

Introduction

In 1981 I had the opportunity to go through a six-week sales course that was originally designed by Xerox for their sales force. It was a fantastic course and I am grateful to have gone through it. We learned twenty-nine different methods to close a sale. I had no idea there were so many ways to close a deal. On the presentation side, one of the things that we learned as an acronym called FAB. It stands for Features, Advantages, and Benefits. We learned to talk about a feature of the product, the advantages of that feature, and the benefit gained by having that feature.

In Romans 2, Paul has just destroyed the Jews three things that they were trusting in for security. The Jews thought that because they were physical descendants of Abraham that they would escape the wrath of God in the day of judgment. They thought that because they had been given the Mosaic Law that they were superior in their knowledge. Third, they thought that because they were physically circumcised their covenant with God was in place and they had a free pass to heaven. Paul has just destroyed their logic and understanding. He has removed these three features and they are now asking, “Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?” Our message today is about the greatest benefit that the Jews were given, the oracles of God. The Greek word is *logion*, which comes from *logos*, the Word. The greatest or chief benefit that the Jews were given is that they were entrusted with the Word of God. The Word of God contains the Law, and it also contains the Prophets. In verse twenty-one, Paul mentions that the righteousness of God was witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. The oracles of God contain both the Law and the Prophets, and the Jews had been entrusted with these oracles.

(Rom 3:1-2) “Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?
{2} Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.”

(Rom 3:21) “But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,”

We will first look at some features of the Word. Second, we will look at some advantages that the Jews had. Third, we will look at the benefits of the Scriptures.

Greatest Benefit (Rom 3:1-2)

1. Features of this Benefit
2. Advantages for the Jews
3. Benefits of the Oracles of God

1. Features of the Benefit

There are roughly twenty features of the oracles of God, and we could spend weeks or months looking closely at all these features. So, I am going to give you just a few of these features, a sampling. Some of you have been to Olive Garden, and one of the choices you have is the Tour of Italy, and it sells for \$18.79. It has the Classic Lasagna, Fettuccine Alfredo, and Chicken Parmigiana on it. They are not all meal-sized portions; it is a sampling of some of their most popular dinners. Today, we are looking at a sampling of some of the most popular features of the word. There is a much more complete menu with all of the features, but we can't possibly enjoy all of them in one meal. The first Scripture that we will look at is in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

a. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

We read that “All Scripture is inspired by God.” The Scriptures that the Jews were given were not inspired or written by men. These were men who were filled with the Holy Spirit and were being given words by God to write on His behalf.

(2 Tim 3:16-17) “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

In 2 Peter 1:20-21, we see that “no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. The words of Mohammed, Confucius, Joseph Smith, or others may be religious, and may contain some pithy sayings, but they are not inspired by God. The Jews were given the oracles of God. No other group of people or nation could make a similar boast.

(2 Pet 1:20-21) “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

The second feature that we see in this passage is that this inspired word of God was profitable. There was great reward and profit in reading and obeying these inspired words of God. It was profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. It was profitable in that it equips God’s people to serve Him. In Ecclesiastes 12, Solomon wrote that the writing of many books is endless, and that excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body. But he concludes by telling everyone to “fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. The Word of God is profitable for everyone and it applies to everyone. This is not like all the other books that are written and inspired by men; this is the inspired Word of God and it is profitable and applicable to everyone.

(Eccl 12:12-13) “But beyond this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion *to books* is wearying to the body. {13} The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person.”

b. Hebrews 4:12.

The second passage on this Sampler Plate is Hebrews 4:12. We find a number of features of the Word of God contained in this verse. First, we see that the Word of God is living; it is alive. That means that when the Word of God enters into our lives, it does something to us.

(Heb 4:12) “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

In 1 Thessalonians 2:13 Paul thanked God that the Thessalonians had received the Word of God and accepted it for what it really is, the word of God, which performs its work in those who believe. The word of God is living and when it gets inside of a believer, it performs its work. That is why in Hebrews 4:12 that we see that it is both living and active.

(1 Thess 2:13) “For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* 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.”

In 1 Peter 2:1-2, we are exhorted to long for the pure milk of the word so that we can grow in respect to salvation, if we have indeed tasted the kindness of the Lord. When a believer, one who has tasted the kindness of God, feeds on the word, it performs its work in them. It is living and active and begins to help them grow. In my own life, I saw no changes in my life after I received Christ until I started feeding on the pure milk of the word. All at once, the Word of God began performing its work in me, and my life began to be transformed.

(1 Pet 2:2-3) “like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, {3} if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.”

In Isaiah 55:10-11, the prophet wrote that as the rain and snow come down from heaven and water the earth, making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so God’s Word, which goes from His mouth, will not return empty. God’s word will accomplish and succeed in performing its work in us. God’s Word, that He gave to the Jewish people, is living and active; no one else on earth was given God’s living oracles.

(Isa 55:10-11) "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth, And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”

We also see that the Word of God is sharper than any two-edge sword. When we speak of a sharp sword, we think of something that can cut through anything quickly. It does not take much effort to cut something when the knife is sharp. When the Word of God is doing its work in us, it cuts right through everything. It is not just sharp, but it is piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow. It is sharp enough to cut through and judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

(Heb 4:12) “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

Biblically speaking, sharpness also refers to having keen mental abilities. Solomon wrote that iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” He was not referring to a metal edge in our lives; he was speaking about our mental abilities. A sharp mind sees and understands things. A sharp mind sees problems and also sees solutions. A sharp mind does not get deceived, but is discerning and wise. It is no wonder that companies want to recruit and hire the sharpest of minds.

(Pr 27:17) “Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another.”

In Psalm 119:98-100, we see that the commandments of God make us wiser than our enemies. God’s commandments give us more insight than our teachers, and they give us more understanding than the aged. How can the Word do this? The word of God does this because it is sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of bone and marrow.

(Ps 119:98-100) “Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, For they are ever mine. {99} I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. {100} I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts.”

One of the things that this living and active Word does is judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Our thoughts and intentions govern the things we do in our lives, and since God’s word is going to perform its work in our lives, it zeroes in on our thoughts and intentions.

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul tells us not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. How do we renew our minds? We have to fill our minds with this living and active Word of God which is sharp and piercing, performs its work in our minds and thoughts so that our lives are transformed.

(Rom 12:2) “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

c. **Jeremiah 23:29**

The third Sampler on this Tour of Features plate is Jeremiah 23:29. We find that God’s word is like fire and like a hammer which shatters a rock. The west coast of the United States is struggling with fires right now. Hundreds of thousands of acres have burned up. There have been who towns that burned up. A fire spreads and it consumes. The Word of God spreads and it consumes those that it touches, only in a positive manner, not in destruction like the fires on the west coast.

(Jer 23:29) "Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"

I remember playing in the Las Vegas Invitational tournament on the PGA Tour in 1983. I committed to be playing or practicing, or to be in my room studying and meditating on the Word of God. I spent hours that week at a time in God’s Word. My caddy remarked that I should be a preacher, because all I talked about was the Word of God. He could tell that I was passionate and on fire. That is the way that the Word of God is intended to be. It is a fire that spreads and consumes, which is what is what my caddy observed in Las Vegas.

The Word of God is also like a hammer which shatters a rock. I believe this speaks to the authority of God’s Word. The hard things in our lives get shattered by the Word of God. There is nothing too difficult for God and His word. It is living and active and powerful. When we come up against difficult situations, we need to apply the Word of God in those situations, because it will shatter those rocks. My favorite way to pray is to pray God’s word. When we pray God’s word, we are applying the hammer to that hard situation.

We have just looked briefly at three Scriptures that speak of the features of God’s word. There are numerous other Scriptures that give us other features. This was just a Sampler Plate, but it shows the features of the greatest benefit given to the Jews: God’s oracles.

2. Advantages for the Jews

Paul also addressed the advantages for the Jews. He brings up the question on behalf of his readers, but he does not go into any kind of detail about advantages. In looking at the advantages of the Jews, there were numerous advantages, so I just want to offer a Sampler Plate.

a. Deuteronomy 4:7-8

The first Scripture that I want to look at is Deuteronomy 4:7-8. Moses wrote, “For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?” Moses has just given two advantages that the Jews had over all the other nations. First, God was near to the Jews. He had called them to be His people and had made a covenant with them. He was going to be their Shepherd, and He would be with them. He would answer whenever they called on Him. The second advantage that we is the one that Paul mentions in our text; the Jews had been given the statutes and judgments in the oracles of God.

(Deut 4:7-8) “For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? {8} Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?”

b. Psalm 147:12-20

The second passage that I want to look at is Psalm 147:12-20. In verse twenty, we see that God had not dealt with any nation like He had with Israel. So, how did God deal with the Jewish people? What was the advantage of the Jews over everyone else? Let’s look at the preceding verses.

(Psalm 147:12-20) “Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! {13} For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your sons within you. {14} He makes peace in your borders; He satisfies you with the finest of the wheat... {19} He declares His words to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel. {20} He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His ordinances, they have not known them. Praise the LORD!”

In verse thirteen, God strengthened the bars of their gates. The gates were to keep out their enemies, so this is speaking of their defense. In verse fourteen, He made peace in their borders. God protected them and gave them peace with their neighbors. God had not protected any other nation like He did for the Jews. This was a great advantage. We also see that God had blessed their sons, and satisfied them with the finest of wheat. God’s blessing and favor were on the Jewish people. In verse nineteen, we find the same advantage that Paul mentioned in our text, that God had declared His words (oracles) to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances. These were all tremendous advantages, and He had not dealt this with any nation. There was an advantage to being a Jew, but it was not going to give them a free pass to heaven.

c. Deuteronomy 7:7-8

The third sampler verse for advantages is Deuteronomy 7:7-8. We see that God did not love the Jews or choose them because they were more in number. The size did not matter to God. He chose them because He loved them, and kept an oath to their forefathers. The Lord brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand. He did miracles on behalf of Israel that He did not do for any

other nation. He redeemed them from the house of slavery. The Jews were the recipients of God's love, His miraculous powers, deliverance, and provision. He had not done this for any other nation. These were great advantages that the Jews had enjoyed.

(Deut 7:7-8) "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, {8} but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

3. Benefits of the Oracles of God

At Christmas time, one of the presents that many companies and individuals give out is a box of Chocolate. Whitmans has a popular sampler box of all dark chocolates. If you prefer the organic, non-GMO chocolates, Lake Champlain has an assortment package that you can buy. These sampler boxes just give an indication of some of the products available. There are numerous benefits that we derive from the Scriptures. Rather than give you thirty different benefits from the word of God, I am going to give you just a sample of these benefits.

a. Galatians 3:24

The first benefit is found in Galatians 3:24. We see that the Law, the oracles of God are to lead us to Christ. The purpose of the Law was not to burden us. It was not to make us legalistic. The Law was to point us or lead us to Christ. Our salvation is the greatest benefit that we have, and the oracles of God are to lead us to Christ. The Jews had been given these oracles to lead them into a relationship with the Messiah.

(Gal 3:24) "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."

In Romans 10, Paul asked how people were going to call on Christ if they have not believed, and how will they believe unless they have heard. He said, how shall they hear without a preacher. At the end he concludes "so faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." The Jews had been given the word, which was to bring them to faith in Christ.

(Rom 10:14-17) "How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? {15} And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!" {16} However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" {17} So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

b. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Earlier, under the features, we looked at 2 Timothy 3:16. We saw that the Word of God is inspired by God and profitable. Now, I want to use the same verse and look at the benefits that we derive from the Word of God. The first thing that it does is train us in righteousness.

(2 Tim 3:16-17) “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

In training us in righteousness, the Scriptures tell us what the standard is. We know the target that we are aiming for. Last year I was given some goals, and I had to ask my manager about some of them because I had no idea what they were all about. It is hard to hit a goal if you do not see or know what the goal is. The Scriptures are a plumbline and tell us what is righteous and what is not. The Scriptures reprove us when we miss the mark. We are convicted of sin, and the Holy Spirit uses the Word to show us when we have missed that mark. The Scriptures also correct us, or show us how to get back on track. Finally, the Scriptures train us in righteousness, showing us what we have to do to stay on track.

In Psalm 119:9-11, God tells us that a young man can keep his way pure by keeping it according to God’s word. When we hide God’s word in our heart, it helps us to keep from sinning. The Scriptures show us what God says is righteous, and what we need to do to stay on the path of righteousness.

(Ps 119:9-11) “How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Your word.... {11} Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.”

The next benefit we see in 2 Timothy 3:16 is that the Word of God equips us. It equips us in for every good work so that we can be adequate. The Word of God equips us for teaching others. The Word of God equips us in prophecy. The Word of God equips us in evangelism. The Word of God equips us in serving others. The Word of God equips us in leadership. The Word of God equips us for every good work. As a pastor, I must teach the Word of God so that others can be equipped.

(2 Tim 3:16-17) “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

c. Acts 20:32

The third sampler of benefits that I want to use is Acts 20:32. Paul was addressing the elders in Ephesus at a place called Miletus. This was the last time that they would see him and he is giving his final instructions to them. He commends them to God and to the word of His grace. Notice that Paul gives two benefits of the Word. First, he said that the Word of God is able to build them up. Second, he tells them that Word of God can give them an inheritance.

(Acts 20:32) "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build (oikodomeo) you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

The word build up is oikodomeo in the Greek, which means to put a roof over a house. It is most often translated as edify or edification, which means to build up. We all need encouragement and to be built up or edified. In Ephesians 4:29, Paul exhorts us not to allow any word out of our mouth that is not good for edification. Our words need to build up, strengthen, encourage, and edify one another. Since the Word of God does this, we need to speak the word to one another.

(Eph 4:29) “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification (oikodome) according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”

In Romans 15:4, we find that the Scriptures were written for our instruction, and that through perseverance and its encouragement we might have hope. The Scriptures build us up.

(Rom 15:4) “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

There are other ways that the Scriptures build us up. In Romans 10:17 we find that faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. The Scriptures build up our faith. Our faith gets built up as we read the testimonies of others. Our faith gets built up as we grow in our knowledge and wisdom. Our faith gets built up as we learn about God’s will for us. Our faith gets built up through the reading, studying, meditating, praying, and applying the Scriptures in our lives.

(Rom 10:17) “So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”

In addition to these, there are numerous other benefits to the Scriptures. God does not do anything without revealing it to the prophets. The Word is a lamp unto our feet. God tells us about future events, and we do well to pay attention to the prophetic word. All of these and many more benefits come through the oracles of God, and the Jews were the only ones that had been given the oracles of God. There was a great advantage in being a Jew. There were great benefits to being a Jew. But, the salvation of God was not guaranteed by being an earthly descendant of Abraham or by being circumcised. The Jews were going to have to give account to God for their deeds, who would judge impartially and righteously.

Conclusion and Applications

After Paul had taken down the three things that the Jews had been putting their trust and hope in, they were left questioning the advantage and benefit of being a Jew. In regard to giving account to God, there was no advantage. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All men will give account to God according to their deeds. God will impartially judge the Jew and the Gentile. But, there were some advantages and benefits given to the Jews, and in our text today Paul said that the chief benefit was the oracles of God. We have taken some time to look at the features of this benefit, the Word of God. It is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. It is inspired by God and profitable.

We also looked at some of the advantages given to the Jews. God gave His covenant with the Jewish people. He watched over them and blessed them. He protected them. There was no nation on earth that received this attention and care.

Finally, we looked at some of the benefits of God’s word, and there are many. Through God’s word we are tutored and led to Jesus. Through His word we are equipped for every good work. Through His word we are encouraged and built up in the faith. In the verse following our text today Paul asks a question, “What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?” Even though the Jews were given this incredible benefit, not all of them believed and availed themselves to the benefit. This morning, perhaps you have heard the gospel but have never believed; you have never received Christ into your life. If you would like to receive Christ this morning, pray with me this morning.

(Rom 3:3) “What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?”

“Father God, thank You for Your word. Thank You for revealing Yourself through Your Word. Jesus, I believe that You are the Christ, the One who came to set us free from our sins. I believe that You came and died for our sins and were raised from the dead on the third day, just as it was prophesied in Your word. I ask You to come into my life and forgive me of my sins. I confess You as my Lord this morning. I ask You to fill me with Your Spirit. I ask You to open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things from Your law. Help me to receive Your word for what it is and may it perform its work in me. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

Most of you have already received Christ into your life. However, there may be some here today that have not really appreciated this greatest benefit that we have been given, God’s precious oracles, the Word of God. Even though the Word has been at your disposal, you have not prioritized time in God’s word. You have not taken advantage of all the benefits of His word. God wants to give you an opportunity to repent and prioritize His word in your life. Job said that he treasured God’s word more than his necessary food. Tell God that you want to treasure and prioritize His word. The psalmist in Psalm 119 said, “I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love. Jeremiah said, “Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart.” Ask God to make His word a joy and a delight in your heart. Ask Him to give you a love for His word.

(Job 23:12) "I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”

(Ps 119:47) “I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love.”

(Jer 15:16) “Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.”

Father God, thank You for the treasure and benefit You have given us in Your word. We want to appreciate and take advantage of this tremendous benefit that You have offered us. Give us a fresh hunger for Your word. Help us to long for the pure milk of Your word so that we can grow. As we partake of Your word, make it the joy and delight of our heart. Holy Spirit, teach us and lead us in Your word. May Your word be living and active in our lives. May Your word perform its work in our lives. We pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Introduction (Rom 3:1-2, 3:21)

1. Features of the Benefit

- a. 2 Tim 3:16-17 (2 Pet 1:20-21, Eccl 12:12-13)
- b. Heb 4:12 (1 Thess 2:13, 1 Pet 2:2-3, Is 55:10-11, Pr 27:17, Ps 119:98-100, Rom 12:2)
- c. Jer 23:29

2. Advantages for the Jews

- a. Deut 4:7-8
- b. Psalm 147:12-20
- c. Deut 7:7-8

3. Benefits of the Oracles of God

- a. Gal 3:24 (Rom 10:14-17)
- b. 2 Tim 3:16-17 (Ps 119:9-11)
- c. Acts 20:32 (Eph 4:29, Rom 15:4, 10:17)

Conclusion and Applications