

THE WORD OF GOD

Our World

(Here are five words from just this past week's news, ... as I read them see if they cause a reaction in you.)

- COVID
- Ukraine
- Wildfires
- Immigration
- Economy

UHG !

It is difficult to not feel the tension in your neck from just hearing the words ... and yet we hear more and more and more each day.

“There is darkness all around us”

As our opening hymn suggests ... we are not of this world ... we are strangers ... pilgrims ... just passing through.

And -

as Ephesians 6:12 tells us

“... we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

SO WE MUST:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 1 Peter 5:8

BUT:

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:32

Brethren ... we are NOT of this world.

Jesus is quoted in the Gospel of John -

... My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, ...

We are not of this world ... we are pilgrims ... strangers ...

We are different ... we are a peculiar people ... We are set apart ... We are set apart for a Holy purpose ... a Holy service ..

WE ARE SANCTIFIED.

SO ... let us not be ... conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Romans 12:2

Brethren, Our Consecration (our dedication) ... and then our Sanctification ... that being set apart for a Holy purpose is something we must be careful about, diligent about, responsible with.

We have heard it said that -

Consecration is one decision ...

Sanctification is a million decisions.

Consecration is one decision ...

A million, daily ... moment by moment decisions.

Our sanctification is a process that we have need to be careful about.

1Thessalonians 4:4

“That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;”

Using the words of Br. Wes Cramer “our sanctification isn’t something that just happens ... it takes effort and it must be defended and protected and must be secured.”

Our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.

Who is that wishes us to be knocked off track from our being set apart for a holy purpose ... it is the adversary, the same adversary that fell from grace in Isaiah (saying-I will be as the most high)... and drew man away in the garden (saying-you won’t surely die) and ...tempted Jesus in the wildereness (saying-if you are the Son of god, command that these stones be made bread). (Satan, Lucifer, The Devil ... our adversary.)

I think one of the more foolish thing we can say is it won’t happen to me . “I can’t be deceived ...”

Luke 21:8

... Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ;

Our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour

Think about it:

What does it mean to be deceived ?

...tricked, ... duped, ...fooled.

Nobody wakes up in the morning and says ... you know what ... I think I will let myself be scammed today, I'm going to let myself get tricked out a few hundred dollars.

The scripture says ... warns to - Take heed that ye be not deceived:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might ... and

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... the wiles, deceit, trickery, scams.

Sometimes we say or maybe have heard it said ... these are unprecedented times ... are these unprecedented times ?

I recently opened another lesson with a short rant as to whether the times we are living in are unprecedented

I'm not sure ... I'm not sure these are:

Unprecedented times?

Unprecedented means:

never done or never known ... unparalleled.

So are these truly unprecedented ...

Maybe?

But, what if we lived at the time of:

- The Flood...
... or what if we saw:
- World War I ...

... or what if we experienced the horror of :

- The Holocaust ...

Would we say “these” are unprecedented times ?

I think ...I know that there will be a time that is even more unprecedented.

These certainly are different times ... and certainly difficult times.

Regardless, ...they may just be unprecedented for us as individuals ... for our generation ... these are certainly difficult and challenging times.

... and with difficult and challenging times and experiences, comes a whole set of requisites for which we need to be braced.

But what we do know is there are mechanisms at play now that have never been available ... information, entertainment, media, social media ...

And at one time we would need to search it out now it comes right into our homes ... and we don't even need wires ... wireless

And all of this is working to knock us off course ... to distract us from being set as part different than those around us, different from the world sanctified, ambassadors of God His character and His Plan.

Brethren: The world is yelling at us !...The world is yelling at us louder than the word of God,

1Kings 19:12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. (The small voice of the Word of God)

So ...

What is the solution ? ... What is our defense ?

The solution ... our only defense is to

... Put on the whole armor of God !

If you have a Bible handy ... turn with me to Ephesians Chapter 6, verses 10-20.

The Armor of God

Ephesians 6:10-20 (KJV)

(10) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. **Not our might. Not our wisdom. We can not fight this battle on our own. We must ...**

(11) Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles (**trickery, deceit**) of the devil.

Again, (12) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

(13) Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

(14) Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

(15) And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

(16) Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

(17) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

(18) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

(19) And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

(20) For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

It was here ... in verse 17, that we find the inspiration and the title for today's discourse, today's consideration and the focus for the remainder of our time this afternoon; The Word of God.

If we get to the end of our time this afternoon and you find yourself asking, ... what a was I supposed to get from that discourse, ... what was the lesson, what was Br. Mark trying to tell us ...
... my objective is this: To emphasize and reinforce the value and importance and the magnitude of the gift of God's Holy Word. ... and thus to encourage each of us to reinvest time and energy in becoming more familiar ... and more capable ... and more passionate ... and more dedicated to the learning and understanding and implementing of God's Word to us.

As we become more seasoned, ... as we have spent a little more time in the way we may begin to view some topics as fundamental, formative, even elementary ...

... but even a home owner checks their foundation of their house now and again. If our foundation becomes compromised, the whole structure is in danger.

One of the joys of being a parent or a grandparent ... is it generates a lot of opportunity to go back to the basics which is very supportive, uplifting .

Using Your Sword

Generally, when we go through a study of the Armor of God ...

We get to the sword of the spirit ... the word of god and typically the leading statement that the Sword is the only offensive component or piece of the armor.

While this is entirely true ... that we use a sword to go on the attack

As we see emphasized by Paul in:
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 discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

But, also we see - watching Jesus, watching Jesus use the Word of God ... his sword... we see it being employed as a defensive weapon ... a protection.

Jesus defended himself with the words ... 'It is written'.

Matthew 4:1-10 KJV

- (1) Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.
- (2) And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.
- (3) And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.
- (4) But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.
- (5) Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,
- (6) And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.
- (7) Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.
- (8) Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;
- (9) And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.
- (10) Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.
- (11) Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Whether we are using the sword offensively (attacking falsehood, untruth, misinformation) ... or we wield it defensively (protecting ourself from error or the adversary) ... we must be good at ... we must know our weapon ... we must practice with it ... we must develop mastery of it.

When on the offensive ... we remember we may hate the sin, but we do love the sinner. We must attack the error, without attack, without injuring the one espousing the error.

We must become so capable ... so skillful ... skillful as a surgeon or as to remove the error (the tumor) without harming the healthy tissue.

My Bibles through the years.

Story of: **“We Love The Book Because We Love The Author”**

(A story I first heard read by Br. Russell Polluck)

They tell a story of a young lady who read a book and found it one of the dullest books she had ever read, very uninteresting. She was not able to catch the story or the real message that the author had in mind when he wrote the book and she set it aside with a feeling of frustration.

A little later she met a young man with whom she fell very deeply in love. She found out that he was the author of the book that she had found so uninteresting. So she picked the book up again and she read it and found this time that it was tremendously interesting. Really so fascinating that she couldn't put it down until it was finished, and this time also she found the message that the author had tried to convey in his book.

Of course, we know why the second reading was so much more profitable than the first reading, that is the simple realization ...
... she had learned to know and love the author.

And though also the Bible to some has been a dull book to read and in spite of their reading they have never quite caught the message of the author as it is contained in the book. But the reason why you and I enjoy so much the reading of the Bible, the reason it has filled such an important part in our lives is because we have learned to know and love the author, and because we do love the author we have learned something of the message that He has endeavored to convey in the writing of the Bible, which is the word of God.

We can say with the Psalmist: “Oh how I love thy word, it is my meditation all the day. I have more understanding than all my teachers for thy testimonies are my meditations. I understand more of the ancients because I keep thy precepts. How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my mouth. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path, I am thy servant.”

SIX:

How did God The creator of the Universe composed, compiled and structured His Word ? ... to us His creation.

The Structure of the Bible

- 66 Books (39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New)

- Written by over 40 authors:

(Poets, princes, fishermen, herdsman, ... there were doctors and lawyers, ... rich men and poor men, ... learned men and unlearned men) ... chosen because of their faith holy men who God could use men that would have the integrity to write not what they wanted but men who would not put their own ideas into the message men who be anxious only to have the message of God reflected in their writing.)

2Peter 1:21 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 *Spirit*.

- Written over 1600 years (about 1450 BC to 95 AD or CE)
(We might tend to think that Genesis was the very first book written ... yet there is reasonable that maybe Job was the first book penned ... although that date is unknown.)
- Written in 13 countries on three continents in # different languages
- 27 of the Bible is prophecy

Old Testament

(Br David Stein, while in Israel...nothing old about them ... Hebrew Scriptures)

3 components :

history, ... and prophesy and wedged in-between are
5 devotional/instruction

History:

Penta-teuch: (Five books of Moses) Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy

Historical(12)

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicals, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther (by and large they are the history presented here is chronological)

Devotional: (5) Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

Major Prophets: (4+)

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations (also written by Jeremiah), Ezekiel, Daniel

12 Minor Prophets

Hosea	Jonah	Zephaniah
Joel	Micah	Haggai
Amos	Nahum	Zechariah
Obadiah	Habakkuk	Malachi

The New Testament (The New Testament has 27 books.)

Matthew	John
Mark	Acts of the Apostles
Luke	Romans

1 Corinthians	Philemon
2 Corinthians	Hebrews
Galatians	James
Ephesians	1 Peter
Philippians	2 Peter
Colossians	1 John
1 Thessalonians	2 John
2 Thessalonians	3 John
1 Timothy	Jude
2 Timothy	Revelation
Titus	

Divinely inspired Only !!

(Jesus) God's Plan concealed in The Old Testament,
(Jesus) God's Plan revealed in the New Testament.

Jehovah, Our God, Our Father who art in Heaven is all knowing
(Omniscient).

His book, His message to His creation is Divinely inspired.

God see the entire parade:

In one chapter, in one parable, in one verse ... He (God) can bring meaning to the young and old, to the farmer and the lawyer, the new believer or the seasoned Christian. It may reveal something to you this year and in five years something else and in another ten something yet, even deeper. Because Jehovah wrote it that way.

One section might have a very practical, day to day application and at the very same time a flawless prophetic projection (500,1000 years) into the future.

The book itself is a divine miracle. Unmatched, ... unequalled.

Adrian Rogers wrote:

“It is so majestically deep that scholars could swim and never touch the bottom. Yet, so wonderfully shallow that a little child could come and get a drink of water without fear of drowning.”

BIBLE TRIVIA

- John 11:35 is the shortest scripture
Jesus wept.
- Longest verse; Esther 8:9
Esther 8:9 KJV

Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.

- Five books are a single chapter:
 - Obadiah
 - Philemon
 - 2 John
 - 3 John
 - Jude
- Psalm 117, the shortest chapter, (with only two verses)
- Psalm 117 is also the middle chapter of the entire Bible.
Psalms 117:1 KJV
(594 chapters before and 594 chapters after)
 - (1) *O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.*
 - (2) *For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.*
- Psalm 119 is the longest chapter of the Bible.
(with 176 verses)

Psalm 103: 1+2

- (1) A Psalm of David. Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
- (2) Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:
... again, how appropriate.

Attempts to Destroy the Bible

“The Bible is an anvil that has broken many hammers.”

These words are proven true when we consider that many people, empires and governments throughout the ages have tried to

destroy, extinguish, suppress and ... have sought, frequently by force, to eliminate the sacred Scriptures from public access. Reflect upon the following examples of malevolence toward the Creator and his Word.

YET ...

The Word of God “lives and abides.” Thus wrote Peter (1 Peter 1:23) and to buttress this claim regarding the enduring nature of the sacred Word, he quotes from the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah (40:6), declaring:

“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: But the word of the Lord abideth for ever (1 Peter 1:24-25).

Men come and go; generations vanish. But the Holy Scriptures march on triumphantly.

There is a saying: “Homer must be handled with care.”

The implication is this: Homer’s works have been treasured and preserved cautiously for centuries.

And yet, in spite of this meticulous care, only scant copies of Homer’s writings survive. There is no complete copy of the poet’s works prior to the thirteenth century A.D.

By way of vivid contrast, the Bible, though viciously opposed and oppressed across several millennia, is reflected in thousands of Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, and even today continues to be the best-selling publication in the world.

Throughout history the adversary has employed many methods to eradicate God’s Holy Word but to no avail... he has used violent opposition, pagan intellectual assault, papal opposition and modern rationalism ... we are going to cite just a sampling of each of these to begin to display how resilient our scriptures are.

Let's start even before our Lord's first advent.

About 170 BC

Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus, known popularly as “the madman,” launched a bloody persecution against the Hebrew people. One aspect of his vendetta was an attempt to destroy copies of the Jewish Scriptures

And [the officials of Antiochus] rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, and set them on fire. And wheresoever was found with any a book of the covenant, and if any consented to the law, the king's sentence delivered him to death (The Apocrypha, 1 Maccabees 1:56-57).

About 303 AD (CE)

Diocletian occupied the imperial throne from A.D. 284-305. In A.D. 303, he inaugurated a series of merciless persecutions upon those who professed the religion of Christ.

It is written:

All assemblies of Christians were forbidden and churches were ordered to be torn down. Four different edicts were issued, each excelling the preceding in intensity. One edict ordered the burning of every copy of the Bible

Oddly, just a few years following, events changed radically when Constantine the Great came to the Roman throne in A.D. 306 at the age of thirty-two. He solidified the Western empire and issued a decree that granted legal protection to Christians.

The Bible has had to survive not only the persecution of its enemies, but has had to weather the opposition of its so-called “friends” as well.

The Fourth Rule of the Council of Trent stated that the indiscriminate circulation of the Scriptures in the common vernacular would generate “more harm than good.” Therefore, those reading or possessing the Bible “without . . . permission may not receive absolution from their sins till they have handed [copies of the Scriptures] over to the ordinary” (Schroeder 1950, 274).

So, they “shrouded it in sackcloth”... the sackcloth of the Latin language and forbade people from owning or reading the scriptures without permission ... because certainly they were not capable of handling God’s word.

In the name of what has been labelled rationalism:

Voltaire in France (wo the composer Mozart called “the ungodly arch-villian”)

Or in America, Thomas Paine (writing “The Age of Reason” or Robert Ingersall’s “Mistakes of Moses”).

Br. Russell refers to this as “higher thinking” ...

And if you thought we were beyond that

Just recently Harvard University who’s montra may well be veritas “truth” hired Greg Epstein as their chaplain. The surprise isn’t that Epstein isn’t Christian ... rather it’s that he is an athiest.

Again Adrian Rogers writes:

... the Bible is not a book of the month, but the book of ages.

1 Peter 1:25 KJV

(25) But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

No book has ever had as much opposition ... men have laughed at it, scorned it, burned it, ridiculed it and made laws against it. But the Word of god has survived. And is as applicable today as it was yesterday ... and will be tomorrow.

In the words of John Clifford:

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
When looking in, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.
"How may anvils have you had," said I,
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"
"Just one," said he; then said with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Jot and Tittle

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus assures His audience on the mount that He had not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets; rather, He had come to fulfill them.

Then, in verse 18, Jesus emphasizes the eternal nature of God's Word: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (KJV). His statement naturally prompts the question of what's a jot? And what's a tittle?

What is a jot? What is a tittle?

Most of us are unfamiliar with jots and tittles because most of us do not read the Hebrew language. Jots and tittles have to do with letters and pen strokes in Hebrew writing.

A jot is the tenth letter in the Hebrew alphabet and the smallest. It was written above the line and looks to us rather like an apostrophe:

Jot is related to our modern English word iota, meaning "a very small amount." The Hebrew spelling is yod or yodh. Many Bibles have a picture of a yod in Psalm 119. Check out the section title coming just before verse 73.

A tittle is even smaller than a jot. A tittle is a letter extension, a pen stroke that can differentiate one Hebrew letter from another. An example can be seen in the comparison between the Hebrew letters resh and dalet (or dalet):

When Jesus said, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" in Matthew 5:18, He was stating emphatically that God's Word is true and trustworthy. God has spoken, His words have been written down accurately, and what God has said will surely come to pass. Fulfillment is inevitable.

Even the smallest letter of the Law will be fulfilled. Even the smallest pen stroke of the Prophets will be accomplished. The NLT translates the verse this way: "Until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved."

2Peter 3:3

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days **scoffers**, walking after their own lusts,

Doubters will doubt, and mockers will mock, but God's Word will not change: "Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens" (Psalm 119:89). The gospel changes lives: "'The word of the Lord endures forever.' And this is the word that was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:25). God is reliable, and so is His Word—every jot and tittle of it.

Proverbs 6:21 Bind them continually upon thine heart, *and* tie them about thy neck.

Deuteronomy 6:6-8

6- And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7- And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

8- And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

Blessed Bible: (Hymn 22)

Blessed Bible, Precious Word !
Boon most sacred from the Lord
Glory to His name be given
For the choicest gift from heaven.

All Scripture

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

All scripture ...

... all 31,103 (31,240) scriptures ...

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

(Brethren, when I last served here at the Chicago Convention, I shared some thoughts about our Daily Heavenly Manna ... let me take a moment now to reiterate some of the thoughts from that study ... I think they re-apply here.)

For some of us our very busy, new millennial lives ... (Our reading time, our study time gets squeezed out of the day ... add kids to the mix along with school and soccer and dance and sometimes all we have time for is the manna.)

365 days that there are 365 scriptures in our Manna's ... when actually some days have more than just one scripture ... I have counted that there are 70 more ... so 435 scriptures.

If your entire scriptural diet consists only of reading the manna:

$$435 \div 31,103 = 1.4\%$$

You would consistently be reading 1.4 % of the scriptures in the Bible.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable ...

Now, we love our Mannas ..., they are a daily touchstone with our brethren ... and serve as a good warm-up for our day.

If your entire scriptural diet consists only of reading the manna you would have missed:

Psalms 46:1

(1) ...God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

(...what a shame, great scripture ... not a manna text.)

2 Corinthians 12:9

(9) And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Again ... Great scripture ... not a manna text.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

All scripture ... all 31,103 scriptures ... not just the 435 found in the Manna.

If you get to the point where you feel there is nothing new under the sun ... I've read that, ... heard that, ... been there, ... done that ... remember the line in the hymn about some new, rich gem appearing.

I am sure we have all experienced the phenomenon that occurs when you are reading a passage of scripture, one that you've probably read a hundred times and "boom" a whole new thought, understanding, enlightenment ... maybe an answer to a long time question, ... maybe an answer to a prayer.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God...

So ? Don't answer these questions out loud but think about what your response would be to them:

- Can you name all of the books of the Bible ?
- Have you read the entire Bible ?
- Do you have a favorite scripture? (Tattoo)
- Can you recite a passage ?

Certainly, Certainly we do not want to wax Pharasitical ... the Pharisees liked checklists ... they liked to quantify and measure ... and keep track ... the checklist

They were more about to do lists, ... not To Be lists.

Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

None of these things,

- Naming all of the books of the Bible ?
- Having read the entire Bible ?
- Having a favorite scripture?
- Being able to recite a passage ? ... will secure our calling and election.

We don't want to read and study to just to be able to check a box and say I read my verse or chapter today ... we want to read the Bible because we love the author.

Br. Brendan Getchal

“How much do I have to give?” or “How much to I have, to give?”

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

But, ... if I am a student of the Bible, ... A Bible Student ... how well do I know my Bible?

How familiar am I with the Word of God ?

How capable am I with my Sword of the Spirit?

... SO what has been the object of this lesson?
... it has been to emphasize and reinforce the value and importance and the magnitude of the gift of God's Holy Word ... and thus to encourage each of us to reinvest time and energy in becoming more familiar ... and more capable ... and more passionate ... and more dedicated to the learning and understanding and implementing of God's Word to us.

Psalm 40:8

I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart.

Psalm 119:105

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I

Satan's Conference

Satan called a worldwide convention of demons.

In his opening address, he stated, "We can't keep Christians from going to church, reading their Bibles and knowing the truth. We can't even keep them from Biblical Values

But, we can do something else. We can keep them from forming an intimate relationship with Jesus and their Heavenly Father. If they gain that connection with Jesus, our power over them is broken.

So let them go to church, let them have their Christian lifestyles, but steal their time so they can't gain the experience of knowing Christ or have time to develop an abiding relationship with him.

"This is what I want you to do," said the adversary, "distract them from gaining the life that is found in their Lord and maintaining a connection with Him throughout their day."

"How shall we do this?" asked the demons.

"Keep them busy in the non-essentials of life and invent un-numbered schemes to occupy their minds," he answered. "Tempt them to spend, spend, spend, then borrow, borrow, borrow. Convince the wives to go to work for long hours and the husbands to work 6 or 7 days a week, 10-12 hours a day, so they can afford their lifestyles. "Keep them from spending time with their children. As their family fragments, soon, their homes will offer no escape from the pressures of work."

"Over stimulate their minds so that they cannot hear that still small voice. Entice them to play the radio or cassette player whenever they drive, to keep the TV, VCR, CDs and their PCs going constantly in their homes.

"Fill their coffee tables with magazines and newspapers. Pound their minds with the news 24 hours a day. Invade their driving moments with billboards. Flood their mailboxes with junk mail, sweepstakes, mail order catalogs, and every kind of newsletter and promotional offering free products, services, and false hopes."

And see to it that every store and restaurant in the world plays non-biblical, contradicting music constantly. This will jam their minds and break that union with Christ."

Even in their recreation, let them be excessive. Have them return from their holidays exhausted, disquieted and unprepared for the coming week. Keep them too busy when they are in nature to behold the Creator's glory.

Send them to amusement parks, sporting events, plays, concerts and movie theaters instead. Keep them busy, busy, busy.

Let them be involved in evangelism. But, crowd their lives with so many good causes that they have no time to seek power from their Lord. Soon they will be working in their own strength, sacrificing their health and family for the good of the cause. And when they gather for spiritual fellowship, involve them in gossip and small talk so they leave with souls unfulfilled.

It was quite a conference.

The demons went eagerly to their assignments causing Christians everywhere to get busier and busier ... more rushed and spread far too thin going here and there seeking meaning and purpose. Having little time to sit at Jesus' feet and learn from Him.

The question is, has the devil been successful in his schemes?

You be the judge.

Does "busy" mean B-eing U-nder S-atan's Y-oke? You be the judge.

Matthew 11:28-30

J.B. Phillips New Testament

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and over-burdened, and I will give you rest! Put on my yoke and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Br. Russell uses the phrase:

"We that are left here, ... still in the flesh ... (still tabernacling in the flesh).

There are so many of our older brethren who have passed away just in recent years, ... those who have been pillars and stellar examples of service and study and dedication.

We have these wonderful examples to emulate ... to stand on their shoulders.

My question one that plagues me often ... what is my legacy ... what is my “afterglow” ...

- Legacy ... to our children and grand children? Do they see Christ in us ?

Afterglow

I'd like the memory of me to be a happy one.
I'd like to leave an afterglow of smiles when life is done.
I'd like to leave an echo whispering softly down the ways,
Of happy times and laughing times and bright and sunny days.
I'd like the tears of those who grieve, to dry before the sun;
Of happy memories that I leave when life is done.

I hope one of the things my grand children my say (maybe even in exasperation):

Remember Grampy ... he was always reading his Bible !