

The Power of the Word of God

by R. A. Torrey

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"Power belongeth unto God." -Psalm 62:11

The great reservoir of the power that belongs to God is His own Word- the Bible. If we wish to make it ours, we must go to that Book. Yet people abound in the church who are praying for power and neglecting the Bible. Men are longing to have power for fruit-bearing in their own lives and yet forget that Jesus has said:

"The seed is the Word of God." (Luke 8:11)

They are longing to have power to melt the cold heart and break the stubborn will, and yet forget that God has said:

"Is not my Word like as a fire? ...and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29)

If we are to obtain fullness of power in life and service, we must feed upon the Word of God. There is no other food so strengthening. If we will not take time to study the Bible, we cannot have power, any more than we can have physical power if we will not take time to eat nutritious food. Let us see what the word of God has power to do.

1. First of all, the Word of God has power to convict of sin. In Acts 2:37 we read,

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

If we look back and see what it was they heard and that produced this deep conviction, we find that it was simply the Word of God. If you will read Peter's sermon, you will find it one of the most biblical sermons ever preached. It was Scripture from beginning to end. It was, then, the word of God, carried home by the spirit of God, that pricked them to their heart. If you wish to produce conviction, you must give men the Word of God. I heard a man pray some time ago this prayer, "O God, convict us of sin," a very good prayer, but unless you bring your soul in contact with that instrument which God has appointed for the

conviction of sin, you will not have conviction of sin. If you wish to produce conviction in others, you must use the word to do it.

Not long ago a fine looking young man came into our inquiry-room. I said to him,

"Are you a Christian?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"I think Christianity is a first-rate thing, but I have not much feeling about this."

"But," I said, "do you not know that you are a sinner?"

He said: "Yes, sir, I suppose I am; but I am not very much of a sinner. I am a pretty good sort of a fellow."

I replied: "So, my friend, you have not very much conviction of sin. I have something in my hand that is a divinely-appointed instrument to produce conviction of sin." I opened my Bible to Matthew 22:37, 38 and asked him to read it. He read, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."*

"What commandment is that?" I asked.

He replied: "The first and great commandment."

"In the light of that, what must be the first and great sin?"

He replied: "It must be to neglect to keep that commandment."

"Have you kept it?"

The Spirit of God took it home to his heart then and there. It was not long before we were kneeling, and he was asking God for mercy through Christ.

2. In the next place, the Word of God has power to regenerate. In 1 Peter 1:23 we read,

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

In James 1:18 we read,

"Of His own will He begat us with the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."

If you wish to be born again, the way is very simple. Take the Word of God concerning Christ crucified and risen, and drop it into your heart by meditation upon it. Look to God by His Holy Spirit to quicken it, believe it with the heart, and the work is done. If you wish to see someone else born again, give him the Word of God. The process of regeneration on our side is the simplest thing in the world. On God's side it is mysterious, but with that we have nothing to do. The process is simply this: the human heart is the soil; you and I are sowers; the word of God is the seed which we drop into that soil. God quickens it by His Holy Spirit and gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). The heart closes around the Word by faith, and the new life is the product. The new birth is simply the impartation of a new nature, the impartation of God's nature.

But how are we made partakers of God's nature? Read 2 Peter 1:4 (R.V.) and the context: *"That through these (exceeding great and precious promises) ye may become partakers of the divine nature." That is all there is to it. The word of God is the seed out of which the divine nature springs up in the human soul.*

3. Again, the word of God has power to produce faith. In Romans 10:17 we read,

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

You can never get faith by merely praying; you can never get it by any effort of the will; you can never get it by trying to pump it up in any way. Faith is the product of a certain cause, and that cause is the Word of God. It is so, for example, with saving faith. Suppose you want a man to have saving faith. Simply give him something definite from God's Word upon which he can rest. The Philippian jailer asked, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* (Acts 16:30), and Paul answered, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house"* (Acts 16:31). But Paul did not stop there. Read verse 32, *"And they spake unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house."* They did not merely tell the Philippian jailer to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and then leave him there floundering in the dark without giving him something to believe, or something for his faith to rest upon. They gave that which God has ordained to produce faith.

It is at this point that we often make a mistake. We tell people, "Believe, believe, believe," but do not show them how, do not give them anything definite to believe. The biblical way and the intelligent way is, when you tell a man to

believe, to give him something to believe. Give him, for example, Isaiah 53:6, and thus hold up Christ crucified; or, give him 1 Peter 2:24. Here he has something for his faith to rest upon. Faith must have a foundation. Faith cannot float in thin air. It is pitiable to see men told to believe, to believe, to believe- and then give nothing for their faith to rest upon.

Not only saving faith comes from the Word of God, but prevailing faith in prayer does also. Suppose I read Mark 11:24, *"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."* I used to say, "The way to get anything I want is to believe I am going to get it." I would kneel down and pray and try to believe, but I did not get the things that I asked for. I had no real faith. Real faith must have a warrant. Before I can truly believe I am to receive what I ask, I must have a definite promise of God's Word, or a definite leading of the Holy Spirit, to rest my faith upon.

What, then, shall we do? We come into God's presence. There is something we desire. Now the question is, Is there any promise in God's Word regarding this which we desire? We look into the Word of God and find the promise. All we have to do is to spread that promise out before God. for example, we say: "Heavenly Father, we desire the Holy Spirit. Thou hast said in thy Word, *'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?'*" And thou hast said again in Acts 2:39 that *'the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.'* I am a called man; I am a saved man. And here I have Your Word for it. You have promised it. I ask Thee now to fulfill me with the Holy Spirit." We then take 1 John 5:14, 15, and say, "Father, this is the confidence I have in Thee, that, if I ask anything according to Thy will- and I know that this is according to Thy will- Thou hearest me, and, if I know that Thou hearest me, I know that I have the petition that I asked of Thee." Then I rise up, standing upon this promise of God, and say, "It is mine." And it will be mine. The only way to have a faith that prevails in prayer is to study your Bible, and know the promises, and lay them before God when you pray. George Mueller is one of the mightiest men of prayer in this century. But he always prepares for prayer by studying the Word (John 15:7).

It is just the same with the faith that we desire instead of doubt. This also comes by the Word of God. Suppose you have a skeptic to deal with, and you wish that man to have faith. What will you do with him? Give him a book on Christian evidences? I have nothing to say against books on Christian evidences. But there is an inspired Book on Christian evidences, and it is worth all the libraries ever written on this subject. Turn to John 20:31, *"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."* The Gospel of John is an inspired Book on Christian

evidences. What, then, shall we do with ourselves if we are skeptics? What shall we do with others? First, find out whether their will is surrendered or not. *"If any man willed to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself"* (John 7:17 R.V.). After the will is surrendered, just say, "Take this Book and read it thoughtfully and honestly and come back and tell me the result." The result is absolutely sure.

There is no man, agnostic, infidel, or whatever you please, whose will is surrendered to the truth, who will take this Book of God and ask Him to give him light, who will not come out believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. I have tried this with I know not how many men and women, and there has never been one exception to the rule laid down by Christ. It has always come out the same way.

The faith that gets the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; the faith that wins mighty victories for God, is also through the Word. (1 John 5:4; Ephesians 6:16; Hebrews 11:33, 34).

Very early in my ministry I read a sermon by Mr. Moody. In it there was something to the effect that a man would not amount to anything if he had not faith. I said, "That sermon is true. I must have faith." I went to work and tried to work up faith. I did not succeed a bit. The more I tried to work up faith, the less I had. But one day I ran across this text, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"* (Romans 10:17), and I had learned the great secret of faith, one of the greatest secrets I have ever learned. I commenced to feed my faith on the Word of God; and as I have thus fed it, it has kept on growing from that day to this. So in every aspect we see that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. If we are to have faith- and if we are to have power for God, we must have faith- we must feed steadily, largely, daily upon the Word of God.

4. In the next place, the Word of God has power to cleanse. In Ephesians 5:25, 26, we read,

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word."

The Word of God has the power not only to take impurity out of the heart, but to cleanse the outward life as well. If you wish to clean outward life, you must wash often by bringing your life in contact with the word of God. If one lives in a city whose atmosphere is polluted with smoke, when he goes into the street his hands will become black. He must wash frequently if he wishes to keep clean. We all live in a world whose atmosphere is polluted, a very dirty world. As we go

out from day to day and come in contact with this dirty world, there is absolutely only one way to keep clean, and that is by taking frequent baths in the Word of God. You must bathe every day, and take plenty of time to do it. A daily, prolonged, thoughtful bath in the Word of God is the only thing that will keep a life clean (Psalm 119:9).

5. In the next place, the Word of God has power to build up. In Acts 20:32 we read,

"I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up."

We hear a great deal in these days about character-building. The Word of God is that by which we must carry it on if it is to be done right. In 2 Peter 1:5-7 we have a picture of a seven-story-and basement Christian. The great trouble today is that we have so many one-story Christians, and the reason is neglect of the Word.

In 1 Peter 2:2, we have a similar thought expressed under a different figure, *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby."* If we are to grow, we must have wholesome, nutritious food and plenty of it. The only spiritual food that contains all the elements necessary for symmetrical Christian growth is the Word of God. A Christian can no more grow as he ought without feeding frequently, regularly, and largely upon the Word of God, than a baby can grow as he ought without proper nutriment.

6. In the next place, the Word of God has power to make wise. Psalm 119:130 is worthy of the most careful attention,

"The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

There is more wisdom in the Bible than there is in all the other literature of the ages. The one who studies the Bible, if he does not study any other book, will know more of real wisdom- wisdom that counts for eternity as well as time, wisdom that this perishing world needs to know, wisdom for which hungry hearts are starving today- than the man who reads every other book and neglects his Bible. The man who studies his Bible and neglects all other books will be wiser than the man who studies all other books and neglects his Bible. The man who studies his Bible will have more to say that is worth saying, and that wise people wish to hear, than any man who studies everything else and neglects the one Book.

This has been illustrated over and over again in the history of the church. The

men who have greatly affected the spiritual history of this world, the men who have brought about great reformations in morals and doctrine, the men whom others have flocked to hear and upon whose words people have hung, have been Bible men in every instance, and in many cases they knew little besides the Bible. I have seen men and women without culture, who have had almost no advantages in school, but who knew their Bibles; and I would rather sit at their feet and learn the wisdom that falls from their lips, than listen to the man who knows much about philosophy and science and theology even, and does not know anything about the Word of God. There is wonderful force in the words of Paul to Timothy, *"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* (the revised version says "completely") *furnished unto all good works"* (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Through what? Through the study of the Book.

7. The Word of God has power to give assurance of eternal life. In 1 John 5:13, R.V., we read,

"These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God."

That is, the assurance of eternal life comes through what is "written". Suppose one has not assurance of salvation, what shall we do? Tell him to pray until he gets it? Not at all. Take him to such a passage as John 3:36: *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."* Hold him right to that point until he takes God's Word for it, and then is sure that he has everlasting life because he believes on the Son, and because God says that *"he that believeth on the Son HATH everlasting life."*

8. The Word of God has power to bring peace into the heart. In Psalm 85:8 we read,

"I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints."

There are many people looking for peace today, longing for peace, praying for peace. But deep peace of heart comes from study of the Word of God. There is, for example, one passage in the Bible which, if we feed upon it daily until it really gets into our hearts and gets hold of us, will banish all anxiety forever. It is Romans 8:28, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."* Nothing can come to us that is not one of the "all things." If we really believe this passage, and it really takes hold upon us, whatever comes, it will not disturb our peace.

9. The Word of God has power to produce joy. Jeremiah says in chapter 15, verse 16,

"Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart."

And Jesus said in John 15:11,

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Clearly, then, fullness of joy comes through the Word of God. There is no joy on this earth from any worldly source like the joy that kindles and glows in the heart of a believer in Jesus Christ as he feeds upon the Word of God, and as the Word of God is brought home to his heart by the power of the Holy Spirit.

10. Patience, comfort, and hope also come through the Word of God. Romans 15:4,

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

11. Finally, the Word of God has power to protect from error and sin. In Acts 20:29-32, the apostle Paul warned the elders at Ephesus of the errors that would creep in among them, and he commended them, in closing, *"to God and to the Word of His grace."* In a similar way, Paul, writing to Timothy, the bishop of the same church, said:

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."- 2 Timothy 3:13-15.

The one who feeds constantly on the Word of God is proof against the multiplying errors of the day. It is simple neglect of the Word that has left so many a prey to the many false doctrines that the devil, in his subtlety, is endeavoring to insinuate into the church of Christ today. And the Word of God has not only power to protect from error, but from sin as well. In Psalm 119:11 we read: *"Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."* The man who feeds daily on the Word of God will be proof against the temptations of the devil. Any day we neglect to feed on the Word of God, we leave an open door through which satan is sure to enter into our hearts and lives. Even the Son of God Himself met and overcame the temptations of the

adversary by the Scriptures. To each of satan's temptations, He replied, "It is written" (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). Satan left the field completely vanquished.

It is evident from what has been said that the first step toward obtaining fullness of power in Christian life and service is the study of the Word. There can be no fullness of power in life and service if the Bible is neglected. In much that is now written on power, also in much that is said in conventions, this fact is overlooked. The work of the Holy Spirit is magnified, but the instrument through which the Holy Spirit works is largely forgotten. The result is transient enthusiasm and activity, but no steady continuance and increase in power and usefulness.

We cannot obtain power, and we cannot maintain power, in our own lives, and in our work for others, unless there is deep and frequent meditation upon the Word of God. If our leaf is not to wither and whatsoever we do is to prosper, our delight must be in the law of the Lord and we must meditate therein day and night (Psalm 1:2, 3). Of course, it is much easier, and therefore much more agreeable to our spiritual laziness, to go to a convention or revival meeting, and claim a "filling with the Holy Spirit," than it is to peg along day after day, month after month, year after year, digging into the Word of God. But a "filling with the Spirit" that is not maintained by persistent study of the Word will soon vanish. It is well to bear in mind that precisely the results which Paul in one place ascribes to being "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18-22), he in another place ascribes to letting "the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16-18). Evidently Paul knew of no filling of the Holy Spirit divorced from deep and constant meditation upon the Word. To sum all up, anyone who wishes to obtain and maintain fullness of power in Christian life and service must feed constantly upon the Word of God.

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