

The Price of the Gospel

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GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715
BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

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Grace Publications is a ministry of
Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word” (John 17:6).

“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3).

“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

We are preachers, teachers, and stewards of a great heritage. Today in America when I preach the Bible, I am not threatened with death. If I go out witnessing, I am not put into prison. It is easy to take for granted what cost the lives of so many. With this booklet, I will try to convey the extraordinary price that has been paid by ordinary people in order for us to hold that Treasure in our hands, to be able to turn its pages, to drink

in its precepts and savor its truth.

I don't want to neglect the Book, nor what it says. I don't want to forget its precepts and preciseness, its purity, holiness, and righteousness. The Word of God imparts a great mandate to win the lost; it communicates a great commission to go into all the world with the gospel. It contains a wonderful admonition to make disciples. There are its wonderful principles, telling us to love one another and to lay down our lives as Christ did for His Church.

It is easy to say we believe in the Bible, but it's another thing to let it take over and control every part of your life. It's easy to say that the Bible is Truth, but it's another thing to say the Bible has the solution and answer for every problem and prayer. God's Word was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ. His desire is for the written Word to become living Truth, so we will become living epistles to all around us.

Chapter One

THE AUTHOR OF
ETERNAL SALVATION

“Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having

obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:33-40).

Every time I read these verses, I am tremendously motivated. I could read them every three months and still feel like a little child each time. Recently, while reading them, it felt just like being born again. The reason is this: The Holy Spirit brings *rhemas*—fresh, personal revelations of truth in application—no matter how much knowledge we may possess. Here we have a Bible college and we have a church where truth is communicated daily; but there is nothing like the Holy Spirit communicating to us through the Word of God in a personal way.

Years ago, I memorized the book of Hebrews within two or three days; it was easy for me. But I didn't *know* Hebrews. I memorized Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, too. I knew the basics, which helped me to live a good life, but I really didn't know those passages. So, I stopped my memorization. Then, through studying, the Holy Spirit would speak *rhemas* to my heart—in the car, at night, anywhere, anytime—as He does with all of us.

The Finisher of Our Faith

The thing I love about Hebrews is that famous second verse of chapter 12, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." I went to Webster's Dictionary and found that *author* means someone "who originates or creates; the writer of a book." I like that! I thought to myself, "Wow! I know where this is going to lead me." Hebrews 5:9 says, "And being made perfect, [Christ] became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Thank God it is not eternal probation; it is eternal salvation! And Jesus Christ is the author of it.

"Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin. I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." God said this way back in Hosea 8:11-12. So, the moral law, the Ten Commandments, the ceremonial law, the sacrifices, and Bible doctrine (the categorical principles on how to think with God) were authored by the Lord for our eternal salvation.

Jesus said, "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). In John 14:23, the Lord is speaking

about the value of His words: "If a man love me, he will keep *my words*: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Again, in John 12:48, He says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not *my words*, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth *my word*, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

His Words in the Heart

There are times, when reading verses such as these, I just have to stop and get up, and I'll walk around my basement study; sometimes it's during the middle of the night. At these times I have to say, "Oh, my God, these are Your words, *Your words.*"

Then, the Holy Spirit will ask me to consider John 16:13-14: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it

unto you.” The Holy Spirit will tell me to speak the verses out loud. I think about what the Scripture is saying and I fellowship around it for hours at a time.

I meditate on a verse such as Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful” His name shall be called *Wonderful*? I have to stop right there. Wonderful! Wonderful is His name. The verse continues, “...Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” What a Book—sharing the words of God with us, through men who wrote it under the absolute inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Two

THE INSPIRATION OF THE WORD

I often picture the exchanges of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in my mind. The Spirit says, "What do you want me to tell them Lord, Jesus?" The Spirit *is* God, of course, but He asks Jesus Christ about the things He wants to communicate. Jesus said in John 5:46-47, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

The first five books of the Bible, written by Moses, were to communicate Christ. The Holy Spirit said to Moses, "I want to give you five books to write. I will tell you everything that is to be said in them. I will breath into you the Truth." "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" 2 Timothy 3:16.

The Glory of the Gospels

Years later, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were called by the Holy Spirit. "Come here and sit down," the Spirit said to them, "I am going to listen to Jesus. Then I'm going to tell you what He says and you will write the Gospels." The Spirit goes to the Son, the Son tells the Spirit and the Spirit beautifully tells the writers what Jesus Christ, God the Son, said.

Is it any wonder that every single Word of God is pure, in Proverbs 30:5? Is it any wonder that He commands each of us to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15)?

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do

it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it" (Deuteronomy 30:11-14).

"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach" (Romans 10:8).

I have often thought of the manuscripts, the original copies of the Word of God. At one time I spent five consecutive days studying about these things and the accuracy of translation. The Bible, the most precious book in all the world, is new today and every day. It's the result of Jesus Christ, the Living Word, telling men, through the inspiration of the Spirit, to pen the written Word. As we receive it, the Holy Spirit once again makes it a Living Word in us so we become living epistles among men.

Of No Private Interpretation

The Word of God is not of any private interpretation. His precious Book cannot be added unto and we cannot take away from it. Every teacher, every pastor, every worker, and every believer has an opportunity to be a partaker of the Book that the Spirit inspired. If Jesus were here today, He wouldn't preach anything but what He has authored in this book. He wouldn't

allow any other revelation to take the place of the Scriptures. "...These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). This is Jesus' endorsement of the entire Old Testament.

This precious book, the Bible, contains God's thoughts toward us. The Word of God is as silver, tried in the fire seven times, in Psalm 12:6. Oh, God, Your Word is so beautiful! It's a magnificent Word for us.

Chapter Three

THOSE WHO PAID THE PRICE

“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:24-25).

Recently I told the Lord of my need to be refreshed in something I was taught years ago. For several days I studied intensely the lives of men who paid the highest price to preserve the written Word of God for us. I began to think of the year 1536 and the man William Tyndale, of England, who attended the great universities of Oxford and Cambridge. He cried out that the Bible needed to be translated accurately for the common person to read. To one enemy of his work, Tyndale expressed his life’s goal: to make it possible that “a boy that driveth the plough shall

know more of the Scriptures than thou doest”!

Tyndale knew he would likely be burned at the stake, which is what happened to anyone who was faithful in getting out the Word. But it was God’s Word! Friends betrayed him and put him in a rat-infested prison for eighteen months. Finally, he was strangled, then burned at the stake—the flames burning very slowly up the martyrs legs, while those responsible for his death were celebrating in their cathedrals.

Of the last words spoken by William Tyndale was a prayer that God would open the eyes of King Henry VIII who was behind his execution. Today, the Tyndale translation has survived as the primary source for the most widely accepted versions of the English language Bible.

Miles Coverdale and His Wife

On and on, men stood for the Word of God. After Tyndale came Miles Coverdale. He fought for the faith and produced the Coverdale Bible, using Tyndale’s manuscripts as a foundation.

One account tells how Coverdale’s wife was told that she would be given a high position if she could convince her husband to change. But she said, “I won’t do it. I’m with him.”

The English officials replied, “Then we are

taking you with us. Are you going to witness?"

"I am going to honor Jesus Christ," she declared.

"Then after we kill your husband, we'll cut out your tongue and burn *you* at the stake," they told her.

They did what they said they would do. But even after having her tongue cut out, Mrs. Coverdale kept gesturing toward heaven, all the while she was being burned at the stake. She praised God even while she was unable to speak; she just kept motioning toward the sky. Scores of people watching her die were saved that day, and later some of them were killed in the same way.

Oh, the preciousness of the Word of God! What a price some have paid to see it proclaimed. Hebrews 11:37 says, "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented."

"Sawn asunder"—can you picture it? People who believed in the Word of God were taken and placed in a box, and they were sawed down the middle. Even children—seven, ten, and twelve years old—were victims of this kind of

cold-blooded murder.

Others were taken and wrapped in sheep skins and goat skins. After being sewn tightly together, the skins were soaked in water, then tied around the believers' bodies. The persecutors put their victims out in the sun where the heat would naturally cause the skins to shrink and grow tighter and tighter around the victims' bodies. Eventually they would die, unable to breathe. Anyone who tried to help these Christians was also killed.

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

Henry VIII said Tyndale's Bible would never come into his kingdom. Yet, while he was saying it, Anne Bulcher and her best friend were smuggling Bibles under their long dresses. They were caught and brutally murdered. Heaps of the smuggled Bibles were burned; every attempt was made to destroy them all, but there were always another thirty or fifty somewhere. Oh, the preciousness of the Word of God.

John Rogers

John Rogers preached, "Hell is hot. Sin is black. Heaven is real. Conversion is wonderful." He spoke against the king publicly and also wrote

against the Pope. He was burned at the stake. Rogers' friend betrayed him and denied Jesus Christ, but his wife and children stood with him. Later, the friend realized what a hypocrite he had been, and confessed that he loved the Bible. He repented and wanted to be killed for the sake of Christ.

Matthew's Bible, the translation Rogers worked on, came to be hated by those in power. But it was the basis for the Great Bibles, huge books which were kept in churches throughout England. One page of the Bible in those days was worth a great deal of money, so the Great Bibles were actually chained to the pulpit to keep them from being taken out of the churches and sold.

About this time, Mary Queen of Scots came to the throne. She ordered death for all the followers of Tyndale and Coverdale. She would give anything to find those related to them. She wanted all of the Bibles burned and buried when they died. William Hunter was a 19-year-old who kept escaping and fleeing from her pursuit. He lived in Brentwood, England, and eventually died as a martyr.

A short time later, several translators took refuge from the Queen by joining John Calvin in

Geneva, Switzerland, where it was unlawful to kill Christians. They produced the Geneva Bible—the Bible John Bunyan was reading while imprisoned in Bedford, England for thirteen years. (He went on to write the great Christian classic *The Pilgrim's Progress*.) Also, the Geneva Bible was used by the pilgrims coming to America on the Mayflower.

Another well known opponent of God's Word was King Philip II of Spain who had the heads cut off of 350 children at St. Augustine in Florida sixty years before the establishment of the first colony on American shores. Later on, in St. Augustine, thousands of believers were brutally murdered. Long before the first city of the United States was established, ten thousand Anabaptists were also killed in the Catacombs in Rome.

Consider the Cost

It is so important to consider the price that many paid for us to have this Book and to hear the preaching of this Book. Those men and women gave their lives courageously. Children, fathers, and mothers gave their lives. One account tells of a father watching his son being burned at the stake, and shouting out, "My son, you are

a great and wonderful example. I'm so proud of you!" He was yanked from the crowd and put on the stake with his son. Oh, what a great price was paid for the holy Word of God! Let's never forget it!

I am so grateful and thankful that heaven and earth will pass away but His Word shall never pass away. Considering the lives of these martyrs, how can I *not* live by every single Word of God? Jesus prayed this prayer to His Father for the disciples and all believers, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:17-20).

There is something that will judge us in the last days: the Word that has been spoken unto us. If we speak not according to His Word, it is because there is no light in us (Isaiah 8:20). Preach the Word, reprove, exhort, rebuke, with all authority. We are going to be taught by the Holy Spirit and we are to teach others also. I love it!

Let's speak the truth in love. Our job is to

win souls and to make disciples. We win people through the power of the Holy Spirit in love. John wrote, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). As a pastor, it is such a treasure to watch those who have come to Christ grow and walk in the power of the Word of God.

When temptation and testing comes, get out the old Book! *In everything, give thanks; for everything, give thanks.* Hit the throne of grace with prayer and faith. He will answer our prayers. How do we know this? Because God says so in the Bible. Men have tried, but they can never, never, never destroy the Bible. Not one single promise from the Book will ever fall to the ground. I believe it. Do you? Let God be true in every situation and every man a liar. What a privilege we have to open the Book!

CONCLUSION

Men were able to kill William Tyndale, but they couldn't take away the Book. They did away with Miles Coverdale and his wife, but they couldn't take away the Book. John Rogers and William Hunter were martyred, but the Word of God lives on. Why? It is forever settled in heaven. It is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. It discerns the motives of the heart.

Every word of Scripture is quick and powerful. It proclaims God's eternal salvation, a salvation that comes by grace through faith. By the words of this Book, the backslider can be reclaimed and the sick are healed.

The Bible has outlived its enemies. It has survived the careless people, the carnal people, the one-dimensional people who have misrepresented it because they have never grown in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This

Book, the precious Word of God, is the reason why we can be red hot for God, on fire today and tomorrow, always revealing Jesus Christ glorified.

This Book is the answer to *any* problem for anyone who will believe it is the answer! For such a price to have been paid, can we afford to slight its worth?

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