



God's Word builds us up

Understanding God's provision of encouragement

Acts 20:32 - So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

What does it mean to be commended?

To be presented, given... Paul in his address to the elders of the church at Ephesus prior to his going away presented them to God. Paul is putting them in the hands of God.

To what else did Paul commend the church at Ephesus?

The Word of God's grace?

What is the Word of God's grace?

It is the gospel, God's Word which tells us about His blessing us by providing the way for us to know Him.

What is grace?

It is unmerited favor. God was in no-way obligated to provide a way for us to have everlasting life, He chose to out of His sovereign will.

So what are the implications of being saved by grace?

What role do we play in being saved?

We can not do anything to earn salvation. We can not do anything to earn God's favor. If we could, it wouldn't be by God's grace that we are saved. If our works played any part in our being saved, God would then be obligated to pay us back making Him respond to us. It is us who need to respond to Him. That is all we can do is respond by accepting the gift of salvation God so freely offers all who will believe Him.

What is the Word of God's grace able to do?

Build us up and give us an inheritance among all who are sanctified.

What does it mean to be sanctified?

Set apart to a sacred purpose. Purified from sin.

For what sacred purpose did God set apart those who are saved?

- To have an eternal relationship with Him...
John 17:3 - And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.
- To glorify Him forever as a testimony to His goodness and grace...

Eph 2:10 - For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

John 15:8 - By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

How can we be purified from sin?

Jesus provided the way by taking penalty for my sin in my place.

How is sanctification related to salvation?

They are almost synonymous

Sanctification – being set apart from sin.

Salvation – being saved from the consequences of sin

How are we sanctified?

There are three aspects to salvation from sin...

Past – The Lord's redemptive act on the cross paid the penalty for our sin...

Heb 10:10 - By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Present – Sanctification is a process in which we participate, the Holy Spirit convicting us and we responding...

Phil 2:12-13 - work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Phil 1:6 - being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

Future – God will resurrect believers into a body with no sin nature...

1 Cor 15:52-53 - the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

How does the Holy Spirit make use of God's Word in our day-to-day sanctification?

The truth of God's Word has a cleansing effect. The Holy Spirit helps us to recognize what is true. When we respond to the truth revealed to us it usually involves a change within us, something we need to stop doing, or something we need to start doing, or it may just be a change of attitude. Jesus prayed to God the Father that His Word be used to sanctify the church...

John 17:17 – "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

The Bible often uses water to represent the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit. For example...

Eph 5:25-27 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

How is it possible for Jesus to pay the penalty of all those who are saved? He is just one man, how can His death count for the sins of the millions of people throughout history who have been saved?

- *"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* (Matt 19:26)
- Jesus was no ordinary man. He was (and is) God Himself who took on the body of one of His creations.
- When Jesus hung on the cross and took on all of the sins of those who had believed and would believe in Him, He endured separation from God the Father...
Matt 27:46 - And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying..., "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"
 - For that moment however long it was, Jesus endured separation from God because God the Father could not look on God the Son because of the sin he had taken on himself.
 - For eternal God who had never known a break in fellowship, this moment would have seemed like an eternity and was powerful enough to apply to the sins of all people.

What is an inheritance?

What one comes into possession of as a result of the death of the giver with whom you have a relationship.

What is the inheritance being spoken of here?

Eternal life.

Who are those who are sanctified?

The eklesia. The church, the body of believers who have trusted in Jesus throughout time.

What about those who lived and died prior to Jesus paying the price for their sin? How could they be saved?

- The same way we are, by the grace of God through faith in Him (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- Even back to the time of Adam and Eve, God had promised the Messiah, His Anointed, who would come to save us...
Gen 3:15 - And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

- In Old Testament times people know that eternal salvation would have something to do with the Messiah but God had not revealed the details.
- Old Testament saints looked forward to the cross, we look back on the cross.
- While we are saved the same way as the Old Testament saints (by grace through faith) we today have the benefit of knowing the mechanism God used to save us, the Messiah coming in the flesh to sacrifice His life for our sake.
 - But the Messiah did not stay in the grave, God resurrected Him into a glorified eternal body which is the firstfruits of the general resurrection of the church which we will inherit if we have genuinely trusted in Him.

How does the Word of God's grace build us up?

I hardly knew how to get my arms around this since there is so many ways the Bible is an encouragement and a guide which keeps us from trouble.

- Certainly God uses His Word to save us...
Rom 10:17 - So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
 - Indeed God saves us through faith...
Eph 2:8 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God
- God's Word also gives us assurance of our salvation...
I Jn 5:13 - These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

The longest psalm in the Bible is mostly about how God's word builds us up...

How do the following verses address ways that God's Word builds us up?

Ps 119:2-3 - Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart! They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways.

Ps 119:9 - How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.

Ps 119:11 - Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!

- God's Word helps to see what we need to do (or not do) to keep from sinning. This frees us from the guilt and consequences which comes from sin.
Proverbs 17:22 - A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.

Ps 119:14 - I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.

Ps 119:72 - The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver.

- Inheriting eternal life is greater than anything and everything in this world.

Matt 16:26 – “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”

Ps 119:24 - Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.

- The Bible reminds us of God’s almighty power.
- It is encouraging to have a personal relationship with the one who knows all things and is all powerful, He is the perfect counselor.

Ps 119:28 - My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your word.

- The Bible teaches us that our true strength is not in ourselves, it is in God.
2 Cor 12:10 - Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Ps 119:42 - So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word.

- It is encouraging to have an answer for why we believe what we believe... the Bible provides this.

Ps 119:44 - So shall I keep Your law continually, forever and ever.

- It is encouraging to know that God’s Word will last forever... we are not believing something that will be destroyed by the latest scientific discovery.

Ps 119:45 - And I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts.

- As Jesus said, “*the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32).
- When you know the truth, you are free to choose to heed it or reject it. If you don’t know the truth, you don’t have a choice, you must reject it. While the truth sets us free, lies keep us in sin bondage.
- Also, when you know the truth, you are free from the worst consequence of sin

Ps 119:46 - I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

- Truth is universal, no man’s wisdom can match God’s wisdom...
Rom 3:4 - let God be true but every man a liar.

Ps 119:50 - This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life.

- It is comforting to know that no matter what happens in this world, the Bible assures us of eternal salvation if we have Jesus in our life.

Ps 119:52 - I remembered Your judgments of old, O LORD, and have comforted myself.

- For the redeemed who have experienced God’s mercy, it is comforting to know and be reminded that God is just... justice will be served.
- The justice of God is not any kind of comfort for unbelievers which is intended to move them to take action before it is too late.

Ps 119:66 - Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments.

- Good judgment and knowledge is power... it is encouraging to have access to such power.

Ps 119:92 - Unless Your law had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction.

- The Bible encourages us to persevere through afflictions and reminds us that God has a purpose in them...
Rom 5:3-4 - And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Rom 8:28 - And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Ps 119:93 - I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given me life.

- God’s Word is what led me to Him, He used this to save me and change me forever.
 - Knowing that God uses the Bible in this great way encourages me to seek His words in even smaller matters.

Ps 119:103 - How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Ps 119:99 - I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation.

- Ps 119:100 - I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.
 - It is encouraging to know that with the Bible we have personal access to the source of all wisdom, we are not dependant on others to help us understand Scripture.

Ps 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

- It is a comfort to have a guidebook which shines light on the pitfalls of life.
 - If we can see the pitfalls, it is our choice to avoid stepping in them... if we can not see the pitfalls, we have no choice but to stumble along.

Why do you believe God's Word?

For me, it is because of God's prophetic Word...

Isa 46:9-10 - Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.'

Only God could declare the end from the beginning and this is how He authenticated Himself in the Bible as being who He is.

- I found the Bible helped me to understand what was going on in the world... why the Soviet Union crumbled without a shot being fired and why people could think this turn of events made nuclear war less likely when the opposite was really the case.
1Thes 5:3 - For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.
- It helped me understand how the ethnic uniqueness of a small race of people, the Jews, could be preserved through time even when they were dispersed among many other nations. It is with out precedent that a race of people could be brought back together as a nation after such a dispersion and even the use of their language that had been long dead being revived.
- It helped me to realize that if the Bible could help me understand why current events were working out the way they were, then it also had to be right about Jesus and my need for Him.
- It helped me understand why my motive for every thing I did was out of selfishness and that in God's eyes, I was a sinner who going to spend eternity in hell if I didn't have Jesus in my life.
- It helped me realize that if I was serious about having a lifesaving relationship with God, I needed to read and study the Bible.
- It helped me to reset my values so that there were higher priorities in my life than what the world says is a successful career. The Lord helped me resist the temptation to jump companies when I simultaneously received a setback in my current job along with a job offer from a customer. Providing a sense of stability to my wife and accommodating my own spiritual growth was more important.
- It helped me to reset my values about money. I have gradually changed my attitude about it as I grew in my understanding that God is sovereign and owns it all.
- It helped me realize that God saved me for a purpose
- It helped me to see how to fill the void of loneliness in my life.
- It helped me to know how to "win friends and influence people".

What do these verses have to say about why you should believe the Word of God?

How should you apply this to your life?

Rev 1:3 - Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

- **Why believe:** to be blessed with life abundant.
- **Application:** make decisions like you could find yourself before the Lord in the very next minute

1Thes 2:13 - For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

- **Why believe:** because we know it is from God
- **Application:** be glad when you hear other speak God's Word and consider what it is saying to you to change so that you may be closer to God.

1 Pet 1:24-25 - because "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, But the word of the Lord endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

- **Why believe:** because (1) God's Word will last forever and (2) it is the mechanism God used to deliver the good news about how to have eternal life to us
- **Application:** Make decisions with an eternal perspective. Always be aware that everything we do and say has ramifications beyond this life so we should always ask ourselves: **What Would Jesus Have Us Do?** (WWJHUD)
 - WWJD is flawed because Jesus is God and we are not... He said things that made clear His deity, there is no-way we should even consider talking like He did.

Rom 10:17 - So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- **Why believe:** God uses His Word to impart faith to us.
- **Application:** Read, memorize and study the Bible so that we may be closer to God and be able to act more in His will.

Why would we want to act more in God's will?

- God has given each one of us a reason for living, as we act more in His will, we'll be more successful in life.

Rom 10:11 - For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

- **Why believe:** because it tells us how not to be put to shame.

- **Application:** remember that truth is universal, we should never be ashamed of the Bible's message about Jesus Christ.
 - I am reminded of *"I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed."* (Ps 119:46)

2 Tim 3:16-17 - 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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- **Why believe:** because (1) Scripture has been inspired by God, (2) is profitable for doctrine, (3) is profitable for reproof, (4) is profitable for correction, (5) is profitable for instruction in righteousness (6) enables the believer to be complete, righteousness (7) enables the believer to be thoroughly equipped for every good work
- **Application:** studying the Bible helps us to know how to accomplish good works.
 - **Why would we want to accomplish good works?**
 - To please God out of gratitude for what He has done for us.

Heb 4:12 - For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

- **Why believe:** because the Word of God is (1) living and powerful and, (2) exposes our true motivations for why we do what we do.
- **Application:** as religious people, we need to continually check if what we are doing is for the sake of religion or as part of our relationship with the Lord
Matt 6:1-3 – "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing."

1 Cor 15:3-6 - For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

- **Why believe:** because it tells us good news about Jesus paying the price for the sins of those who receive Him into their lives.
- **Application:** Use the Bible to provide proof of the resurrection of Jesus... it is an historically accurate document which includes first hand testimonies.

What is the most important thing we learn from God's Word?

That Jesus Christ is the Son of God – God Himself taking on the form of a man so that He may make the way for us to be saved from our sin.

What is sin?

Not meeting God's standard of perfection. We are all born imperfect, in denial and rebellion against God...

Rom 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

From what do we need to be saved? What is the most significant consequence of our sin?

Spiritual death which is eternal separation from God.

Rom 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If we live this life seeking to be separate from God, He will give us what we ask for and that will be our condition for eternity.

How did Jesus make the way for us to be saved from the worst consequence of our sin?

He paid the penalty for all who trust in Him...

Rom 5:8 - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

So what must a person do to be saved?

Believe that Jesus paid the price for your sin

Rom 10:9 - if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Jesus not only paid the penalty, He rose again to prove that He was who He said He was and show us that life after death is more than a promise, it is a certainty.