

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! In this edition I'll be discussing...words! Well, a little more than that actually.

I would encourage you to go to <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info> as I continue to update the site. I have links to several specific features below. Let me know what you think, whether you have any suggestions, or any requests.

As always, I'm extending an invitation for submissions to be published in The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN). Additionally, if you have a subject or a question that you would like to have covered in a future edition of TGNN, feel free to send me a note and I'll do my best to address it.

The primary criteria for inclusion of articles are these:

1. It should be oriented towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. It should use the scriptures as a source of information.
3. It should include references for any quoted 3rd party sources.
4. It should not be political.

If you have a testimony to share, please send that to me and let me know if you would like it to be included in a future edition of the newsletter. Please keep in mind the four criteria listed above where applicable.

You can view previous editions of The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN) in PDF (Portable Document Format) at <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/TheGospelNotesNewsletter>

Or you can access other educational/informational/inspirational resources at <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources>

You can find the current preaching schedule for the Springfield, Missouri Restoration Branch at https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources/Service_Schedule.php

If you do not wish to receive the newsletter, please let me know. All responses to me will be treated confidentially unless you tell me otherwise.

Exodus 19

10 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes,

11 And be ready against the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.

1 Nephi 5

228 And then, behold, I proceed according to that which I have spoken; and this I do, that the more sacred things may be kept for the knowledge of my people.

229 Nevertheless, I do not write anything upon plates, save it be that I think it be sacred.

1 Peter 1

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation,

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

1 Nephi 4

48 And I said unto them that our father also saw that the justice of God did also divide the wicked from the righteous;

49 And the brightness thereof was like unto the brightness of a flaming fire, which ascendeth up unto God forever and ever, and hath no end.

I've chosen four words to discuss – “sanctify,” “sacred,” “holy,” and “righteous.” These terms are often used in religious discussions in reference to the things that are good, and of course there are counterpart words like “corrupt,” “abominable,” “evil,” and “wicked.” I would like to examine the ones on the good side since I think that is probably more beneficial than studying those things that are bad, though there are times when we have to see both to get a full understanding.

I've chosen these particular words because they each seem to be connected to the same spiritual values. In today's vernacular these words are often used in jest, as part of humor, or casually to describe a simple qualitative difference between two things. We've all heard these things before:

- “His theory about the flat earth is his sacred cow.”
- “He needs to sanctify that report with his signature.”
- “Holy cow, that is amazing!”
- “They were fed up with righteous indignation.”

These are just a few examples, but it illustrates that these words all refer to something that we know about even if we don't think about them much. They all go back to a scriptural origin in one way or another, even if the way they are used today has become corrupt over time and by culture.

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary (<https://m-w.com>) defines these terms as follows:

Sanctify

verb

transitive verb

1: to set apart to a sacred purpose or to religious use : consecrate

2: to free from sin : purify

3a: to impart or impute sacredness, inviolability, or respect to

3b: to give moral or social sanction to

4: to make productive of holiness or piety

Sacred (sense 1)

adjective

1a: dedicated or set apart for the service or worship of a deity

1b: devoted exclusively to one service or use (as of a person or purpose)

2a: worthy of religious veneration : holy

2b: entitled to reverence and respect

3: of or relating to religion : not secular or profane

4: archaic : accursed

5a: unassailable, inviolable

5b: highly valued and important

Etymology

Middle English, from past participle of *sacren* to consecrate, from Anglo-French *sacrer*, from Latin *sacrare*, from *sacr-*, *sacer* *sacred*; akin to Latin *sancire* to make sacred, Hittite *šaklāi-* rite

Sacred (sense 2)

adjective

1: set apart in honor of someone (as a god)

2: holy sense

3: religious entry 1 sense 2

4: deserving respect or honor

Etymology

Middle English *sacred* "sacred," derived from early French *sacrer* "to make holy, dedicate to God," from Latin *sacrare* (same meaning), from *sacr-*, *sacer* "sacred, holy" — related to *consecrate*, *sacrifice*

Holy

adjective

1: exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness

2: divine

3: devoted entirely to the deity or the work of the deity

4a: having a divine quality

4b: venerated as or as if sacred

5 —used as an intensive: "this is a holy mess"

Righteous

adjective

1: acting in accord with divine or moral law : free from guilt or sin

2a: morally right or justifiable

2b: arising from an outraged sense of justice or morality

3 slang : genuine, excellent

The very use of these words puts you into a spiritual mindset because they were first used in a spiritual sense. The origin of words is sometimes an interesting subject because the way we use them changes over time, but these words – though obviously used for different purposes today than originally – still give us some insight into how we view good from evil, love versus hate, and so on.

I wouldn't bring these up just to make you more informed about the origin of the words though. The meaning these words bring into our lives is important, especially as we view the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the nature of God, the way we serve him, and how we should be judged. These words, and others like them, shape how we see life in both spiritual and temporal ways.

In the temporal sense, the actions we take have spiritual consequences for both ourselves and others. We can see this from a chain of reasoning:

We sanctify ourselves by sacrificing something of lesser value for something of greater value.

We hold sacred those truths that bring us closer to God.

We view God as holy and just, worthy of our worship.

We hope to be made righteous through the blood of the lamb.

The words we use are often just simple representations of something. We call a certain type of fruit an "apple" because we need to use a noun to describe something that we can all agree on. In the beginning God gave Adam a language that was "pure and undefiled" because he needed something to use in reference to the world around him. It lost that "pure and undefiled" status over time – it became corrupt - because of how sin entered into the life of man.

We use words like "sanctify" and "holy," though, because we understand they are more than just verbs or nouns – each represents a certain truth. It is that truth that matters. Jesus also said this in one of his final pre-crucifixion prayers:

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.

The word he is referring to is the word of God, and not just a collection of writings of various men. The word of God is a living thing just as God himself is alive. In fact, Jesus himself is called the word of God, or, the word made flesh.

John 1:14 And the same word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

From the mouth of an infinite, eternal being, words are special. They are part of himself. He spoke and the worlds came into order. The words of God are the action of God upon

reality. The words we speak, unless they are the word of God, do not carry the same weight of power that his do.

Hebrews 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

2 Peter 3:5 For this they willingly are ignorant of: that of old the heavens and the earth standing in the water and out of the water were created by the word of God;

Jacob 3:12 For behold, by the power of his word, man came upon the face of the earth, which earth was created by the power of his word.

Mormon 4:78 Who shall say that it was not a miracle, that by his word the heaven and the earth should be; and by the power of his word man was created of the dust of the earth; and by the power of his word hath miracles been wrought?

The word of God is a power that is creative and destructive, glorious and terrible, for by it the mind and will of God is manifest. God's words are not like our words. We have nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, etc., but merely putting them together does not make them the express power of God in action. They only have power when God manifests himself through them.

The ancient Israelites witnessed for well over 40 years how the word of God works, witnessing miracles on a daily basis. Like God himself, his words are living words and this is why they cannot return to him void. They cannot be nullified because they are a living manifestation of his will, and his will is as unchangeable as he is.

Words like "sanctify," "sacred," "holy," and "righteous," may sometimes - to us - be words that are ideals and ideologies, but to God they are expressions of truth. If we become "sanctified," then it is because a change is wrought upon us spiritually. If we are "righteous" because of the sacrifice of Jesus and our willingness to submit to him, then we are marked with the name of Jesus in our spirit. These are not just theoretical study items, but real expressions of God himself. He knows those who are his.

When we think of prophets like Enoch, who spoke and the earth trembled, or rivers turned out of their courses, etc., we find that the scriptures use interesting phrases to describe what happened:

Genesis 7:17 And all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.

This was not a power of using dictionary entries assembled into sentences, but a language. Enoch was given a gift that changed mere words into language, and that language was

inspired and supported by God. It wasn't just the collective meanings of words, but the active manifestation of God's will.

The same is true any time that God's words are given – a power is exercised which brings about a change: God spoke and the elements stood up, the heaven and the earth were created, man came from the dust of the earth, salvation was declared, they that were dead were raised to life, they that were sick were healed, those who sat in darkness were brought into light.

Today's language is largely missing that power because it is not aligned with God's will. Using "thou" and "thus" and "saith" and "dost" doesn't make the words powerful. You may recognize the power that generated those words, but without support they are only words and nothing more. For a moment, think of the words we have been given from the scriptures as gasoline. You can use it to briefly lighten up a campfire, or you can put it in your car where it can be used properly in a way that is useful to get you to your destination.

This is why Nephi's words are so pertinent to us today:

2 Nephi 14

1 And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way.

2 But behold, why do ye ponder these things in your hearts? Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost, ye could speak with the tongue of angels?

3 And now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels, save it were by the Holy Ghost? Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ.

Paul wrote the following, which seems to echo the same meaning by the way he lived those words among the people:

1 Corinthians 2

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

2 For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Before his conversion it would have been inconceivable that Saul would have been able to bring a message that was filled with the power of God: he had not yet entered in by the way, and had not yet received the Holy Ghost. When he was converted he became the living validation of Nephi's words because he received the power to speak with the tongue of angels, which is the word of Christ.

The same holds true for each of us. When we are converted we receive the gift of God, and by proper use thereof we become the living vessels of the Holy Spirit, who can speak through us in words and in deeds. That is not to say we must speak in tongues to prove our conversion as some might suggest. Speaking in tongues is not the only way for God to express himself through us. Yet it is true that when we need something more powerful than vain words to carry us through this life there is a clear pathway before us, and Nephi explained it very simply.

2 Nephi 13

23 For, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter.

24 For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.

25 And then are ye in this straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son;

26 And ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye enter in by the way, ye should receive.

27 And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this straight and narrow path, I would ask if all is done.

28 Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far, save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save;

29 Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope and a love of God and of all men.

30 Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father, Ye shall have eternal life.

31 And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God.

32 And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen.

As Jesus is the word of God, he is also the bread of life:

John 6

32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

It should not be surprising that Satan tempted Jesus with words, tempting him to misuse them.

Matthew 4

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights and had communed with God, he was afterwards an hungered and was left to be tempted of the devil.

3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

4 But Jesus answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

The word of God is much more than nouns and verbs, but it is life to those who seek him.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.