



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Better than Gold: The Real Value of God's Word

PSALM 119:72, 127

FEBRUARY 11, 2010

Tim Pauley / PO Box 58403, Charleston, WV 25358 / www.capitolcom.org / tim.pauley@capitolcom.org

It is fascinating to watch *Antique Roadshow*, the PBS program in which people bring in items to be evaluated by professional appraisers. The show “captures tales of family heirlooms, yard sale bargains and long-lost items salvaged from attics and basements, while experts reveal the fascinating truths about these finds.” Often items which may have been just lying around the house turn out to be worth a great deal of money while the owners had no idea of their true value. In the Bible we have a supremely valuable item, a great treasure, and often we are unaware or forgetful of its true value.

We are looking at some of the vivid poetic illustrations used to describe the writer's love for God's Word. We have seen the Bible described as “sweeter than honey”. The scriptures are compared to a “lamp to our feet and a light to our path”. Today we will see God's Word as “better than gold or silver (vs. 72, 107):

The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces. (72)

Therefore I love Your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold. (127)

Before we contemplate this meaningful description of the Scriptures, let us read the next section in Psalm 119:

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*33Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall observe it to the end.*

*34Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law
and keep it with all my heart.*

*35Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
for I delight in it.*

*36Incline my heart to Your testimonies
And not to dishonest gain.*

*37Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity,
And revive me in Your ways.*

*38Establish Your word to Your servant,
As that which produces reverence for You.*

*39Turn away my reproach which I dread,
For Your ordinances are good.*

*40Behold, I long for Your precepts;
Revive me through Your righteousness.*

THE SUPERIOR VALUE OF GOD'S WORD

Our writer proclaims the Word of God to be of greater value than “thousands of gold and silver pieces” and worth more than “fine gold”. Picture the treasure hunter who finally discovers the chest full of gold and greedily plunges his hands into the pile of coins and lets them fall through his fingers. Instead we envision going to the pages of Scripture and reveling in truth we find there.

The contrast of the surpassing value of spiritual things over that of earthly riches is found throughout Scripture. Proverbs 2:4 encourages us to seek for wisdom “as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures”. Proverbs 3:14-15 proclaims, “How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding. For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her.” Jesus had a great deal to say about the inferior value of earthly wealth: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21). Jesus warned of greed with a powerful illustration and cautioned us “to be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” (Luke 12:15). Paul writes about “the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7) and of the “unfathomable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8).

Why are these expressions so frequently used throughout the Scriptures? Why does Jesus Himself have so much to say about the inferior value of worldly riches? It is because most of us are so tempted to be caught up in the desire for earthly wealth. As one puritan pastor described it, “the greatest part of mankind is miserably bewitched with the desire for riches”.¹ It is with this in mind that our writer exclaims “The law of your mouth *is better* to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces”. This is his appraisal of the value of God's Word. An appraisal is an estimate or considered opinion of the nature, quality, importance, and worth of an item. In this verse we see the writer's appraisal of the nature, quality, importance and worth of God's Word, both in its intrinsic value, and the value he ascribed to it.

BIBLE STUDIES

LOBBYIST / STAFF STUDY: **TUESDAYS, 12:00 NOON, TREASURER'S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)**
LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL STUDIES: **THURSDAYS 8:00 A.M. & NOON, SENATE PRESIDENT'S CONFERENCE ROOM (M219)**

Better Than Gold: The Real Value of God's Word

THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF GOD'S WORD

Why is the Scripture of such great value? What makes it worth more than piles of earthly riches? Let us think for a few moments of what makes an item valuable. When we do so, we quickly realize why we should highly esteem and value God's Word in our lives.

The Source of the Item. What makes a work of art valuable? It is the artist who created it. Paintings by Rembrandt or Van Gough are extremely valuable because of the masters who painted them. Both verses make clear that it is God who has spoken to us in the Scriptures. "The law of **Your** mouth" and "**Your** commandments" both tell us God is the source of the truth we hold in our hands. That alone is enough to make the Bible supremely valuable. Paul was thankful the Thessalonian believers valued God's Word "**not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe**" (1 Thes. 2:13). If we truly believe that the Bible is indeed the Word of God, then we will value it supremely.

The Necessity and Usefulness of the Item. The more useful and important to our lives something is, the more valuable it becomes to us. We saw this demonstrated in the demand for electric generators during the recent extended power outages. As a matter of fact, without regulation, prices would skyrocket on items at such times. To value God's Word we must come to recognize our great spiritual need. We understand that we have all sinned before a holy God and face His wrath and judgment. In the Scripture we find the truth to meet that need, since "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). It is in the Word we learn of Christ's suffering and death on our behalf, so that in repentance and faith we can have His righteousness given to us. Peter reminds of this when he says, "**you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.**" (1 Peter 1:18-19). When we understand that our great need can only be met through the truth we find in God's Word, then we will esteem the riches of God's Word above any we can gain in this world.

The Lasting Quality of the Item. "They don't make 'em like they used to" is a phrase we often use to bemoan the poor quality of many things made today. We value that which is well made so that it will last. The Psalmist recognized God's Word as that which will truly last. "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven" (89). "Your testimonies are

righteous forever" (144). "Of old I have known from Your testimonies that You have founded them forever" (152). We remember Jesus' warning that earthly riches may be destroyed or stolen, but the treasures we lay up in heaven are eternal. (Matthew 6). Paul reminds us to "**look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.**" (2 Cor. 4:18). We are warned about putting our money into things that depreciate. We are counseled to invest in things that appreciate in value. What we must remember is EVERYTHING DEPRECIATES except those eternal treasure of which we are taught in the Word of God.

THE ASCRIBED VALUE OF GOD'S WORD

The Psalmist wrote "The law of your mouth is better **to me** than thousands of Gold and silver". This reveals the value he ascribed to it. This was his own appraised value. He demonstrated this appraisal throughout the rest of Psalm 119 as he committed to read it, study it, pray over it, and seek to walk consistently in its ways. His life was governed by what he valued and esteemed.

This appraisal of God's Word as more valuable than earthly riches has three powerful implications for us. **If we have earthly wealth**, it should draw our hearts from it to better things. **If we want earthly wealth**, it should encourage us to find contentment in godliness and those things that really matter. And, **if we lose earthly wealth**, we know when we have Christ we still have that which is better and really matters.

In times past men have been put to death for translating the Bible into the common language of the people so they could read it and study it for themselves. Many have died seeking to proclaim the Word as missionaries to foreign countries. Even today in some parts of the world people may be arrested, imprisoned, beaten, and even put to death for possessing and distributing the Christian Scriptures. They have obviously placed great value on the Word of God. Do we value God's Word above earthly riches?

- **WHAT IS YOUR APPRAISAL OF GOD'S WORD? DON'T BE LIKE A CANDIDATE FOR ANTIQUE ROADSHOW WITH AN ITEM OF INFINITE VALUE JUST LYING AROUND THE HOUSE. USE IT. READ IT. STUDY IT. PUT IT INTO PRACTICE IN YOUR LIFE.**

¹ Mantou, Thomas. 190 Sermons on the 119th Psalm.