

## ***The Value of Scripture Memorization***

***Dr. Andrew M. Davis, Pastor, First Baptist church in Durham, N.C.***

There are numerous spiritual benefits to the memorization of Scripture. A proper assessment of these benefits begins with understanding the role of the written word of God in our spiritual development. Jesus Christ openly stated that our spiritual existence depends upon the word of God: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4) The words of God are written in only one place: The Bible. Also, according to the Apostle Peter one of our ongoing responsibilities is to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," (2 Peter 3:18) and that we are to "make every effort to add to our faith goodness, and to goodness knowledge..." (2 Peter 1:5). But how are we to grow? Growth in the Lord is called "sanctification," the process by which we become more and more like Jesus Christ and more and more separated from the world. Jesus Christ says that happens by the Word of God: "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17) However, the Word of God must enter us through our MIND – through our understanding – in order to change our hearts. Thus we are to meditate deeply on Scripture in order to understand it better, so that our hearts may be changed. And we are to meditate on "**every** word that comes from the mouth of God." There is no more useful discipline to this careful process of verse by verse meditation than memorization. Memorization is not the same as meditation, but it is almost impossible for someone to memorize a passage of Scripture without somewhat deepening his/her understanding of those verses. Plus, once the passage is memorized, a lifetime of reflection is now available through ongoing review...while driving on long trips, while walking on beaches, while conversing with friends, memorized verses can flow from you and cause a deepening of understanding.

Furthermore, these verses also sanctify us by causing us to hate sin and to determine to fight it vigorously. Through memorization, we are able to stand in the moment of temptation through the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." (Ephesians 6:17) Therefore did the Psalmist say, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:9, 11) In addition, the word sanctifies us by transforming our entire worldview from secular to heavenly: "Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2) The "renewing of your minds" happens by the flow of Scripture through them like a pure river. As this river flows through your mind constantly, you will see things more and more the way God does, if you are a child of God... for "we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16) This gives us more and more wisdom to deal with this world. However, this benefit does not merely bless US in our own growth and development, but it becomes a treasure trove for the growth of the church as well. The Scripture memorizer will be used mightily by God to teach and encourage other Christians, with an apt word from the perfect Word of God: "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom..." (Colossians 3:16) How better can you obey Colossians 3:16 than by Scripture memorization? The "word of Christ" will indeed "dwell in you richly" as you memorize it, and then work it over in your mind through meditation. Then you will most certainly be useful to God to "teach and admonish" another brother or sister. Scripture builds the Church to its final doctrinal and practical maturity (Ephesians 4:13-16) and God uses those who memorize it to do this building in a powerful and eternally fruitful way.

Finally, the memorization of Scripture enables us to bless lost people with a powerful and vivid presentation of the gospel of salvation. "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17) Those who memorize Scripture obey Peter's

command in this regard: "Always to prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have." (1 Peter 3:15) The "preparation" Peter had in mind is best done memorizing Scripture.

Remember that it is Scripture which is "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15) The evangelist who stores up Scripture on the life of Christ, for example, can vividly retell the miracle stories to a generation which is Biblically illiterate, which knows very little about the life of Christ. That person can also give the theology of salvation from Paul's epistles, if they have memorized those books. In short, Scripture memorization makes one a much more powerful and effective evangelist. There are other benefits---comfort during trials and bereavement, power and wisdom for counseling, the development of heavenly-mindedness, the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit, conviction over indwelling sin, fruitful passage of time while waiting for delayed plane flights, etc. Suffice it to say that this is well worth our time. When Judgment Day comes, we will regret the waste of a single moment not used for the glory of Christ. We will, however, not regret on moment we spent diligently studying God's Word and hiding it in our heart. We will only wish we'd spent more moments doing this.