

Profiting From God's Word (Part 2)

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (II Timothy 3:16-17). The word "profitable" denotes something that is useful, beneficial and advantageous. In these two verses we find areas in which we can profit spiritually from our knowledge and application of the Bible. Last week we considered the doctrinal profitability of God's Word. This week we turn our attention to its usefulness in reproof.

The Greek word translated "reproof" in the passage cited above is most interesting. As it is used here it means "conviction." The same word is translated "evidence" in Hebrews 11:1 where Paul wrote, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." In his work, Synonyms of the New Testament, Richard Trench wrote regarding this word, "it is so to rebuke another, with such effectual wielding of the victorious arms of the truth, as to bring him, if not always to a confession, yet at least to a conviction, of his sin." In short, the Bible is profitable not just for pointing out the error of our ways but also for convincing us of our wrongdoing. God in His Word does not "beat around the bush." He tells us what we need to know so that we can go to heaven (II Peter 1:3).

Luke 3:19 tells us that John the Immerser "reproved" Herod because he was living in sin with his brother Philip's wife. In Matthew's account of this incident, he records John as saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." (Matthew 14:4). You can't get much more plain spoken than that. John's message from God was designed to convince Herod of his transgression. Would that Herod had heeded the message, yet, his neglect of God's Word did not lessen its power. It was strong enough to convict and convince one with a soft heart. God's Word could have been profitable to Herod had he obeyed it.

In John 8 we find Jesus once again answering His Pharisaic detractors. They had been following Him, not to learn the truth, but to try to trap Jesus in any type of inconsistency they could find. In John 8:46 Jesus asked, "Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" In other words, "Which of you can honestly use the Word of God to convict me of teaching or practicing error?" God's Word was and is powerful enough to "convince the gainsayers." (Titus 1:9). With this inherent power, it should have been able to prove that Jesus was wrong. Of course, it could not because Jesus was not in error. They couldn't convict Jesus with God's Word because there was no sin to convict! If the scribes and Pharisees had only gone to God's Word to learn God's will, they themselves would have been reproved and thus would have acknowledged that Jesus taught the truth. This is an important passage regarding not only the value of God's Word in reproof, but also the perfect life of Jesus.

Other verses that use at least a variation of the Greek word translated "reproof" are:

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (II Timothy 4:2).

"This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." (Titus 1:13).

"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee." (Titus 2:15).

God's Word is profitable to us because, being from God, it has the innate ability to show us who we really are and guide us to who we need to be. It can "call us on the carpet" and bare our sins and shortcomings before us. It can expose our weaknesses. It can tear us down. Is this bad? No, it's not bad, especially when you consider what James wrote in James 4:6: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

We need reproof. We need to be convinced of our sins because if we are not, we will continue in them and if we continue in them, we will lose our souls. We can profit from God's Word in that we can study it and get the discipline we need to humble us and set us in the path of righteousness.