

Articles and Sermons :: The Word of God Requires Divine, Not Human, Interpretation ~ T A Sparks

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an excerpt from a book called *Four Greatnesses of Divine Revelation*

This explains one or two things! In the first place, it explains why you can have a number of different institutions which all contradict and exclude one another, and yet all claim to be founded upon the Bible. There is not a sect or denomination which does not claim the Bible as the warrant for its existence and its order, and yet they are mostly mutually exclusive. How do you explain that? And, mark you, in the fact of the existence of all those things there is spiritual limitation. When the particular order and constitution and ecclesiastical position and all that belongs thereto are forgotten for the time being, and the Lord's people come together in any one given place, and are there only as the Lord's people, you will find a great deal more life and fulness and consciousness of the Lord than when all are proceeding along the various lines of their ecclesiastical departmentalism, for the Lord is met. Ought this state of things to be?

If we had the Word of God in the sense in which we have just been speaking of it—God coming through in illumination, in quickening, in His act of new creation—while there would be variety, there would be essential oneness and unity, and no contradiction. Nature is a great parable of this. It is strange how in nature, despite all the God-given colors that there are, you never find any real clash. But if you tried to wear those colors in a garment, there would be a clash. In a garden, where they are all found, there is no clash. In God's realm there may be endless variety, but there is no contradiction nor clash. The Holy Spirit is One and God is One; and if we get off the ground of human interpretations of the Word of God, of man's mental handling and apprehension of the Scriptures, and get God's revelation of His meaning, then there will be an absolute oneness, and contradiction and exclusive expression will go. You have left the earthly ground and come on to heavenly ground.

So what is true of the Church, according to God's mind, as a heavenly thing, altogether other than of this earth, is true of the Word of God. When you really get on to the ground, not of the letter only, but of the essential nature of the Word of God—the speaking, the breathing, the working of God—you get on to another level which is altogether different from the earthly, and you find that the clash and the contradiction go out. There is tremendous need for the people of God to get on to God's level of things and away from man's in all these matters; a need to get right into the heart of God's thought and mind. It is costly. As we have said before, Christianity is such a tight system now that it is well-nigh impossible for many who are in it—and especially those who are in it officially—to come into God's full thought, because it means so much in every way to escape from that system. But, oh! where it does happen and there is escape: where the price is paid: where there is obedience: where the heavenly vision is and there is no disobedience to it: where God has spoken, and you cannot but hear and know that it is God, and your heart gives the answer back to Him and at all cost you go on: then you come out into a place of tremendous spiritual enlargement and into a realm of fulness.

Faith Must Accompany the Word of God

To sum up. The essential nature of God's Word is akin to the essential nature of God Himself, which is spirit. God's Word is spirit because God is spirit. And God's Word as a means of communication defines the essential nature of Christ the living Word, for He can only be known after the Spirit. We have said that although He was there before people's eyes, they saw Him not, they heard Him not and knew Him not. Essentially, it was what He was spiritually that was His real nature. Paul makes that perfectly clear: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more" (2 Corinthians 5:16; ASV). He does not say so positively, but he clearly indicates that our knowledge of Christ now is not that of the Jesus of history. We know Him now after the Spirit. The real nature of the Word of God is what Christ is essentially, spiritually; so also the essential nature of the Word of God is what the Church is spiritually. God is spirit; the medium or vehicle of God's speaking is Christ known after the Spirit; the vessel receiving the speaking of God—the Church—is spiritual. As the Church, we are tested by this. Do we hear more than the Bible as something written in words of men? Are we, as the Church, hearing through it the more, the extra, which no man can hear unless it is given him of God? Are we hearing that? Where that is truly found, the Church is something of spiritual power, spiritual life and spiritual growth. What is true of the Church, of course, must be true of every part of it; every member of that Body must be a spiritual person, made so by spiritual birth. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). In order really to hear the Word of God continually (though God may in a sovereign act make an unregenerate man know that he is being spoken to through the Scriptures) something must have been done inside us, and that something must be continually maintained. What lies behind everything with God is spiritual. He has bound Himself more with the spiritual than with

the natural. I will not pursue that further.

I wonder if you are able to discern even now, by the Lord's help, the great difference, and the great need to know what the Word of God really is, what its possibilities and its potentialities are, and what is the nature of its greatness? It is not just a verbal statement. It is the impact of God Himself, and that impact is sovereign. Therein is the place of faith in preaching and in coming to read the Scriptures. It is possible to preach without God coming through, and there is plenty of that, yet God has ordained to come through preaching, and everyone who preaches can only preach in faith, declaring the truth of God. He is cast back upon this: that God must act sovereignly and make this one here and that one there recognize that God is speaking; not a man only, but God. Hundreds may be gathered, and yet only one of them hear God speaking. We are cast upon that sovereignty of God. Blessed be God, it does work like that! People are able to say, and we ourselves are able to say as we look back over our own spiritual history: 'I knew the Bible well enough. I could quote it, analyze it and set it forth; but one day God came through it and smote me, and from that time the Scriptures which were so familiar to me became the basis of a new life and an entirely new position.' That is the Word of God coming through.

What is really needed today is a recovery of the Word of God in its essential, intrinsic greatness, and of the fact that the Word is God, with a personal impact upon us.