

God spoke through the prophets and apostles of ages past. They delivered His message in a series of books and letters that when bound together became the Bible. Whether those messages were read aloud at meetings or studied privately, God expected His people to understand His Word, to obey it, and to treasure it.

Colonel Johann Rall led a British infantry in our Revolutionary War. Though a proven leader, Rall made a mistake that cost him his life at the Battle of Trenton and influenced the course of the entire war.

It was Christmas Day, 1776, when the Colonel and his men decided to rest. They didn't expect an attack on Christmas Day, and the frigid weather dumped rain, snow, and sleet upon them. Rall celebrated the day with his men and slept well only to awake the next morning to the sound of gunfire. General George Washington had ordered the Continental Army to work all night in the most awful conditions to cross the icy Delaware River. Here was America's first decisive victory.

Prior to the Battle of Trenton, Congress heard only of defeat. Hope was fading and many wondered if the new nation could survive. Washington finally had a good report for Congress. So inspiring was this moment, it became the turning point of the Revolutionary War.

Rall had been warned. When the British received his body, they found a message from a Loyalist tucked inside his coat pocket. To their horror, the message said to be ready for an attack on Christmas Day. Rall had never bothered to read the note.

It's unbelievable, but are we so different than the Colonel? God has written a kind of note as well—a book that warns of things to come. Sometimes so much is at stake in a single message. I hope what God has written isn't something you've tucked away.

A REDISCOVERY

Scripture is God's self-disclosure. It is the Living God graciously letting us to peer into His holiness that we might know and worship Him.

Moses was Israel's first leader, followed by Joshua. Both publically read the Word of God to the people (Exo 24:7, Josh 8:34), which was a good start for the nation. However, it didn't last long. The next leader to publically read Scripture was King Jehoshaphat—450 years later (2 Chr 17:7).

What changed? Rarely do we read of Israelites or leaders determined to destroy Scripture. Some did, but generally speaking, the Word of God was passively set aside. The people wanted to do what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25; Ezekiel 16).

After King Jehoshaphat, another two-hundred years would pass of setting Scripture aside. It became like an old book on the shelf, not read for so long that no one could remember where it was placed. It was then in the 7th century B.C. that King Josiah rediscovered the Book, read it, and reformed the nation (2 Kings 22-23).

This story isn't unique, for it's also the story of many church-goers in our day. Perhaps it's time for you to dust off the pages of Scripture and rediscover what it says? When God spoke, He expected His people to revere His Word. He expected them to understand, to obey, and to treasure His Word. It's hard to do any these or even to know His will for your life if His Word is set aside.

AN UNDERSTANDABLE BOOK

Psalm 119:130—“The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.”

When we speak, we expect to be understood, right? So it is with God, and His Word gives light even to the simple. This means you don't need an advanced degree to understand the Bible. Take a look at many of the New Testament letters, for instance: “To the church of God which is at Corinth...” or “To the churches of Galatia...” Most of these books weren't written to scholars or even leaders but to common Christians. Many of them had little education and no knowledge of Jewish history.

Letters were read on a Sunday morning to the congregation, and the people understood them. This doesn't mean everyone fully grasped everything at once though. This also doesn't mean a book like Ezekiel is easy. Many passages in Scripture are low hanging fruit and lie within an arm's reach. Others, however, are much higher and harder. Whether high or low, hard or easy, no passage in the Bible is impossible.

At the First Coming of Christ, most of the Jews didn't understand the prophecies... but some did. The wise men who brought gifts and Simeon who blessed Jesus at the temple—they understood. Many people during Jesus' ministry didn't understand Him... but some always did. To those who misunderstood, He commonly asked,

From God to Us

“Have you not read?” (Matt 12:3, 19:4) or said, “You know not the Scriptures” (Mark 2:10). To Nicodemus, Jesus questioned how one so well-versed could struggle to understand Him (John 3:10).

Would you say that God struggles with poor communication? I would hope not. God’s will is revealed in God’s Word, and God’s Word was written to be understood (Ephesians 5:17). If you’ll commit to regularly reading it, fruit that once seemed out of reach will be grasped, and God’s will won’t seem so mysterious but become quite clear.

DOING WHAT IT SAYS

James 1:21b-22—“...receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

No one owned a complete copy of God’s Word in the first century. It was difficult even for churches to own a copy. Church leaders received, read, and passed on the New Testament epistles as they came. Early Christians met to hear their shepherd read from the few books that might be on hand (1 Tim 4:13).

First-century Christians regularly heard the reading of Scripture; twenty-first century Christians can read full copies of it. James urged his readers to receive the Word of God with all humility. How? By doing what it says, and the same applies to us today. Having the full revelation of God available in print and bound in leather, we have no excuse. God expects His Word to be obeyed. If we’re required to obey it, then aren’t we required to know it; and if we need to know it, that means we actually need to read it.

We have such ease of access to divine light. Don’t cast it aside and fail to read. C.S. Lewis writes, “The more often [a Christian] **feels without** acting, the less he will be able ever to act, and, in the long run, the less he will be able to **feel**.” The heart becomes hard. Where you once felt a warmth towards God and His Word, perhaps now there are only cold ashes. It happens by degrees to the point where a person no longer acts, no longer feels, no longer cares.

ESTEEMED AND TREASURED

History has many examples of people who treasured God’s Word, and Ezra was one of them. One-hundred years after the Babylonians razed Jerusalem, Ezra returned to serve as priest and help rebuild.

Ezra 7:10—“For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.”

Without a temple for worship or city walls for protection, Ezra “set His heart” to know God’s Word. Rebuilding mattered, but Ezra paused to study and to gather the people to hear the Word of God again. Was he a busy political leader? Absolutely, but his actions indicate a deep love for Scripture. He treasured it. So did the governor, Nehemiah. So did the people who wept when they heard the Word of God again (Neh 8:9).

What happened then was the response God had always expected of His people. To Moses, a millennium prior the Lord said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” And of God’s Word? It was to be on the hearts of His people, taught to their children, the subject of daily conversation, present everywhere (Deut 6:4-9). It was to be ubiquitous.

THE 10,000 HOUR RULE

There’s no such thing as a prodigy. Malcolm Gladwell makes a strong case that anyone who’s mastered anything worked hard at it. We see the end result of greatness and tend to believe someone was just unusually gifted. The truth is that they worked unusually hard—in the ballpark of 10,000 persistent hours.

If you want to master the piano, practice 10,000 hours at it, for this is what Mozart did. If you want to master golf, the same is true, and it’s what Tiger Woods endured to enter the PGA. The same applies elsewhere, even to computer programming. If you want to master it like none other, program away for 10,000 hours. It’s what Bill Gates did throughout the 1970’s.

So, when it comes to mastering God’s Word, why do we as Christians think it will be any different? If you want to understand God’s Word and know God’s will for your life, be committed to reading the Bible.

The only prodigy of God’s Word is God’s Spirit. There are no spiritual prodigies in life. What need we have to regularly read the Word of God that we might rightly understand, faithfully obey, and deeply treasure all that it says.