

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE BIBLE

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Abbreviated Version:

1. The first function of the Bible is to testify concerning the Lord Jesus: “Testify concerning Me” (John 5:39).
2. The Bible makes us wise unto salvation: “Makes you wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15).
3. The Bible causes us to be regenerated: “Having been regenerated...through the living and abiding Word of God” (1 Pet. 1:23).
4. The Bible teaches, convicts, corrects, and instructs us in righteousness so that we may be complete before God: “For teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
5. The teachings of the Bible enable us to endure and provide us with encouragement and hope: “For our instruction, in order that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).
6. When we read the Bible, we can be warned by the experiences of some who went before us, and we can be careful not to follow their example: “An example...written for our admonition” (1 Cor. 10:11).
7. The Bible is like a lamp shining in a dark place: “A lamp shining in a dark place” (2 Pet. 1:19).
8. The Bible functions as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path: “A lamp to my feet / And a light to my path” (Psa. 119:105).
9. The Bible gives light and imparts understanding to the simple: “Gives light, / Imparting understanding to the simple” (Psa. 119:130).
10. The Bible cleanses our actions by removing everything that is filthy and impure: “Keep his way pure” (Psa. 119:9).
11. The Bible prevents us from sinning against God: “That I might not sin against You” (Psa. 119:11).
12. The word in the Bible is the sword of the Spirit: “The sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17).

13. The Bible can divide our soul from our spirit and discern the thoughts and intentions of our heart: “Sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12).
14. The Bible is food for our spiritual life: “I ate” (Jer. 15:16; see also Matt. 4:4; Job 23:12; Heb. 5:14).
15. The Bible is not only solid food but also milk for our spiritual life: “Milk of the word” (1 Pet. 2:2; see also 1 Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:12-14).
16. The word of the Bible washes our outward actions and removes our outward defilement; it also washes us inwardly and frees us from the weaknesses of the old creation: “Washing”; “Clean” (Eph. 5:26; John 15:3).
17. The word of the Bible is like a burning fire and a smashing hammer: “Like fire...and like a hammer” (Jer. 23:29; see also 5:14).
18. The word of the Bible is like rain, dew, and abundant showers: “Like the rain...like the dew...and like abundant showers” (Deut. 32:2).
19. The word of the Bible is not only like rain, but it also refreshes like snow: “As the rain...and the snow...so will My word be” (Isa. 55:10-11).
20. The word of the Bible is like a mirror; it reflects our true appearance and condition: “A mirror” (James 1:23).
21. The Bible functions in a sweet way to restore and refresh our soul, to make us wise, to make our heart joyous, and to enlighten our eyes: “Restoring the soul... / Making the simple wise... / Making the heart joyous... / Enlightening the eyes” (Psa. 19:7-8).
22. The Lord’s words, the word of the Bible, are spirit and life: “Are spirit and are life” (John 6:63).
23. The word of the Bible can spiritually nourish us and also heal our flesh: “My words...are life to those who find them, / And healing to all their flesh” (Prov. 4:20-22; see also 16:24).
24. The word of the Bible is our counselor: “Counselors” (Psa. 119:24).
25. The word of the Bible is the solid foundation of our life and work: “Likened to...the rock” (Matt. 7:24-25).

Full Version:

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE BIBLE

1. “Testify concerning Me” (John 5:39, see also v. 46; Luke 24:27, 44, 46).

The first function of the Bible is to testify concerning the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the subject and content of the Bible, and the Bible is the explanation and expression of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the *living* Word of God, whereas the Bible is the *written* Word of God. If the written Word, the Bible, did not have the living Word, the Lord Jesus, as its reality, it would be nothing but empty doctrines and letters. If the living Word, the Lord Jesus, did not have the written Word, the Bible, as His expression, He would be abstract and vague and difficult to know and touch. Thankfully, we have the distinct and definite explanation of the Bible with its clear revelation so that we can know and understand the Lord Jesus. The books of the New Testament reveal the Lord Jesus, and even the books of the Old Testament, including the law of Moses, the books of prophecies, and the psalms and poetry, reveal the Lord Jesus. The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms are the three general sections that comprise the Old Testament (Luke 24:44). If we want to know the Lord Jesus, we must read and understand the Bible.

2. “Make you wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15).

On the one hand, the Bible serves the Lord Jesus by testifying concerning Him, and on the other hand, it serves us by causing us to be saved and built up. The first function of the Bible in relation to us is to make us wise unto salvation. It reveals God’s way of salvation in Christ and our pathway to salvation through faith so that we may know and understand God’s salvation.

3. “Regenerated” (1 Pet. 1:23; see also James 1:18).

The Bible causes us to be regenerated. The Bible is the word of the eternally living God, and it contains God’s eternal life. When we receive the word of the Bible through faith, the word is planted like a seed of life in us. The Bible functions to sow the life of God into us, imparting God’s life into us and regenerating us.

4. “For teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

After being regenerated by the word of God, the Bible teaches, convicts, corrects, and instructs us in righteousness so that we may be complete before God as regenerated men of God.

5. “For our instruction, in order that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

The teachings of the Bible enable us to endure and provide us with encouragement and hope. Many believers are unable to endure when they encounter difficulties or sickness. They become discouraged and lose hope. However, simply reading a section or even a sentence of the Bible often provides us with the

inward strength to endure and supplies encouragement and hope that is beyond our expectations. When we encounter difficulties, we are helped and established by the Bible.

6. “An example...written for our admonition” (1 Cor. 10:11).

Many things are recorded in the Bible as examples for our admonition. When we read the Bible, we can be warned by the experiences of some who went before us, and we can be careful not to follow their example. This is another help that believers find in the Bible.

7. “A lamp shining in a dark place” (2 Pet. 1:19).

Often the Bible is like a lamp shining in a dark place. We are in a dark night because the age in which we live is dark (Rom. 13:12). In this darkness the Bible is like a shining lamp. It causes us to know our situation so that we do not become lost and confused. If we want to be enlightened and knowledgeable in this dark age, we must understand the Bible and keep the word of the Bible in our hearts so that it can shine and enlighten us.

8. “A lamp to my feet / And a light to my path” (Psa. 119:105; see also Prov. 6:23).

People walking in the dark need a lamp to shine on the path of their feet. The Bible functions in this capacity. As we walk in this dark age, we truly need a heavenly lamp to shine on our every step so that we do not leave our path and fall into a deep pit. The Bible is a heavenly lamp. If we read the Bible and keep the word of the Bible in our heart, it will become a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. It will shine continually on our footsteps according to our need.

9. “Gives light, / Imparting understanding to the simple” (Psa. 119:130).

The light from the Bible not only shines upon our feet and path; it also imparts understanding to the simple. Many who are simple by nature have gained understanding through reading the Bible. Furthermore, anyone who wants to understand spiritual matters must understand the Bible and be enlightened by the Bible.

10. “Keep his way pure” (Psa. 119:9).

In addition to containing the power to enlighten, the word in the Bible has the power to cleanse. Enlightenment is in contrast to darkness, and purification is in contrast to filthiness. The age in which we live is filthy and dark. The word of the Bible causes all darkness to vanish when it shines on our feet. It cleanses our actions by removing everything that is filthy and impure. This is especially important to young people. If we read the Bible frequently, we will not only be enlightened but also kept pure. Every time we approach the Bible, its word will pass through us and enlighten and cleanse us. The word of the Bible will cleanse us, even if we cannot always remember what we have read. This is like a bamboo

basket being dipped in water; it will be cleansed even though the water leaks away. If we want to be pure, we must read the Bible frequently.

11. “That I might not sin against You” (Psa. 119:11).

The Bible also prevents us from sinning against God. We were born in sin, have grown up in sin, and easily sin against God. If we store the words of the Bible in our heart, they will constantly remind and warn us so that we do not sin against God.

12. “The sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17).

The word in the Bible is the sword of the Spirit. We can apply it by the Holy Spirit to deal with Satan and his messengers. Through the word of the Bible, we can defeat the devil, the enemy, who tempts and attacks us. When the Lord Jesus was in the wilderness, He defeated the tempter, the devil, through the word of the Old Testament. Therefore, in order to fight and defeat Satan and the evil spirits, we must read the Bible. We must be familiar with the Bible and be able to use it to deal with spiritual enemies at any time and in any place.

13. “Sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12).

The word of the Bible is as sharp as a sword. It can deal with our spiritual enemies, but it can also divide our soul from our spirit and discern the thoughts and intentions of our heart. It divides what is of the soul and what is of the spirit. It also enables us to discern the thoughts and intentions that come from ourselves and those that come from God. The word exposes our entire inward condition before God. Nothing can be hidden in us, and everything is made manifest through the word.

For example, a brother who preaches the gospel and casts out demons according to his natural zeal can be touched when reading Matthew 7:21-22, which says, “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, was it not in Your name that we prophesied, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name did many works of power?” As he is reading, the word will pierce him and cause him to see that his preaching of the gospel and his casting out of demons are according to soulish zeal, rather than God’s revelation in his spirit. This exposes his zealousness as being from himself, according to the power of his soul, rather than from the will of God, according to the power of the Spirit. In this way, the word of the Bible enables him to discern that the source of his gospel preaching and casting out of demons is his soul rather than his spirit. Consequently, in the matters of preaching the gospel and casting out demons, the word separates his soul from his spirit, causing him to reject his soul in these matters and to rely on his spirit.

A sister who plans to marry an unbeliever may be touched when she reads 2 Corinthians 6:14, which says, “Do not become dissimilarly yoked with unbelievers.” This word can pierce her heart and cause her to see that her desire to marry an unbeliever is according to her own will, not God’s will. Thus, the word enables her to discern that she is following her will and minding the preferences of her flesh rather

than God's will and heart's desire in the matter of marriage. When the will in her soul is divided from God's will in her spirit, she will be saved from the desires of her flesh in this important matter. Rather than following her flesh and the desires of her heart, she will obey the peerless will of God. Then she will please God and be preserved by God.

The word of the Bible is always living and operative in our circumstances. It is sharper than any two-edged sword. There is no amount of mixture within us that cannot be divided and discerned by the word of the Bible. The word will always expose our real condition, bringing our situation into the shining of the light from His face. This will empower us to live in our spirit, forsaking our self and the thoughts of the self in order to live in God and in His will.

14. "I ate" (Jer. 15:16; see also Matt. 4:4; Job 23:12; Heb. 5:14).

The Bible is food for our spiritual life. Just as our physical life needs nourishment, our spiritual life needs nourishment. The word is the only thing that can supply nourishment to our spiritual life. If we want to be strong and living before God, we cannot live on bread alone; we need the word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, which is the word of the Bible. We must eat the word of the Bible like food and even esteem the Bible more highly than food. We need to eat the word in order for our spiritual life to grow. We also must exercise to understand the more difficult portions in the Bible in order to be full-grown men, who are able to eat solid food. Without this eating and exercise, we will not become strong in our spiritual life.

15. "Milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2; see also 1 Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:12-14).

The Bible is not only solid food but also milk for our spiritual life. Solid food is for adults; milk is for infants. When our spiritual life is mature and we have an understanding of spiritual matters, we can extract the nourishment of solid food from the Bible, strengthening our spiritual life. When our spiritual life is immature and we lack an adequate understanding of spiritual matters, there are portions of the word of the Bible that are like milk, which can nourish us and cause our spiritual life to grow. Therefore, newly regenerated believers must love the word of the Bible and "as newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word." If they do not, they will remain babes in Christ and their spiritual life will not grow.

16. "Washing"; "Clean" (Eph. 5:26; John 15:3).

The word of the Bible washes our outward actions and removes our outward defilement. It also washes us inwardly and frees us from the weaknesses of the old creation. Ephesians 5:26 refers to this kind of washing. The Lord uses the water of life within us to wash us through the word of the Bible, eliminating the spots and wrinkles of the old creation. Spots and wrinkles are not related to the defilement that we acquire from our outward actions but to the weaknesses of the life of the old creation within us. The Lord uses the word in coordination with His life in us to wash away our spots and wrinkles. The Holy Spirit in coordination with the Lord's life in us frequently enlivens us with a word or sentence in the Bible in order to

remove things of the old creation so that we can grow in the new creation. This washing is a function of the word of the Bible.

Ephesians 5 is not the only portion of the Bible that speaks of this function. John 15:3 says, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you." This portion, which is related to being branches abiding in the Lord as the vine, shows that the Lord's word, the word of the Bible, cleanses us so that we can bear much fruit. This cleansing does not refer merely to an outward washing of the branches but to the removal of everything old so that the branches can be renewed. Therefore, this washing does not involve our outward actions but our inward life. Inwardly, we must be cleansed of everything related to the old creation in order to grow in the new creation. The word of the Bible manifests this washing power and function in us.

17. "Like fire...and like a hammer" (Jer. 23:29; see also 5:14).

The word of the Bible is powerful; it is like a burning fire and a smashing hammer. The word of the Bible can burn hearts that are ice cold toward God and can completely burn away the things of man, which are contrary to God's holy nature. It can smash hearts that are hard toward God and subdue every thought that is against God. For thousands of years countless hearts which were cold toward God have been burned by the word of the Bible, and countless hearts which were hard toward God have been smashed by the word of the Bible. Throughout the ages many things which are contrary to God's holy nature have been burned by the word of the Bible, and many thoughts which were against God have been subdued by the word of the Bible. The word of the Bible truly has the power to deal with a person's cold and hard heart.

18. "Like the rain...like the dew...and like abundant showers" (Deut. 32:2).

The word of the Bible is like rain, dew, and abundant showers. It waters and refreshes us. Rain is a general watering, dew is a gentle refreshing, and showers are a special watering. The word of the Bible manifests these functions, especially in relation to us as God's farm (1 Cor. 3:9), the harvest that God cultivates (Mark 4:20; 1 Cor. 3:6). The word of the Bible is like rain, dew, and showers. It waters and refreshes us so that we can grow and bear fruit.

19. "As the rain...and the snow...so will My word be" (Isa. 55:10-11).

The word of the Bible is not only like rain, but it also refreshes like snow. Rain comes in the spring, summer, and fall, but snow comes in the winter. The refreshing of rain is quick and brief, but the refreshing of snow is slow and lasting. These comparisons remind us that the word of the Bible can refresh us in every season of our condition. Sometimes we need a quick, short refreshing, like rain. At other times we need a slower, longer refreshing, like snow. Whether the refreshing is like rain or snow, the word causes us to grow and bear fruit, and it will accomplish God's delight upon us (v. 11).

20. “A mirror” (James 1:23).

The word of the Bible is like a mirror; it reflects our true appearance and condition. By reading the Bible, we see our real countenance and know our true condition. It is difficult to find a person who has not seen himself when he comes to the word in the Bible.

21. “Restoring the soul... / Making the simple wise... / Making the heart joyous... / Enlightening the eyes” (Psa. 19:7-8).

The Bible functions in a sweet way to restore and refresh our soul, to make us wise, to make our heart joyous, and to enlighten our eyes. The word manifests these functions when we read the Bible. Our soul may be depressed, but a word in the Bible will restore and refresh us. We may be simple, that is, foolish, but a word from the Bible will make us wise. We may be troubled in our heart, but a word in the Bible will make us joyous; and we may be blind, but a word from the Bible will enlighten our eyes.

22. “Are spirit and are life” (John 6:63).

The Lord’s words, the word of the Bible, are spirit and life. God is Spirit; He is the source of life. The word of the Bible comes out of God, so it comes out of the Spirit and out of life. Since the source of the word is Spirit and life, it is spirit and life. The word of the Bible enables us to have Spirit and life; it causes us to receive life from the Spirit and to live according to the Spirit.

23. “My words...are life to those who find them, / And healing to all their flesh” (Prov. 4:20-22; see also 16:24).

The word of the Bible can spiritually nourish us and also heal our flesh. Because the word of the Bible can restore our soul and make our heart joyous, it can heal our body. Our soul is refreshed, our heart is made joyous, and our body is healed because of the word of the Bible. There is a saying, “When the heart is happy, the body grows fat.” Since the word of the Bible makes our heart happy, it can also make our bodies healthy.

24. “Counselors” (Psa. 119:24).

This verse says that the word of the Bible is our counselor. This is true. Often the word of the Bible is far better than the ideas or suggestions of any counselor, strategist, or consultant. We should consider all things with the Bible, the best counselor, and consult it in order to give the Lord an opportunity to give us His counsel and thoughts.

25. “Likened to...the rock” (Matt. 7:24-25).

The word of the Bible is like a rock. It is reliable and firm. If our life and work are based on the Bible, they will be like a solid and reliable house built on a rock. The word of the Bible is the solid foundation of our life and work. This is another function of the Bible.