

THE LITTLE BOOK Revelation 10:1-11

INTRODUCTION:

George came home from work after a very long and terrible day. Everything had gone wrong. His secretary called in sick and he couldn't figure out how to use the fax machine. The photocopier jammed and the paper caught on fire. The district manager scolded him for not meeting his monthly quota. As he plopped down in his favorite easy chair he said to his wife, "I've had nothing but bad news at the office today. If there is one thing I don't want, it is more bad news." His wife gently replied, "In that case, you'll be glad to know that 3 out of 4 of your children did not break their arms today."

One of the most essential skills in life is to learn to take the bad along with the good, to enjoy the pleasant and to endure the unpleasant, to make the most of the bittersweet experiences in life. Those who do not learn this essential skill can wallow in self-pity and become mired in bitterness.

Something that helps Christians develop this skill of acceptance is to learn the truth that both the bitter and the sweet in life ultimately come from our Lord.

It was Job who asked of his wife, "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" (Job 2:10) The obvious answer is, "no, we must accept the trouble as well as the good." Job recognized that, inevitably, our lives must include both the sweet and the bitter and we must learn to accept both.

You know, that principle is not simply true for life in general; it is true for God's Word in particular. There are parts of Scripture that are pleasant words, easy to understand, nice to know, comforting to hear. And there are parts of God's Word that have a bitter flavor and leave a sour aftertaste.

John, the author of the book of Revelation, had just such an experience with a word from the Lord. May I read a portion of that with you this morning? From Revelation 10:5-10...

⁵ Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. ⁶ And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay!" ⁷ But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

⁸ *Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."*

⁹ *So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey."* ¹⁰ *I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour.* ¹¹ *Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."*

Robed in the cryptic verbiage of apocalyptic language, John showed us how we are to receive God's Word, whether it be sweet or sour.

I. **TAKE GOD'S WORD (10:8; 10:9)**

First of all, we are to take God's Word.

Twice in these few verses, John was told to take the little scroll that lay in the hand of one of God's angels. Scrolls were the books of John's era. They were the medium for the preservation of the written word.

This particular little scroll was a message from God and John was commanded to take it. The scroll was not forced on him. The scroll was not offered to him. John was told to take it.

John records that, in response, he went to the angel and asked him to give him the scroll. Look at the text and note: the angel did not do as John requested. He did not *give* John the scroll but he repeated the command: *take it*.

As it was for John, likewise it is for us: God's Word is available to us and we are commanded to take it. It was never intended that God's Word should be a decorative accessory, gracing a coffee table, a mantle or a curio cabinet. It was never intended that God's Word should be a lucky charm, a talisman or a superstitious amulet. It was never intended that God's Word should be on a shelf. God intends that we should reach out and take it. Take it off the shelf, off the coffee table, off the mantle, out of the curio cabinet and into our hands.

The authors of Scripture endured much so that we might have God's Word. The translators of the Bible sacrificed much, some even giving their very lives, so that we might have God's Word *in our language*. You do not need to study Hebrew and become fluent in Greek so that you can read God's Word. But you must take it! You must pick the Bible up and read it for it to do you any good. To fail to read your Bible is akin to failing to read a personal letter, failing to open an e-mail, failing to take a phone call.

II. How are we to receive God's Word? Take it
FEED ON GOD'S WORD (10:9)
 Take it and feed on it.

This figure of eating the scroll seems curious to us but it would not have seemed curious to John. That imagery is often used in the Bible to convey the idea of internalizing the Word of God.

For instance, in Jeremiah 15:16, the prophet wrote:

¹⁶ *When your words came, I ate them;
 they were my joy and my heart's delight,
 for I bear your name,
 O LORD God Almighty.*

And the idea of God's Word being sweet like honey is not new, either. In Ezekiel 3:1-3, Ezekiel said:

*And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel." ² So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.
³ Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.*

In Psalm 19:9-10, the poet penned:

^{9b} *The ordinances of the LORD are sure
 and altogether righteous.
¹⁰ They are more precious than gold,
 than much pure gold;
 they are sweeter than honey,
 than honey from the comb.*

And in Psalm 119:103, David observed:

¹⁰³ *How sweet are your words to my taste,
 sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

William Barclay notes that there is a practical and a historical background to this figure of speech. Barclay says that it was the Jewish educational custom to smear a slate with a mixture of honey and flour to create a kind of a waxy surface into which letters could be formed. The student would be told what the letters of the alphabet were and how they sounded. Then, upon review, if the pupil could correctly identify a letter and associate the proper sound to it, he was rewarded by being allowed to scrape that letter off of the slate and eat the sweet wax.

John was told that God's Word would be sweet as honey in his mouth. And some of God's Word is sweet to hear. We enjoy the message of redemption, of forgiveness and of heaven. We delight to hear about God's love, Jesus' miracles and the Spirit's presence. Grace, mercy and peace are to be desired. Love, joy and harmony are attractive, to be sure.

But, be honest. Aren't there some parts of the Bible that are a little harder to swallow? Aren't there some doctrines that are difficult to digest? Sometimes the Bible confronts, convicts and even condemns and that doesn't sit well.

Quite frankly, I don't like some of what I read in Scripture. I don't like to read about a judgment and that not all will be saved. I don't like to think about hell and eternal punishment. I could wish that there were various ways, multiple truths and alternative lives.

God's Word, taken seriously, demands change in our lives and that can be a bitter pill to swallow.

Like John, we must take God's Word. We must internalize it. And then, by command of the King, we must share it.

III. **SHARE GOD'S WORD (10:11)**

John, the revelator, wrote:

¹⁰ I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. ¹¹ Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

John did not receive a revelation for himself, alone. God's Word came to John in order that he would write it down and share it with others.

And, likewise, after John took the scroll and internalized it, he was then commanded to proclaim it. *"You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."*

In the next several verses, we learn what John was to tell people of every language, tribe and nation. He was to tell them about the events that must take place at the end of time.

What John was to tell the world was that Jesus is coming again. And when he comes again, every knee will bow. And every tongue will confess...that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.

And what I am to tell you is that when the Lord returns, *your* knee will bow and *your* tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. You will either bow

in reverent worship or you will bow in trembling fear as a defeated foe. But bow you will.

John was to tell that, on the day of Jesus' return, a chorus of voices in heaven will affirm that:

The kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ (His Anointed One), and he will reign for ever and ever.

And I am to tell you the same thing.

Christians are people who have heard, believed and acted upon the good news of the Gospel. And Christians are people who are responsible to share what they have heard.

CONCLUSION:

If you will go to the trouble of reaching out to take God's Word...really take it, devour it and internalize it, you will find some of it is pretty sweet and some of it is pretty bitter stuff. But you do not have the option of changing the message; the message is to change you.

And then, having taken the Word and having taken it in, you are responsible to take it out to those who need to hear the message.

Parts of the message we must share are great good news that is a joy to give and a joy to receive. And parts of the message are stern warnings of mortal danger. It must all be told and it must all be told with tender love...even the dire warnings.

I read a story this week about a church that was hiring a new minister. After the board announced its choice, someone asked why they chose the one they did. After all, he and at least one other candidate had both told the congregation that the world is going to hell. The chairman of the board explained that the one they hired seemed concerned.

When we must share news that is unpopular, unpleasant or unappreciated, it is vitally important that people know we are concerned.

The songwriter, Carol Owens wrote a simple little chorus that says, "God forgave my sin in Jesus' name; I've been born again in Jesus' name; And in Jesus' name I come to you To share his love as he told me to."

You have received a message from the Lord. Will you share it...with people of every language tribe and nation? Will you?

INVITATION: # 436 – "Freely, Freely"