

(The Supreme Priorities) 2. One Thing Is Needful

by Zac Poonen

The Bible is the supreme essential for our spirits, and spending time each day with God's Word is imperative for effective witness and spiritual growth.

Scripture: Psalm 46:10, Psalm 119:105, Isaiah 50:4, Jeremiah 23:29, Matthew 11:25, Luke 10:42, John 12:48, Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 3:16, James 1:22

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the importance of prioritizing time to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear His Word, as exemplified by Mary in the Bible. Jesus emphasizes the necessity of focusing on the one thing needful, which is spending time with God's Word. The sermon delves into the authority of the Bible, highlighting Jesus' testimony, fulfilled prophecies, unity, endurance against attacks, life transformations, inexhaustibility, and personal revelation. It stresses the importance of hearing God's Word daily, warning against deception and emphasizing the need for humility, subjection, and obedience. The sermon also explores the transformative effect of the Word of God, comparing it to light, a mirror, and fire, emphasizing its role in guidance, self-examination, and purification.

Transcript

"Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10: 38-42).

How striking are Jesus' words to Martha in verse 42: "One thing is needful!" There may be plenty of good things to be done and many indeed that may justly be considered essential. But, Jesus affirmed, one thing above all others was needful. What was that one thing?

Jesus and His disciples had just arrived at Bethany. As soon as Martha saw them, she joyfully received them into her house, made them sit down and straightway hurried into the kitchen to prepare some food.

Meanwhile Jesus began to preach to those present. When Martha discovered that her sister Mary had settled down to listen to His words instead of coming to her help, she rushed out of the kitchen with anger, and turning to Jesus, appealed to Him in words more or less as follows: "Lord, here I am toiling in the kitchen preparing a meal for you all, and my sister just sits here doing nothing. Tell her to get up and help me!" To her surprise, however, it was Martha herself whom Jesus rebuked. She and not Mary, He told her, was the one who was at fault.

Now let us note this, that it was not for anything sinful which Martha had one that she was thus addressed. She had joyfully received Jesus into her home. The work that she then did in the kitchen was not for herself, but for Him and for His disciples. She is a picture of a believer today, who has received the Lord into her heart and who is unselfishly seeking to serve the Lord and others. Yet despite her zeal she was rebuked by Jesus. What, we ask ourselves, is the point of this? What was wrong with her action? And the answer, surely, lies in those four words of Jesus: "One thing is needful." Martha was not rebuked for her service, but for not putting first things first.

Mary, the Lord said, had chosen the good part. What was that? She simply sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Word. Nothing more. But that is the good part. That is the one thing needful above all other things. How much place does listening have in our lives? How much time do we spend sitting at the feet of the Lord, reading His word and seeking to hear Him speak to us through it? Not very much perhaps. Other things crowd it out, so that we often find ourselves guilty of the same mistake that Martha made. It may not be mundane affairs alone that keep us pre-occupied. It may be Christian service too. We may take active part in meetings for prayer or worship or witness, and yet find that the Lord is rebuking us as He did Martha.

"Mary hath chosen that good part." This is Jesus' own valuation of His words to her, and by inference, of all that today comes to us as God's Word of life. Our first theme, then, is that good thing - the Word of God as given to us in the Bible. We shall look at this from three standpoints. We shall consider first the authority of the Bible, then the importance of hearing God's Word, and finally, the effect that the Word of God can have upon our lives.

The Authority of the Bible

We have to consider first the Divine authority of the Bible because this is the foundation to all else. To proceed further without settling this point would be as disastrous as proceeding with the construction of a building without laying its foundation. Only as we are assured of the Bible's authority shall we value and appreciate it aright.

Many who are born and brought up in Christian homes have accepted the Bible without question as the Word of God, simply because they were taught to do so by their parents or by their church, but they have never cared to establish with certainty in their own minds the reason for doing so. Thus they carry on happily for a while, until one day some modernist gives them a dose of his so-called higher criticism. "The Scriptures," he claims, "are full of inconsistencies. The authors are not the persons named but much later writers, often writing with motives that are not above suspicion. It is impossible therefore to know what Jesus or His disciples really taught. There is insufficient factual evidence even for the great saving events. Modern man cannot possibly believe such fables." So he goes on, and very soon their whole faith begins to crumble. Why? Because it was never properly founded in the first place. God does not ask us to believe things blindly. Many Christians give that impression to others, but it is totally wrong. God intends that the

eyes of our heart be enlightened that we may know.

What the Bible does teach is that our minds are blinded by Satan. As sinners, therefore, we cannot with our natural minds understand the things of God. We are thus completely dependent on Divine revelation - on God making known His message to us. (This He is ever ready to do for the sincere seeker.) Our minds are sinful, and therefore fallible. We are not perfect in knowledge. So we need not be surprised if, with our finite and fallible minds, we are unable to grasp some things in the Bible that are beyond our reason. This does not mean that the Bible is contrary to reason. It does mean however that, like little children, we are just on the threshold of Divine things. If our intellects were perfect and infallible, we would assuredly find ourselves in full agreement with the Bible. This is proved by the fact that a person who is born again, as he grows in likeness to Christ, finds himself growing correspondingly in his understanding of the Bible and agreement with it. But if instead of acknowledging our limitations we give rein to our critical faculties, we shall stumble. If we found our faith only upon what appears reasonable to our fallible intellects, one day we shall find that we have built on sand.

Why do we believe the Bible to be the Word of God?

Firstly, because of the testimony of Jesus Christ. In the Gospels we find Him constantly quoting the Old Testament scriptures as an authority. At the outset of His ministry in Luke chapter 4, we find Him quoting the book of Deuteronomy in effective answer to Satan's temptations. Jesus began His ministry with the words, "It is written," a straight assertion of the authority of Scripture. After His resurrection, in Luke chapter 24, we once more find Him expounding the Scriptures, first to two disciples walking to Emmaus, then shortly afterwards to the eleven in the upper room. And again and again throughout the three-and-a-half years that lay between these incidents we hear Him quote the Hebrew Scriptures as the authoritative Word of God. And remember, these Jewish Scriptures are the very same Old Testament that we have with us today. In the brief record of the four Gospels, Jesus made at least fifty-seven quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament. Since this was evidently His custom, there must surely have been countless more such instances which the New Testament does not record in detail.

What is abundantly clear is that the Lord entertained no doubt at all about the authority of the Old Testament. It was, in fact, the only written authority that He accepted on earth. When answering the Pharisees and the Sadducees of His day, He always quoted Scripture. "It is written" was His ground of appeal. Whereas many of today's preachers quote theologians, philosophers, psychologists - and even secular writers, the Lord Jesus never cared to quote the opinions of others. His only authority was the Old Testament. If we accept His testimony at all, it necessitates our accepting the Bible as God's Word also. Those who reject the Bible reject the testimony of Jesus Himself.

Secondly, we accept the Bible as God's infallible Word because so large a number of detailed prophecies contained in it have been fulfilled. One-third of the Bible is prophecy. Prophecies concerning the birth, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus were made in the Old Testament hundreds of years before He came to earth, and these were literally fulfilled when He came. Prophecies concerning many of the leading nations of Old Testament times, and especially concerning Israel, have been fulfilled to the very letter. In our own life-time the Jews have returned to their homeland in Palestine and taken possession of the city of Jerusalem. Yet these events were foretold 2,500 years ago.

Another proof of the Bible's Divine inspiration is the remarkably unity that is found in its sixty-six books. They were written in three different languages over a period of 1,600 years by some forty different authors

of varying standards of education and the widest range of social and cultural backgrounds - kings, shepherds, military leaders, seers, Pharisees and fishermen. Yet even so there is a marvellous unity throughout this whole library of writings, and not a single fundamental contradiction. Apparent contradictions here and there are of a trivial nature, to be explained by errors in copying of the text. Fundamental moral and ethical contradictions there are none. Many of the historical statements in the Bible have been questioned, but have been confirmed on further research. Its scientific statements (though few, because it is not a text-book of science) are all true to the established facts of the physical world. Though written at a time when man's scientific knowledge was extremely faulty, it contains none of the crude fallacies that were believed by men in those and even much later times. Science is constantly changing its views and rewriting its books, but the Bible needs no such revision.

The fact that the Bible has stood through the centuries triumphant over every attack upon it by its foes is yet another proof of its Divine inspiration. There is no book in the world that has been attacked so vigorously as the Bible. Yet it has gloriously survived the criticism of its friends and the hostility of its enemies. The French infidel Voltaire once said that in a hundred years there would be no Bible. They were "famous last words" indeed, for ironically enough, after his death, the Bible Society opened its office in the very house in which he had lived! Thus has God vindicated His Word. Infidels may come and go, but the Bible goes on from strength to strength. No other book has been so loved and respected and treasured by men and women the world over. It remains the world's best-seller.

Then again, we believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word because of the accepted fact that countless lives have been transformed by it, sometimes indeed by just one verse from its pages. Passages of Scripture which no one would imagine could have such an effect have been used by God to convert people and bring them to salvation. Wicked men and women have been transformed overnight into saints of God through the reading of some passage or other in this marvelous Book. This has happened even in vernacular versions where the translation has been so poor as to make such a result highly improbable. God does indeed speak through this Book to effect moral changes in human lives.

A sixth proof of the inspiration of the Bible is its inexhaustibility. Through the centuries many brilliant men with the keenest intellects have spent their lifetimes studying it. Yet even so its depths have not been fathomed. Like a bottomless mine, the Book continues to yield new treasures, speaking to men in ever fresh ways. Moreover, its message has such a sublime simplicity that even a child can grasp it. Time cannot out-date it; it is time-less. If only we have the humility to consult it, we will find the answer to all our problems in this wonderful Book. That could never have been possible were it merely a human writing; but being divinely inspired it contains the inexhaustible wisdom of the infinite God. Man therefore can ever draw from it according to his need.

Finally, the greatest proof of its inspiration is that, as we read it in humility before God, He speaks to us through it. Hearing its words we become growingly convinced that they are the voice of God. Scripture's great themes, such as the doctrines of the Trinity and of the atonement, could never have been invented by men. They could only have been known through the Spirit's inspiration. They are in a true sense God-given. We discover, too, an amazing design in the content and message of every book in the Bible, especially when it is viewed as a mirror reflecting the Lord Jesus Himself. The title of an old commentary, *Christ in All the Scriptures*, aptly describes what students of the Bible have constantly found, that the entire Scriptures "hang together" in wonderful detail to form an ever more convincing pattern when He is the goal of their study.

We are living in days in which the authority of the Bible is being widely questioned. Paul warned the Corinthian believers of the possibility of Satan corrupting their minds in just the same way as he corrupted Eve's (2 Corinthians 11:1-3). When the Devil came to Eve, he began with the question, "Hath God said?" He has been asking men the same old question ever since, "Is this really God's Word?." This has been one of his most successful devices to turn men away from the faith. The Holy Spirit warns us emphatically that there will be an increase of deception in the last days, due to an influx of deceiving spirits into the world (1 Timothy 4:1). The statement that "some shall depart from the faith" seems to indicate that this verse is describing not pagans but Christians. The Lord Jesus referred to this possibility of deception three times in Matthew 24 (verses 5, 11, 24) while speaking about the last days. The Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 also speaks of a "a falling away" prior to the day of the Lord. This defection is obviously due to Christians being lured away by some subtle deceit of Satan. These warnings are serious. If in spite of them we still remain unwatchful, we shall most certainly find ourselves deceived.

How does a man seek to deceive you? If he wants to cheat you of one hundred rupees by passing a counterfeit currency note, he will ensure that the counterfeit note is as close as possible in appearance to the real thing. Only so will he hope to trick you. And Satan is no less subtle. His most powerful tool with which to deceive the unsuspecting Christian will be a "Christian" preacher - one who preaches with the Bible supposedly as his basis but who has not bowed his knee to its authority. Watch him! On closer inspection the things he preaches either are not found in the Bible at all, or they give a slanted and unbalanced presentation of Biblical truth.

The safeguard against all such deception is the Bible itself. If we do not know our Bibles well, we shall surely fall a prey to such deception. Unless we make the Bible our final authority in all matters relating to our faith, we shall be tossed about hither and thither until that faith itself is lost.

The Lord Jesus condemned the Pharisees and scribes for rejecting the Old Testament and replacing it with their own traditions (Mark 7:5-13). Their long-standing rejection of the written Word of God led finally to their rejection of the living Word when He came into their midst. The spiritual descendants of those scribes and Pharisees are found in our own generation. And many are being deceived by them. How watchful we need to be.

We are told by the psalmist that God has magnified His Word above all His Name (Psalm 138:2). To reject or ignore it therefore, or to treat it lightly, is to invite immeasurable loss. But to reverence it is to discover a door into untold riches.

The Importance of Hearing God's Word

The overwhelming necessity of spending time each day with God's Word is implied clearly in the words of Jesus to Martha, with which we opened this chapter. There are many other things which may help us and which may prove useful, but this one thing above all others is absolutely essential. We can no more do without it than our physical bodies can do without oxygen. It is quite indispensable. The supreme essential for our spirits is indeed just this - to sit at the Lord's feet daily to hear His Word.

The Lord Jesus knew, better than anyone else, all the factors that affect a man's life. He knew every possible situation that any man could ever find himself in. He knew the dangers that lay ahead of every man and He knew all the wiles of Satan. He knew what was necessary for man's spiritual growth, for He alone knew the relative importance and unimportance of things. Knowing all this, He said that one thing was needful above all else. He used similar words in Luke 4:4. "Man shall not live by bread alone but by

every word of God." This is a quotation from Deuteronomy 8:3, where reference is made to the manna with which God fed the Israelites for 40 years in the wilderness. The Israelites were told there that God's purpose in giving them the manna daily from heaven was that they might, in like manner, learn to receive God's Word. If they were to be strengthened for their wilderness journey those Israelites needed the manna daily. Even so does man require to receive the Word of God daily, if he is to be empowered to face the trials of life.

Jesus never made these statements lightly. He was seeking to impress upon His disciples the absolute necessity of hearing His Word daily. If that is true, then it follows that a life that is lived without time given to meditation on God's written Word is a wasted life, no matter what else it may have achieved.

In Luke 17:26-30, Jesus tells us that the last days will be like the days of Noah and of Lot, in which people ate, drank, bought, sold, planted, built, and so on. Have you noticed that none of these things are sinful in themselves? They are all legitimate activities. Why then did Jesus mention them as being peculiarly characteristic of those sinful days? Because the people of those days were so occupied with these legitimate activities as to have no time for God at all. The Devil succeeded in getting them to crowd God out of their lives altogether. This of course resulted, as it always will, in moral decay and corruption.

Compare this state of affairs with what we see in the world today and we shall find an exact similarity of attitude and of consequent result. Men and women are too busy to have any time to listen to God. Look into your own life and see if this is not true. The spirit of the world has crept into the very heart of the believer. Even though science has invented many time-saving devices which our forefathers did not possess, yet man finds himself rushed for time. Today we can travel by car, train or aeroplane where they had to travel on animals or on their own two feet. Our ancestors had to spend much longer doing the daily household chores which today are done for us by gadgets and machines. Yet many of them found much more time for God than most people find today. Why? Because they had their priorities right. They put first things first.

If we are to be effective witnesses for our Lord, it is imperative that we spend time each day at His feet listening to His voice. There are many today who are ambitious to preach, who have never developed this habit of listening to God's voice daily. The result is a sad paucity of "the word of the Lord" and a sickening abundance of man's words. Of how very few of today's preachers can it be said that "the word of the Lord is with him" (2 Kings 3:12). Yet this was the distinguishing mark of every true servant of God in the Bible. No man has the right to speak to other men about God, who has not first spent time listening to what God Himself says - and this refers to private witnessing as well as to public preaching. It is written of Moses that he went in before the Lord and then "came out and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded" (Exodus 34:34). Joshua was told that his life would be a success only if he meditated on God's Word daily (Joshua 1:8). Samuel is another classic example of one who patiently waited to hear God speak, and then spoke to the people. The result was that the Lord "allowed no single word of his to fall to the ground" (1 Samuel 3:19).

In a prophetic reference to the Lord Jesus in Isaiah 50:4, it is said of Him that morning by morning God spoke to Him, for His ears were disciplined to hear His Father's voice. The result was, as the same verse tells us, that Jesus had a ready word for all who came to Him, according to their need. He was truly the Father's perfect mouthpiece. If this habit of listening to God's voice daily was necessary for Jesus Himself, then how much more is it so for us. We shall never be able to minister adequately to those in need if we fail here. It is only when we learn to "hear as a disciple" that we shall have "the tongue of a disciple."

Unfortunately, many who should have been teaching others by now are still spiritual babes, because they have either ignored or neglected this "one thing."

Listening to the Lord does not mean merely reading the Bible. There are many who read their Bibles purely as a matter of routine. Listening to the Lord means more than that. It means meditating on His Word until we receive, through it, His message for us. Thus alone can our minds be renewed and conformed growingly to the mind of Christ. But many who read their Bibles have never yet learned thus to meditate.

There are at least three spiritual truths to be learnt from Mary's sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Sitting - unlike walking, running, or even standing - is primarily a picture of rest. This teaches us that our hearts must be at rest and our minds still, before we can hear God speaking to us. Unconfessed sin will preclude the former, while over-occupation with the cares and riches of this world will stand in the way of the latter. With a conscience ill at ease or a mind filled with anxiety or fear, how can we hope to hear God's "still small voice?" Psalm 46:10 tells us that we must be still if we are to know God.

Sitting at a person's feet is also a picture of humility. Mary was not sitting on a chair on the same level as Jesus, but on a lower level. God never speaks to a proud man, except in judgment. But He is ever ready to speak and to offer His grace to the humble soul who will be as a child before Him (Matthew 11:25).

Thirdly, sitting as Mary did is a picture of subjection. It is the attitude of a disciple in the presence of his Master. Our subjection is manifested in obedience to God's Word. God has not spoken in his Word to satisfy our curiosity or to give us information. His Word is an expression of His heart's desire. He speaks in order that we may obey. Jesus made it clear in John 7:17 that it is only if we are willing to do God's will that we shall receive an understanding of that will.

Many Christians go through months and years of reading the Bible without seeking to hear God speaking to them through it. Still they seem to be quite satisfied. I ask you, Do you hear the Lord's voice each day? If not, what is the cause? He speaks to those who listen. What is it that is stopping your spirit's ears? Is it lack of stillness before Him, lack of humility of spirit, or lack of obedience to what He has already said to you? Or is it perhaps a lack of desire itself? Whatever it be, God grant that it may be remedied at once and permanently. Pray Samuel's prayer, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." Then open your Bible and seek the face of the Lord earnestly, and you too shall hear His voice.

The Effect of the Word of God

We shall never fully appreciate the importance of sitting at the Lord's feet daily to listen to His Word, until we understand the effect that it will have upon our lives. A man who is given a medicine by a doctor, but who is sceptical or unsure of what that medicine will do for him, may not, as a result, care to take it regularly. He is not likely to feel that he has lost anything when he neglects to take it. But if, on the other hand, that man is made to understand what a marvellous cure the medicine will work in his body and the tremendous improvement that it will bring to his health, then whatever it costs him to take it regularly, it is very unlikely that he will forget to do so.

In very much the same way, we find thousands of Christians who never have a regular devotional time with God and His Word, yet who still do not feel that they have missed anything. Search your own life. If you miss a quiet time with God one day, do you feel a sense of regret at having lost something valuable,

or do you feel that you have not lost much? How does it come about that so many children of God never have a quiet time with God daily and yet remain so complacent about it? It can only be because they have not fully appreciated the creative effect that God's Word has upon a person's life. For as we shall see, it is more than a medicine; it is food. They have not realized how much they are losing by not subjecting themselves to its transforming power.

In order to understanding something of the effect that the Word of God has upon a man, we shall consider nine Biblical symbols by which it describes itself or is described.

First of all, we shall look at Psalm 119:105, where the Word is likened to light. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." When we walk through unknown terrain in the dark, we use a light in order to see our way. That is a picture of what the Bible does for us in a world that lies in the pitch darkness of sin. It shows us the path to God. We can know nothing of God's way of salvation apart from the Bible.

Further, the Bible gives light to the Christian on the pathway of right doctrine, showing up at the same time the pitfalls of false teaching alongside the road, so that he may not fall into them. Without that light, he would never know what was false and what was true. The Holy Spirit commended the believers at Berea, because they did not receive even what the apostle Paul preached in them until they had themselves checked it with the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). Only then did they accept his message. (Was it because of this attitude to the preachers who came to them that Paul had no need to send an epistle to the Bereans correcting false doctrine, as he did to so many of the other churches?) People who search the Scriptures diligently are not easily lured into false doctrine. They know the truth that has made them free.

Unfortunately, many thousands of Christians today are either too lazy or too pre-occupied to study the Bible for themselves. Their resultant ignorance of the Scriptures makes them an easy prey for the Devil's deceptions. Alas, such things as eloquence, emotionalism and logical presentation of the message are in our day the criteria by which a preacher is judged. Whether he expounds the Word of God correctly or not seems to be only of secondary importance. Remember that true doctrine matters infinitely more than a man's personality or gift of speaking. The contents of a medicine bottle are more important than its size or shape or appearance! Do you look for the truth or for eloquent messages? And if it is indeed the truth you look for, how can you know what the truth is, unless you know the Bible first?

There is a story of a man who was told by his priest that the Bible could not be understood by laymen like him, but who happened to get hold of a New Testament and was saved as a result of reading it. One day while the book was open in front of him, the priest dropped in to visit him and asked what he was reading. On his replying that it was the Bible, the priest protested that he should not read it as it was not meant for uninstructed laymen.

"But," said the man, "I have been saved as a result of reading it. And besides, it tells me here in 1 Peter 2:2, to desire the sincere milk of the Word that I may grow."

"Oh," said the priest, "but God has appointed us priests as the milkmen to give you the milk."

"Well, sir," the man replied, "I had a milkman once who used to bring me milk every day, but I soon discovered that he was mixing water with the milk. Then I decided to buy a cow instead. Now the milk I get is pure milk."

Brothers and sisters, it is only as we study God's Word ourselves that we shall get the pure milk, the uncorrupted doctrine. For in this sin-darkened earth, the Word of God is the only light that we have, to walk by. It is also therefore the key to the problem of guidance. God has marked out a pathway for our lives, but many Christians complain that they are unable to find it. Often the reason is simply that they have not spent time regularly in meditation on God's Word. "Thy wordis a light unto my path." It is God's provision to show us the road.

Secondly, the Word of God is likened in James 1:22, 23 to a mirror. We need a mirror to see whether our faces are dirty or clean and whether our hair is disorderly or combed. Without one, we cannot tell how we look. If James had been writing his epistle in the twentieth century, he might perhaps have gone a step further and used a more modern symbol - the X-ray - to illustrate this effect of God's Word. An X-ray film shows me the conditions of the interior organs in my body, which I cannot know otherwise. The Bible does something similar in that it shows me the condition of my heart before God. It corrects me and reproves me so that I might be perfect and fully equipped to serve Him (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Many people today are deceiving themselves about their spiritual condition, thinking that there is nothing wrong with them. Why? Because they have never subjected themselves to the X-ray of God's Word.

It is possible that, even as believers, we may be unaware of sins of which we are guilty before God. I have often found during times of meditation on the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit has made me aware of some sin - some selfishness of motive, perhaps, in my actions - of which I was totally unaware until He made it known. We need to subject ourselves to a daily examination through the mirror (or X-ray) of God's Word if we are to avoid spiritual stagnation and decay. Not a day goes by in our lives without our examining our faces in a mirror. May not a day go by either without our examining our hearts.

Then, in Jeremiah 23:29, the Word of God is likened to a fire. Fire, in the Bible, is used as a symbol of that which purifies or burns up. Gold put into the fire is purified, whereas wood is consumed. The Word of God, similarly, has a purifying effect upon our lives, eliminating from them what is un-Christlike. It not only shows us our faults, as we saw above, but it also makes us holy. No man can ever hope to be holy without spending time every day at the Lord's feet, for that alone can purge away all the dross from his life. But it is also terribly true the same fire will burn up the one who rejects the Word (John 12:48). Our attitude towards God's Word determines whether it will purify or destroy. If we submit to it, it will purify us. If we ignore or spurn it, then it will surely consume us.

In the same verse of Jeremiah 23 we see, fourthl

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