

What Good Can Come From Bible Study?

Isa. 34:16 – “Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.”

Diligent Study Urged

- Last few weeks considered the divine authority of Scripture and the general subject matter of them.
- Come now to the point where we must consider the importance of Scripture to our own lives and practices.

The Text, Isa. 34:16

- Earlier in chapter 34, Isaiah brought threats against the enemies of the people of God, which will not receive their complete fulfillment until the last day (vv. 4, 10). In this text (vv. 16-17) there is the confirmation of the entirety of the threats.

The Text, Isa. 34:16

- There is an intimation that all will be accomplished according to God’s word:
 - The study of the word is therefore required
 - It is called “The Book of the Lord” to honor it
 - Study of it is recommended by God himself
 - The manner of study is by reading
 - Fulfillment or accomplishment promised
 - None of them shall fail
 - All shall have their mates

The Text, Isa. 34:16

- The confirmation of the accomplishment of God’s prophecy is according to his own word.
 - He has spoken it himself
 - His Spirit will cause it to be certain
- Two doctrines arise from the text, then:
 - The Holy Scriptures are the book of the Lord
 - We must carefully and diligently read, search, consult, and seek his word in this book.

The First Doctrine

The Holy Scriptures are the Book of the Lord

The Holy Scriptures are the Book of the Lord

- In what respects we may rightly call the Holy Scriptures the Book of the Lord
- The evidence that it is so
- Some uses we should draw from this doctrine

In What Respects Scripture is The Book of the Lord

- The Lord is the subject-matter of the book. If we would know God and our duties to him, then we must know this book.
- The Lord is also the author of the book. We saw this in 2 Tim. 3:16. It is the product of the inspiration of his own Spirit:
 - He moved holy penmen, 2 Pet. 1:20-21.
 - He told them the subject matter
 - The very words were from him as though dictated; not simply the subject or the idea, but the words themselves.

The Evidence that Scripture is the Book of the Lord

- This book teaches what no mere mortal could teach, such as the history of creation, the sublime mysteries of our religion, and the eternal counsels of God.
- The doctrine itself is perfectly holy. It commands all holiness and forbids all impurity.
- The efficacy of the doctrine in its searching of the human heart and conscience.
- The miracles by which it was confirmed
- Finally, the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit

Some Uses of This Doctrine

- Information:
 - The Scripture is the best of books because it relates to us what no other book can: the true nature of God and what he truly requires of us.
 - Those who are enemies of Scripture make themselves the enemies of God: if men love God they will love his word. Their relish for the word of God is a "snapshot" of their relationship to the Author of the book. Those who are indifferent toward Scripture are either without grace or do not exercise it as God has required.

Some Uses of This Doctrine

- For exhortation:
 - Let us highly prize this book for the Author's sake.
 - Let us believe it in all its parts: the commands, that we may conform ourselves to them; the promises, that we may be encouraged by them; the threats, that we may be deterred from sin.
 - Let us submit ourselves to it, as the oracles of God and not as the words of men.
 - Finally, let us study to become well-acquainted with it, and make it our business to search the Scriptures. And this brings us to the second doctrine, which is:

The Second Doctrine

Holy Scriptures are a book to be carefully and diligently read,
searched, consulted, and sought into

By Whom Is Scripture To Be So Read & Studied?

- By all into whose hands the mercy of God brings it.
 - Magistrates (Josh. 1:8; Deut. 17:18-19)
 - Ministers (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
 - All those within the church (John 5:39)
 - Parents together with children (Deut. 6:6-7)
- These points follow:
 - Explain such seeking and study
 - Reasons for the doctrine
 - Reasonable and useful applications

Explain The Seeking and Searching We Should Do

- Two things: presuppositions and importance of the studious inquiry into Scripture.
- First, presuppositions regarding this seeking:
 - That man has lost his way and needs to find it (Ps. 119:176)
 - That man is in danger of being led even further astray by the devil, the world, and his own corrupt lusts

Presuppositions Continued

- That men are slow of heart to understand the mind of God, thus requiring diligence
- That the Scriptures are in places somewhat obscure and require that we spend time and effort in resolving them. Thus Ps. 119:18. But it is our glory to search out such matters.

- That there is a need for us to search such things out else we would not have been bidden to do so. This is a treasure hid in a field, so to speak.
- Finally, that there is a great gain from such diligent inquiry. Thus Ps. 19:10

The Importance of Diligent Inquiry

- There are both the matter of the duty and the manner of its obedience.
- Regarding the matter, three things:
 - We must read the Scriptures
 - We must become familiar with the actual “words,” the histories, prophecies, precepts, etc.
 - We must search out the mind of God in order to have a saving understanding of them, as Prov. 2:4-5 requires of us. Little labor results in little profit. We should search to know Scripture perfectly and narrowly as one who not only plows, but breaks the clods of dirt.

The Importance of Diligent Inquiry

- The manner of the duty:
 - We must highly esteem the treasure we will find in its pages; one will not search for what he does not highly value.
 - We must design the advantage of our souls, and not simply the accumulation of facts.
 - There must be serious application of our hearts to the work, not lazily nor randomly.
 - We must put forth some pains, as wrestlers or those who besiege a city.
 - There must be both diligence and constancy. It is the hand of the diligent that makes rich, while drowsiness clothes us in rags. So it is with spiritual riches as well.
 - There must be a thorough search of Scripture, not settling upon one or a few portions, but regarding the whole.

The Reasons For Diligent Study of Scripture

- The way of salvation is found only in Scripture (John 5:39).
- Scripture is the only rule of faith and life (Isa. 8:20).
- The Lord dictated it and gave it to us for this reason (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rom. 15:4). It is contempt of God to contemn his Book.
- We will be judged in terms of this book at the final day (John 12:48)

Practical Applications of the Second Doctrine

- Threefold:
 - *First*, For information
 - *Second*, For exhortation
 - *Third*, A supply of motives to the duty of searching the Scriptures carefully, diligently, and with constancy.

Inference, For Information

- The necessity of translation into the common language of the people of a nation
- People may and should read and study the Scriptures quite apart from the “permission” of church-guides
- Even the unlearned may reap many advantages from reading and studying the Scriptures in closet devotions.

Inference, For Exhortation

- If you do not know how to read, then learn. If there are some under your charge who do not know how to read, teach them. This is the minimal requirement for parents.
- If you know how to read, then procure a Bible. Go without luxuries or even other necessities rather than be without Scriptures.
- If you have a Bible, then study it frequently. Each day is not too often. What you memorize can be your constant companion.
- Finally, not just reading but searching is required. Do not settle for a superficial understanding of a few passages. Study with application, painfulness, diligence, and all means at your disposal. Reading by rote may be fine for the youngest, but is unsuitable for those who would master their subject.

Motives to Study Scripture

- God requires it
- It is by Scripture that we shall stand or fall forever.
- It is an exercise well pleasing to God, provided we approach the duty in faith:
 - The Spirit of God commends it (Acts 17:11)
 - A particular blessing is promised to those who faithfully carry it out (Rev. 1:3, et al.).

Motives to Study Scripture

- It is a great privilege to study Scriptures
 - Look to the church of ages past; how much they loved Scripture and how few copies they had
 - Look at the pagan world today; they have little or nothing of Scripture in their own tongues.
 - Consider how few helps there have been for understanding Scripture in days gone by and in other parts of the world and how many helps we have in our own country.

Motives to Study Scripture

- Consider that it is the practice of the people of God in days gone by and in the best times of the church to study Scripture and become conversant with its teachings. “Go forth in the footsteps of the

flock.”

- We find that the saints in the days of Scripture highly prized it (Ps 19, 119, etc).
- The best saints were those most addicted to study of Scripture, as David (Ps 119:97), Daniel (Dan. 9:2), the Bereans (Acts 17:11), Apollos (Acts 18:24), and Timothy (2 Tim. 3:15ff.).
- It is the character of a godly man to be mighty in the Scriptures (Ps. 1:2; 1 Pet. 2:2; etc.).

Motives to Study Scripture

- Consider the excellence of the Scriptures themselves:
 - It is not simply “the good book,” but “the best book.” There is no chaff or dross in it (Ps. 12:6).
 - It is more excellent than God’s own name (Ps. 138:2).
 - It is the “oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2), the voice of God and not man.
 - It is the law of heaven (Ps. 19:7).
 - It is Christ’s “last will and testament” (2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 9:15).

Motives to Study Scripture

- Excellence of Scripture continued:
 - It is the scepter of Christ’s kingdom (Ps. 110:2). By it he rules the church and guides his children.
 - It is the primary channel of grace to his people. By it we receive the Spirit (Gal. 3:2), are regenerated (1 Pet. 1:23), and believe the truth of Christ (Rom. 10:17). By it we are nourished, strengthened, and thus grow in the grace of God.

Motives to Study Scripture

- Excellence of Scripture, concluded:
 - It is Christ written. It is the book of the covenant, which is founded on the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 11:25). It is the grant and conveyance of the right to the mercy and favor of God. They who slight the book will also be found to tread underfoot the blood of the covenant.

Motives to Study Scripture

- Consider the usefulness (profitability) of the Word of God:
 - It is a treasure to the poor (Rev. 3:17; 2 Cor. 4:7). If the “poor” soul searches this mine, he shall find the discharge of his debt to God, a new right and title to what had been mortgaged by sin, and an inheritance that does not fade.

Motives to Study Scripture

- Usefulness Continued:
 - It is valuable, and people treasure valuable things. Here are the eternal counsels of God regarding salvation, life and immortality brought to light, the purest precepts, the most awful threats, and the most precious promises (2 Pet. 1:4; etc).
 - It contains great variety, showing the manifold wisdom of God. No matter how often we come to the book, we find new treasures for our souls, new refreshments in its pages, new encouragements and comforts for our afflictions

Motives to Study Scripture

- Usefulness Continued:
 - In abundance, not only for the present but for time to come. Plentiful instruction, light, comfort, etc. Anything needful can be found in its precepts (Ps. 119:162). These are the spoils gotten by Christ from the world and the devil.
 - Finally, in closeness. It is a hidden treasure to those not illuminated by the Spirit, but is reserved to those who dig deep into the vein of its ore, who seek diligently and pray earnestly to receive of its storehouse.

Motives to Study Scripture

- Not only a treasure, but also:
 - Life to the dead
 - Light to the blind
 - Awakening to the sleeper
 - Sword to the soldier
 - Counselor to the bereaved
 - Comforter to the mourner
 - Cure for all the diseases of the soul

Motives to Study Scripture

- Consider the honorable names given to Scripture, among which are:
 - The Scriptures of truth (Dan. 10:21). Though men may wrest the Scriptures, yet they are in themselves only and always the truth.
 - Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15). They are the word of a holy God and consist of holy commands, holy promises, holy instructions, and holy threats. Holy hearts will love its directions and reverence them for that reason.

Motives to Study Scripture

- Consider the dangers involved in slighting the word of the

Lord:

- Cannot walk in God's ways if we do not know them
- Will walk in darkness without a lamp and will lose our way without it
- It is the word and direction by which we will all one day be judged

Nine Directions For Study

- Keep to a schedule so you can cover the whole of Scripture and make this reading a part of your secret devotions to God. This is not to say you should never read any other way, but that reading through Scripture obtains the most edification. Some places may seem very bare, but if you look at it in its whole context of Scripture, then you will approach it with increased vigor and interest.

Nine Directions For Study

- Keep a diary or a way of marking your Bible so as to know which passages you have found useful in various conditions, as a time of temptation or trial, a time of affliction, a time of particularly sweet communion, etc. It will be profitable for you to review these from season to season. You will again be tried, afflicted, etc. and it will be useful to know where you have found comfort in the past.

Nine Directions For Study

- Compare Scripture with Scripture. Especially compare that which is more obscure with that which is more plain, 2 Pet. 1:20. This is an excellent means of finding out the meaning of a Scripture and will serve you well to make marginal notes (or to check previously made marginal notes). Keep Christ in your eye whenever you are reading. Look for him in the Old Testament as well as the New (in the genealogies, types, and sacrifices).

Nine Directions For Study

- Read with as much attention to detail as you are able. Look to the words, the sense of the words, and the authority that they have in God's economy. Remember how your conscience is bound to its precepts.

- Make sure your chief aim is application and does not stop with theoretical knowledge. Read and study in order to do, and not merely to know.

Nine Directions For Study

- Pray for God's Spirit, and look to his Spirit for enlightenment and understanding. It is the Spirit who dictated it, and it is the Spirit who must give us understanding (1 Cor. 2:11). Therefore, before you begin your study, and when you have completed it, it is highly reasonable to beg for a blessing from the Spirit of God on what you are about to read.

Nine Directions For Study

- Beware a worldly or carnal mind. Fleshly sins blind the mind to the things of God and the worldly heart cannot favor his words. The world, coming between you and the light of the word, can keep the light of the word from you as the moon passing between the sun and the earth hides the light of the sun in an eclipse.

Nine Directions For Study

- On the other hand, labor to be exercised in godliness: patience, love, faith, etc. Such a frame helps us understand the Scriptures. There is an understanding that comes with the desire for godliness and with the practice of its precepts.
- Finally, whatever you learn from Scripture, attempt immediately to put it into some application. Those get little insight into Scripture who make little conscience of practicing what they have learned. The fountain is freest where the stream runs quickly.