and it calls for a commitment to scripture. And because of that I want to use it to call you to be a person of the Bible, to master the Bible so that the Bible will master you. I want to challenge you to pick up the mantle and grow in the knowledge of the Word and faithfulness to it, to dust it off, pick it back up and hear from God because…

**When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks**

When the Bible speaks, God speaks. Let’s just go through it and notice five or six statements that Solomon gives us.

**The content of the Bible**

Verse 9 begins an epilogue of sorts. He closed out the body of the book in verse 8 with “vanity of vanities” and now we get some commentary.

First let’s look and see what the preacher taught. Two words – “knowledge” and “truth,” one in verse 9 and one in verse 10. Let’s read it: ***9****Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.****10****The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.* In the first part of verse 9 we see knowledge.

There are two ways to look at the word “knowledge.” One is just information and facts, things you need to know to make good and wise decisions, things you need to know to function as a Christian. But knowledge of how the world works without knowledge of God only leaves you depressed.

So there is more going on here. The Bible gives us knowledge of God, His holiness, His omnipotence, His omniscience, and His omnipresence. The Bible gives us knowledge about ourselves, that we are made in the image of God. The Bible gives us knowledge about gender: created humans in His image as man and woman. The Bible gives us knowledge about sin, human nature and about judgment. The Bible gives us knowledge about God’s love, mercy, and grace, about redemption and reconciliation in Christ. We know the Gospel because it comes from the Bible and now is a good time to talk about that.

The Bible teaches us that God is good and holy and created everything including mankind, all of us in this room. You were created in the image of God. That image of God within you and me has been disfigured by our own sin to the degree that we are separated from God. Jesus Christ, who was fully man and is fully God, lived perfectly, earning righteousness that you and I can’t do. Then Jesus took the wrath of God in the place of sinners. The wages of sin is death, and Jesus died on the cross for us. Then God raised Him from the dead, He ascended into Heaven, and He sits at the right hand of God and rules the entire universe. We can never work our way to Heaven, but the work of righteousness has been done in Christ. The work of salvation has been done in Christ, so what is left for you is to believe. To believe means turning from sin, repenting, and turning to Christ, believing that Jesus saves.

The Bible gives us knowledge on how to know God through faith in Jesus. It’s not just knowledge that the preacher taught is the content of the Bible, its truth. Let’s read verse 10 again.***10****The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.*

There is not a sliding scale for truth. God’s word is our standard and strength as Christians. If we don’t actually know the truth, then we end up believing whatever sounds easiest and nicest. This is especially true today and especially true in the confused world of sexuality. One by one, all of the mainline denominations have fallen to the creed of the sexual revolutionaries. It’s why we start every service with the Bible and stake our lives on its content. Here is our North Star. Here is our Lighthouse. Here is the lamp to our feet and the light to our path. Here is our hope and strength.

You need to pick it up again. Start your day with it, study it, pray and ask God to help you. Know this book. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. Know the content of the Bible.

**The communication of the Bible**

Let’s look again at verses 9 and 10 and look at all the adjectives that describe what all the preacher did to actually teach the Bible. ***9****Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.****10****The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.* This says he weighed it, studied it and arranged it. He did it with great care. Now if you are a teacher of the Bible, pay attention to this. There is a lot of thought and meditation and deliberation and even frustration in preparing to teach and communicate the Bible. And verse 10 says he sought to communicate it with words of delight. That means that the Bible is truthfully written and beautifully recorded so that we can take joy, even enjoying its content. The 23rd Psalm is so beautiful and true. The Bible is even fun to read sometimes.

Remember the stories of Elijah at Mount Carmel making fun of all those prophets of Baal. Come with me to the book of Judges to Ehud, the left-handed man and his encounter with the fat man Eglon and what happened to his sword when he put it on that man’s belly. Read about Sampson and Samuel and Saul.

But even more than that, the Bible is communicating the everlasting and steadfast love of God for sinners, for you. It’s the hope of the Gospel and the confidence that He is with you. You can trust this word. You want to hear from God. When the Bible speaks, God speaks.

**The inspiration of the Bible**

You will see this in three sections. Notice it with me in verse 10-11. ***10****The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.* That’s one way. Now in verse 11 it gets general. ***11****The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings;*So now there are collected sayings. And then again in verse 11 at the end, *they are given by one Shepherd.* That’s God.

The Bible is made up of the Law, History, Prophets, the poetry of the Psalms, and wisdom of the Proverbs. Then it moves to the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles and Revelation. It was written by 40 men over 1,500 years in 3 different languages and they are all bound together as one message. The creation. The fall, redemption and consummation. It’s what the Apostle Peter said about the Bible in 2 Peter 1:20-21. ***20****knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.****21****For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* This reminds us that this book is our strength, our comfort, our guide and our aim. You can trust it. But not if you don’t know it, its content, communication, and inspiration.

**The efficacy of the Bible**

“Efficacy” is an important word. It is the idea that there is power to get the intended result. It’s the power to get the job done. Look how the preacher describes the power of the Bible. There are two ways, goads and nails. Verse 11 says, the words of the wise are like goads “*dorbana*.” It’s a large, sharp-pointed stick that a herder or shepherd might use to prod an animal. Look at the second way the Bible is described. It’s like nails firmly fixed. It’s secure and established. It’s to make sturdy and resolute. Let’s take these two adjectives and talk about the power of the Bible. What does it do? The Bible gets you where you need to go. It’s essential for life. It will prod you in the right direction and establish you in God’s will. The Bible will be truthful to the point of pain. It will be useful for nourishing your soul and essential for knowing God. The Bible is foundational for every believer. It will secure those who are in pain, correct those in error and stabilize you in the storm. The Bible is sometimes harsh and sometimes healing but always God speaking. It’s a nail firmly fixed so you can hang your life on it!

Tommy Nelson said, “I don’t have to wonder what things are. My problem is not the Bible I don’t know. It’s the Bible I do know.” I want to challenge you to develop the discipline of Bible intake. You won’t know it all in a week. It’s a marathon. Now I have run a few marathons and I’m not a runner. I’m so slow that little kids on tricycles eating lollipops pass me, but I finish. It’s training and discipline. You need to carve out a time. Get a pen in hand and ask God to help. Read, meditate, underline, consider, digest and think. As Nelson says, learn to master your Bible until it masters you. Because it has the power to get you where you need to be.

In 1979 my grandmother gave me a Christian Living Bible. In 1984, my Mom and Dad gave me my first *real* Bible and I started reading. I was told that Christians read, so I did. Three years ago, Connie and I were walking through a particularly stressful time. I have a little blue Bible that I see time to time and I had written in the back that this is the Bible that carried me through that time.

You need to read the Bible because when the Bible speaks, God speaks. I want to say two more things about the Bible.

**The sufficiency of the Bible**

It’s sufficient. It’s enough. Let me show you where I get that. Let’s read verse 12. ***12****My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.* Beware of anything beyond these. There are lots of books and lots of opinions. Be careful what you read and give yourself to, now more than ever. Sometimes the worst thing you can do is Google something. If you aren’t feeling well, do *not* go to WebMd. You will be planning your funeral.

The sufficiency of the Bible, that it is enough, is one of the doctrines that we must hold on tightly to. We should hold tightly especially when we think about mankind, marriage, sexuality, mortality, and gender. Look, we talk about racial reconciliation and when we do, we should talk about it through Ephesians 2 where God brings two opposing parties together to make one new man in Christ so that brothers and sisters in Jesus is our primary identity. Tommy Nelson again says, “the problem with the Bible is that it gives answers, and answers are sometimes painful, hard and sacrificial.” But those answers from the Bible are always God-honoring. That’s the sufficiency of the Bible.

Let me end with this last one. **The purpose of the Bible**

I always appreciate a summary, and that’s exactly what we get in verses 13-14. And the order is significant.

Let’s read verse 13. ***13****The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.* Fear God. Keep his commandments. To fear God is the realization of His greatness and power and worthiness of your life. That’s worship and worship goes somewhere. It leads to obedience. It’s your conduct. How you live derives from worship. It’s what you believe. The knowledge of God leads to obedience. But that last verse reminds us that we fall short and judgment is coming. ***14****For God will bring every deed into judgment, withevery secret thing, whether good or evil.* That puts a pinpoint on our need for the Gospel. “All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.” We need a substitute. We need Jesus, the righteous.

Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

*(Pastor prays)*