

Words of Truth

by Thomas Bradbury

The sermon explores the importance of spiritual understanding and the role of Christ in revealing the truths of Scripture.

Scripture: Isaiah 29:11

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Guidance"

Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches about the importance of understanding the Scriptures through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, emphasizing that God's Word is a sealed Book until opened up to spiritual understanding. He highlights the necessity of Christ to explain the mysteries and truths hidden in the Bible, especially in the Book of Proverbs, where only Jesus can remove difficulties and expound the parables. Bradbury delves into the spiritual ignorance of man and the willingness of Christ to teach His loved ones, showcasing the need for spiritual education and the certainty of God's words of truth. He encourages believers to answer objections with the words of truth from Scripture, sanctifying the Lord in their hearts and being ready to give a reason for their hope with meekness and fear.

Transcript

"Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge. That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth, that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?" (Proverbs 22:20,21)

I WAS much struck with the saying of a learned man a day or two ago, that the Book of Proverbs is well adapted to young and untutored minds. In thinking over it, God, in His gracious goodness, has led my mind counter to it altogether, in the contemplation of the fact that God's Book from the first word of Genesis to the last word of Revelation is a sealed Book to old and young to the learned and unlearned, until opened up to the spiritual understanding by the Holy Ghost. I might multiply portions of Holy Scripture in proof of this, but I forbear. Isaiah declared it. (Chapter 29:11,12) Ezekiel confessed it. (Chapter 3:4,7) And in Revelation 5, we see how John learned afresh that none can understand the mind of God recorded in His Book, but by the sovereign will and good pleasure of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Who alone has authority to break the seals and explain the mysteries hidden therein to whom He will. You notice the same in these oft-repeated words of our blessed Lord and Master, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My

Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." (Matt. 11:25-27) Then He calls upon the spiritually labouring and heavy laden to enjoy that rest which He alone can give, and which they must find in the precious revelation He gives of Himself to their souls as their Surety, Head, and Husband.

Our spiritual ignorance, and the willingness and determination of Christ to teach His loved ones are set before us throughout the whole compass of Divine revelation. These are seen all through the Book of Proverbs. None but Jesus can explain the mysteries, remove the difficulties, solve the problems, or expound the parables given to us in this interesting book. Notice at the commencement, Christ appears to the spiritual mind. "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels; (Prov. 1:5) to understand a proverb, and the interpretation;" look in the margin, "an eloquent speech." This is the speech of Him Whose lips are full of grace for all those whom He brings into fellowship with His Father, Himself, and His Blessed Spirit. "The words of the wise, and their dark sayings." To the world this Book is full of dark sayings, and to the living child of God they are all dark and meaningless only as the Spirit of promise leads the mind to Christ set forth therein in the freeness of His salvation and the fullness of His succour, solace and sympathy.

Now notice the context preceding the words of our text. At the seventeenth verse we read, "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise." This is a command to the high and the haughty, the proud and the presumptuous, the self-willed and unbelieving, whom God will make willing in the day of His power, bring under the reign of His grace, and make subject to the teaching of His Most Holy Word. "And apply thine heart unto My knowledge." God's knowledge. Not only the knowledge which He communicates to us, but that which He has concerning each and every one of us. When we are brought to apply our hearts unto wisdom we manifest a spirit of willingness to sit at the feet of Jesus and to be guided solely by His instruction. God's perfect knowledge of me was the very first truth which exercised my young mind and all from the pages of Divine inspiration. The very thought that God was always with me saw every thing I did knew every thing I thought marked every thing I felt noticed every movement of my mind filled my soul with terror and my face with confusion, and made me think, even as a little child, that at the winding up of all my affairs there would be nothing but hell for me. The world looked upon me as a "little innocent child," but I know I was a sinner deserving wrath, death, and hell. Look at that third verse of the fifteenth chapter, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." By this I was confident that He could see no good in me. Paul's experience was that of my young heart, "For I knew that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." (Rom. 7:18) I tried to be good, and to banish all that was evil from my thoughts; but I was left to the experience of the very opposite, and there I was kept for many a long year. God could see me as I was in myself a sinful creature. A creature full of sin, according to my standing in Adam the First, deserving nothing but His eternal wrath and indignation. But there He left me not. He would teach me something of His knowledge of me in my grace-oneness with Him in the Son of His love. I was sinful, polluted, vile, when He brought me to the footstool of sovereign mercy, to the feet of a precious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who alone could wash away all my sin, and clothe me in His pure, white, spotless robe of righteousness. And this He was graciously pleased to do. I like that scripture in Isaiah 53:11, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My Righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." This is something worth thinking about. Not my short-sighted knowledge of Him, but His perfect knowledge of me in all my sin, helplessness and shame, and as I stand in Him, my Surety, "justified from all things from which I could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:39)

"For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee;" or, as you read in the margin, "in thy belly." That is, in thy affections. You remember the Master's words in John 7:38, "He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This is life and love flowing from the heart of every living child of God. Look at those words "If thou keep them within thee," that sounds like a condition. Well, there is a state and condition also. You can find many "ifs" in the writings of the apostle Paul. See Col. 1:23, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." This being the case with us we are blest with the proof that we are amongst the number of those who are presented by Christ the Father holy, unblameable, and unreprieveable in His sight. But is not this state conditional? Not at all. Except as an eight days clock runs eight days, its running eight days does not make it an eight days clock, but is evidence of the fact, to any who may be unbelieving in the matter. So to the tried and tempted, doubting and fearing children of the living God, there is many a sweet and blessed "if," not conditional, but evidential. So in the portion before us, "If thou keep them within thee." Look at this blessed truth as stated in 1 Peter 1:23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Abideth where? Wherever it is communicated by the Holy Ghost in the person over whom the Word of God has asserted and exercised its sovereignty and authority. "They shall withal be fitted in thy lips." There is but One Who can fit the words of grace in the lips of redeemed sinners, and that is "THE ABIDING COMFORTER."

"That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day "in the set time of favour, the time of the Father's appointing "even to thee," whose name is in the Book of life. To all such the blessings of the covenant, and the secrets of the kingdom are communicated by the Faithful Trustee the Lord Jesus Christ. He it is Who has the words of eternal life for His wanting disciples He alone has the eloquent speech for His tempted brethren "Grace is poured into His lips" (Ps. 45:2) "Never man spake like this Man." When He commands He secures willing obedience. We meet with His commands all through this Blessed Book. Moses wrote them David sang them Solomon taught them Ezekiel gloried in them. The Evangelists were full of them Paul delighted in them. Listen to His command to John, "What thou seest, write in a book." (Rev. 1:11) By Divine command the writers wrote, and it is with the writings in THE BOOK that we have to do every day of our lives, and especially today. In the words of my text God speaks to us personally, and it is for each of us to pay attention to His bidding. Has God ever spoken to your heart by the things that are written? Has Christ endeared Himself to you by the Scriptures of truth? Listen

"Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge?" Now Christ by His Spirit has written to us, or He has not written to us. What is our estimate of the Holy Writings? What estimate do we put upon the mind, will, purpose, and pleasure of God as revealed therein? Well, if you ask me what estimate I put upon the Sacred Scriptures, I answer in the spirit of the words of dear old George Smith, of Barrow Hill, when I asked him what he was reading, he answered, "Th' yed Book in aw th' wold" (The head Book in all the world). That ignorant old man was wiser than the learned old man at Rome. He knew the meaning of the Psalmist's words, "Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name." (Ps. 138:2) Dear old George could see no book raised to the same height of grandeur and glory as that of the Scriptures of truth. This is the Book for you and for me. In it we are asked many searching and salutary questions. Christ asks, "Have not I written to thee?" We may well ask, Has the Father spoken to me? Has Jesus said ought to me? Has the Holy Ghost said anything to me concerning my salvation? And all from Holy Scripture? To sound, spiritual, experimental Protestants, Holy Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation, succour, safety, security, and gracious guidance to eternal glory. Everything necessary for the knowledge of salvation is contained in the Book of Divine inspiration. God has given the gracious command that His Holy Book shall be preserved to the church. Papists and Puseyites would have us

believe that the church of their vain imaginations is the preserver and keeper of Holy Writ. Do not believe them. God is the Preserver of His own Book to His own people. Priests, so-called, are the jailers of the Bible, and would keep it shut up from the people for whom it was designed. Princes, prophets, priests and people in Old Testament times, would have made short work with the Roll of the Book if they could have done so; but they could not. Jehoiakim would mutilate the Roll with his penknife and cast it into the fire; but God would have it written again, "and there were added besides unto them many like words." (Jer. 36)

In the dark ages the Scriptures of truth were zealously guarded from the people, and the people were deluded with the vain notion that none but the learned could understand the Scriptures and expound them. This is contrary altogether to the mind and will of God. Circulate the Scriptures, say I. "Search the Scriptures," says Jesus Christ. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak, not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isa. 8:20) What is the law? It is the declaration of God's sovereignty in the Scriptures of truth. What is the testimony? It is the truth of God sealed home to the heart by the Spirit of truth. Notice how our blessed Lord put honour upon the Old Testament Scriptures in all His ministrations here upon earth. Though He was Wisdom Incarnate He would say nothing and do nothing but by the clear warrant of the Scriptures of Moses and the prophets. See how He carries this truth out of this world to the depths of hell, as set forth in that solemn and awful parable of the rich man and Lazarus recorded in the sixteenth of Luke. The rich man lifting up his eyes in hell desires Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house to testify to his five brethren, to testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Mark well Abraham's answer "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." This man had been a despiser of God's word and was destroyed, yet in his destruction he was a despiser still. Listen to his "Nay" to God's "Yea." "Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." I once heard a preacher say, "There are no Arminians in hell." I did not believe him. This is a case in point. Hell is an everlasting Nay to God's unchanging YEA. Arminianism is man's will at the instigation of Satan opposed to the will and word of God. See how Christ's teaching is against all Papists and Scripture detractors "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." You have evidence of the truth of this in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Though the power of Christ in calling Lazarus from death and the grave was so apparent, yet the chief priests and Pharisees were such idiots I speak advisedly their carnal enmity and folly were such as to cause them to compass the death of Him Who had showed to them that the issues from death belonged to Him. He had given them proof positive that He was eternal life, and that the communication of it to whom He would was His prerogative. "It is written" was simply and purely the will of the Father to Him.

"What saith the Scripture?" (Rom. 4:3) was Paul's motto in all his ministerial labours and utterances. Mark well the list of quotations given in Romans 3. Go through the whole epistle and take away all the quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures, and you will have a very little epistle left to you. His preachings and writings evince his delight in the Scriptures of truth. He styles them "Lively Oracles." (Rom. 3:2) He gives them divine attributes. Sovereignty in Rom. 9:17, "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh." Patience and comfort in Rom. 15:4, "We through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Omniscience and prescience in Gal. 3:8, "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith." Authority in Gal. 3:22, "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin." Now notice Paul's words to his son Timothy in 2 Timothy in 2 Tim. 3:14-17, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Of whom? Of Father, Son, and Spirit through the teaching of Paul. (Chap. 1:13) "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures "through the teaching of his grandmother and mother (chap. 1:5) "which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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."

Peter was thoroughly one with Paul in his estimate of the Scriptures of truth. See 1 Peter 1:10-12, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." Those three words, that should come are added. Read the words without them. "Who prophesied of the grace unto you." All the prophecies of grace in the Old Testament Scriptures are intended in the purpose of God for certain persons, and in the time appointed those very persons must be brought into the possession and enjoyment of the same by the teaching and guidance of the Spirit of truth.

"Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Here we see that the prophets had not a full grasp of the truths communicated through them by the Holy Ghost: therefore they searched. What did they search? The Scriptures of truth. Here we are led to look at 2 Peter 1:16-21, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His Majesty.

For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." I once thought I should like to have been there, that truth might have been more confirmed in my mind than I felt it to be. But that fallacy was exploded by these very words of Peter: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy."

More sure than what? Than Christ's bodily presence transfigured before our natural eyes, or the sound of the Father's voice in our natural ears. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." The priest and the Papist do not talk or write thus. The pretended successors of Peter are opposed altogether to this apostolic counsel, "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn, and the Daystar arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation."

What does that mean? It means that the writers of God's word did not communicate their own private thoughts, but the thoughts, purpose and pleasure of God. They wrote and spoke of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, not according to their own natural mind, but by the Spirit of Christ Who was in them for that very purpose. We are apt to lose sight of the fact that the Scriptures are composed of God's words, "As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began." (Luke 1:70) Many prophets.

One mouth. The Scriptures are not written by one man, are not of any private or special interpretation. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man." The Holy Writings came not by one man like the Koran by Mahomet, or the Book of Mormon by Joe Smith; "but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." These holy men were of every grade of society, kings, warriors, judges, herdsmen, shepherds, lawyers, fishermen, publicans some learned, others unlearned they lived in periods remote from each other, and in circumstances and influences diverse, yet all brought together within the backs of this blessed Book in marvellous agreement in sweetest harmony.

Here, Christ speaking to His own says, "Have not I written to thee excellent things." Rabbinical lore informs us that these "excellent things" are the three divisions of holy Scripture. Others say they are the three books written by Solomon. Well, certainly these are excellent indeed, when rightly understood. In the

Book of Proverbs we learn that we are sinful fools. The Book of Ecclesiastes teaches us the vanity of everything apart from Christ. The Book of Solomon's Song reveals the glories of the King and the beauties of His heavenly bride. But the excellent things of the text are those of Him Whose Name is excellent in all the earth wherever a redeemed sinner is found, and to Whom the Abiding Comforter reveals the things of Christ. See how Christ as the Wisdom of God commands in Prov. 8:6, "Hear, for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things." He makes Himself known to His brethren as He appeared in the excellent glory of the covenant when He "was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was," and this excellent glory He gives to each and all of them. (John 17:22; 2 Cor. 3:18) Here we see Christ in covenant and the covenant in Christ. In every chapter of this Book of Proverbs He appears. He is the Delight of His Father in covenant; (Chap. 8:30) The Friend Who loveth at all times, and the Brother born for adversity; (Chap. 17:17) the Man that hath friends to whom He must show Himself friendly the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. (Chap. 18:24) He shows Himself friendly when He gives to us as spiritual understanding and this spiritual Book, in which we learn the ten thousand excellent things of God and all by the teaching of His blessed Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:9-12) The very thought of this causes me to cry with ardent longing, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." (Ps. 119:18) "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." (Ps. 119:130)

"Excellent things" written to me concerning the Glorious Godhead and the sacred Manhood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The mysterious, yet substantial and enduring union of these two natures in the womb of the ever blessed Mary. "The Godhead and Manhood were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man." The two natures are perfectly distinct. Man, to obey and suffer, for God could do neither. God, to give infinite worth to every act of obedience and all the endurance of suffering He rendered to the Father as the Surety of the covenant and the Mediator of the New Testament. Infinite perfection and eternal satisfaction were seen and acknowledged by the Father in all the mediatorial works and ways of the Son for His people. In the Scriptures of truth Christ, "that Holy Thing," that super-excellent One is revealed to us, and set before the eye of the faith of God's elect by God the Eternal Spirit. Look at Him in His obedience unto death. Consider Him in His "unknown sufferings" in Gethsemane and upon curse-crowned Calvary. Mark Him well at the sepulchre, dead and buried. The stone at the door sealed, and the picked men of the Roman army determined to detain Him there. But all the armies in the world could not keep Him there. Peter's words are gloriously true, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." (Acts 2:24) After showing Himself alive by many infallible proofs He ascended with great triumph into His kingdom and glory. From then till now, and until the last vessel of mercy is taken home, He saves to the uttermost, and ever liveth to make intercession for them that come unto God by Him. (Heb. 7:25) There He is with all the sympathy of His loving heart, and all the care and attention He can show to those whom His love and blood have saved. Are not all these excellent things? Yes indeed they are to one who knows that where sin abounds grace does much more abound that where helplessness is felt and mourned, the greater the attention of the Covenant Helper; and that the greater the experience of weakness, the sweeter the enjoyment of the impartation of divine strength. The greater the fainting the more precious the upholding. This is sure to be proved all the way home, "Sing unto the LORD; for He hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth." (Isa. 12:5)

"Excellent thing in counsels and knowledge." What counsels? "Counsels of old, faithfulness and truth." (Isa. 25:1) Look at this "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isa. 46:10) Mark well! "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand." (Prov.

19:21) What a blessed privilege it is to be able to trace up every thing concerning us to God's eternal counsels, and to His everlasting purpose of grace. We cannot dwell too long upon that word "knowledge." I lingered over it this morning, when reading Hosea 6:3, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD." Mark. The word "if" is in italics, and really ought not to be there. "Then shall we know," when the experience described in the preceding context is wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, when sin has become exceeding sinful, and everything apart from Christ is vanity and folly, "Then shall we know," and knowing, we shall "follow on to know the LORD." It is blessed to know that God has made ample provision for the spiritual education of His people in His covenant of grace and salvation. This saving knowledge is secured to us in Christ, according to His words to the Father in John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." This is known by the Scriptures of truth "These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God." (1 John 5:13) Look at the twentieth verse, "The Son of God hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true." It is by the Unction from the Holy One that we know all things. (1 John 2:20) It is thus we are brought by these excellent things in counsels and knowledge into a right apprehension of God's will concerning us as His children in Christ Jesus.

Look still further "That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth." There is no uncertainty in the words of truth. There is much uncertainty in the words of sinful mortals; aye, and also in those of experienced saints. "For ever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven." (Ps. 119:89) Listen to the teaching of the Master, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63) Well may we cry with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:68) Notice this declaration of Jesus, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matt. 24:35) Every word of purpose or of promise that has passed the lips of Incarnate Wisdom must be accomplished in the heart's experience of His redeemed through all generations and to eternal ages. Now I would have you notice the reason given in the text for these communications "That thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee." Mistakes are often made in hurrying to answer objectors and opposers. These should be met as far as possible in the language of Zion in the clear words of Holy Scripture, and never for the purpose of displaying our fancied cleverness: for, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." (Prov. 18:13) It is well to keep free from association with those in error respecting the Godhead of the Three Persons in the Undivided Trinity, and in reference to our everlasting salvation by Jesus Christ and the security from error He has made ours in the revelation of Himself by the Spirit of truth. But objectors and enemies to God's truth are sure to assail us; yet He Who has guided us into the Way of truth, and kept us therein, will see to it that the right word for the decisive answer will not be wanting in the time of our necessity. Lister! "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. 3:15)

The Blessed Spirit of truth by the Words of truth brings us through Christ, Who is THE TRUTH, into the enjoyment of the God of truth, and into the knowledge of the Truth which makes us free from legal bondage separates from evil (John 17:17)purifies the heart from error (1 Pet. 1:22)graciously preserves (Ps. 40:11)firmly establishes (2 Pet. 1:12)eternally triumphs. (2 Cor. 13:8) After a season of conflict the weeping prophet could say to his God, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by Thy Name, O LORD God of hosts." (Jer. 15:16)

The Lord so bless us, for His own Name's sake. Amen.

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