

We do not forget that the Word of God, considered as a letter, is unable to impart life to the soul—unable indeed to work any good result. The “letter” can only “kill;” it is the Spirit who “giveth life.” Regarding this great truth there is no room, surely, for dispute. The Father has life in Himself, and He hath given to the Son to have life in Himself and to quicken whom He will. This life the glorified Saviour imparts by His Spirit to all them who believe upon Him. The human soul must, in order to possess life, come into immediate and vital contact with Him who is the fountain of life. Nothing but the breath of the Lord entering into the dry bones can cause them to live. In vain were ordinances bestowed, and the terms of the Lord proclaimed, and the invitations of the gospel sounded in the ears, unless divine power should accompany the word and give it an efficacy which it has not in itself. Were this truth ignored, the utmost activity in the application of the word would not result in the salvation of any.

But the Law of God—the Scriptures—God’s truth made known to us—is the instrument which the Spirit employs in the impartation of the new life, and in the development of Christian character and graces; and in this sense, the Law “converts the soul.” In all ordinary cases the Spirit works by means—uses an appropriate instrument; and the Law is the instrument which He designs to employ. “The Sword of the Spirit is the word of God.” And, though the philosophy of this matter may be above us there is doubtless a special appropriateness in the instrument, with reference to the end in view. He who made the human soul and knows it altogether, has ordained His truth to be used in the work of spiritual renovation. The Law declares the unchangeable holiness of God and the guilt and misery into which man has fallen, and these truths the Spirit uses for convincing us of sin. This perfect Law discloses the redeeming love of God, who has sent His Son to die for our deliverance, and shews the office of faith in receiving the gift freely offered to us by God: these truths, applied by the Spirit who works faith within us, inspires us with hope, and we pass from a condemned to a justified condition, from the dominion of the carnal mind, which is death, to that of the spiritual mind, which is life and peace.

Thus, brethren, we see the exceeding value of God’s Law. The greatest and most blessed transformation which the human mind can undergo is effected through its instrumentality. Nor let it be said that we exaggerate the importance of Scripture, seeing that the soul may be converted by means of God’s truth read in any of the thousands of pious books or tracts which may come into our hands, and especially by means of the truth delivered to us by preaching. For this were to forget that the Bible is the one fountain of revealed truth, and that all the streams of a pious literature are fed by it, and that the voice of the preacher, though he be Christ’s servant, can have no authority except as his utterances agree with the inspired word. “to the Law and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to them, it is because there is no light in them.”

Let me conclude by exhorting all hearing me to prize this great boon which God hath conferred upon us—the possession of His perfect law—and in every way to shew the value they attach to it. Let us testify our appreciation of the Scriptures (a) By the diligent use of them for our personal benefit. Let us say with the Psalmist, “O how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day:” let our “delight” be in the law of the Lord. Let us not think his language too intense when he says that God’s precepts and Statutes are “more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb.” Most interesting it is to see the anxious enquirer after the truth, searching that word which will not fail to lead him, if sincere and humble, into the light; or to see the reverent and diligent love with which the true and earnest Christian seeks in God’s word as for hid treasure.

Would that there were far more study—thorough and prayerful—of the Scriptures. Is there not danger, even from the abundance of excellent and