

KNOWING GOD

1 John 1:5

Intro: It is very difficult for me to understand how a person can be a real Christian and not be very concerned about the low level of Christian living that seems to prevail in our country. There always are, and, we can thank God, there always will be those whose lives reflect a great love for God and for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But the world has invaded our homes and our lives and even our churches to the point that it has become increasingly difficult to tell where the true Christians are. While many are interested in Bible study, yet it seems that many who profess to be Christians are content to live with practically no exposure to the Bible. It would interesting to know how many Christians have the habit of seriously reading the Bible every day, and by seriously I mean, with a hunger to learn the truth, and then to live according to the teachings of the Bible, which we believe is the Word of God from cover to cover. Many people have been attracted to churches in recent years by the programs that churches put on, but too often the programs are more for entertainment than for preaching the Gospel, and human psychology with a few Scriptures thrown in, is passed off as the truth. And people who do not know what the Bible contains are so easily deceived. Many never give evidence of having had a change of heart through the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Recently I have gone through the first epistle of John in our evening services. At the present time a good number of us are busy memorizing that epistle, and I for one want to testify that it has been one of the greatest blessings of my life. I am trying to hand on to each lesson so that I will know the whole epistle by the time we finish all of the assignments. Every year our memory work has been a tremendous blessing to me, but there has been something about memorizing 1 John that has been very, very special. And you all realize, I am sure, that when we finish the study of 2 Timothy, we are going to be back in 1 John again. It seems that the Lord may be seeking to tell us something by bringing this book to our attention in such a concentrated way. Of course, we can never exhaust any book of the Bible. We read them over and over again year after year, and yet each time we come to any book of the Bible again, there is always fresh blessing for us.

There should be no question but that for the Lord to give us His Word in written form is a clear indication that He wants us to read it. The Word of

God is written to preserve it, and to preserve it as God gave it. But it is written to be read.

As most of you know I am teaching the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ in our Tuesday Bible Class. Right at the outset of the book, the Apostle John was directed by the Holy Spirit to promise us a blessing. And these are his words:

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand (Rev. 1:3).

Those word really could be put in the introduction of every book of the Bible, but we want to leave it there because that is where the Holy Spirit had John put it. But there is always blessing to be found in reading the Word if we are interested in understanding it, and *keeping* it, that is, accepting it just as it is, and seeing to it that, by the grace of God, it becomes to us the way we live.

In the nineteenth verse of the first chapter the Apostle John was told by the Lord Jesus Christ to do this:

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter (Rev. 1:19).

Long before Moses lived the Word of God was preserved by being passed down by word of mouth, but when Moses came along he was directed to write all that God wanted us to know from the very beginning, plus all that happened during his lifetime, so it would be preserved in a permanent form, and future generations of the Lord people could do what we have done, *and that is to read it.*

Two of our SS verses are 2 Tim. 3:16-17. (Quote them.) What did the Apostle Paul call this record? He called it “Scripture.” Why? Because the Word of God had been committed to writing.

How did the Apostle Peter describe the Bible? He said that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). But how did they speak? In the verse just before this Peter also was talking about “scripture.” Now many of those who *spoke* in old times, spoke as preachers. But Peter was saying here that they spoke in their writings.

Today we have the completed revelation of God. We are not to add to it, nor are we to take anything away from it. We are to accept it just as it is,

and we are to read it!!! And we are to believe it. And we are to obey it.
The Psalmist said long ago, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path” (Psa. 119:105).

So when a person becomes a Christian, he begins a life-long relationship with the Bible.

But there is another emphasis that we find in Scripture that has to do with the Bible. And that is found in what the Lord told Joshua to do when he became the leader of all Israel after the death of Moses. I am referring to the Lord’s words found in Joshua 1:8. This is what the Lord said:

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Joshua 1:8).

We find the same emphasis in Psalm 1. (Read it.)

1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.
3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.
5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish (Psalm 1).

Paul gave the same advice to Timothy. After writing to him about the ministry, he said this (and he was talking about what God had given to him, that is, to Paul himself):

15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all (1 Tim. 4:15).

There are many, many passages which speak of meditating on the Word, of *thinking* about the Word, like Paul did with the Philippians in chapter

4, verse 8.

We know that in the past it was the practice of many Jews to memorize whole books of the Bible. I have been listening to a series of message which Dr. Bruce Waltke brought at Family Camp back in 1994. Some of you may remember that he was studying in a university in Jerusalem, and he became friends with a Jewish rabbi. And I believe that they were studying the book of Proverbs. Anyway their conversation turned on one occasion to Proverbs, and the rabbi said that he had memorized the whole book of Proverbs in Hebrew. Dr. Waltke asked him to quote it for him. And so for about two hours or better Bruce followed him in his Hebrew Bible while the Jewish rabbi quoted it from memory. But the amazing thing about that rabbi was that he was an atheist. Before Bruce left him the rabbi told him that he had become a theist; Bruce told him that he wished that he had become a Christian.

But the point I am making is that, while you can meditate on the Word without memorizing, yet I don't know of a great aid to meditation than what some of us are doing now with 1 John. And I have come to believe that memorizing whole books, or at least whole passages, is the best way to memorize. If you are memorizing, and we seek to be word perfect, you have to be thinking about each word while you are memorizing, and even afterwards whenever you are repeating even to yourself what you have memorized.

What God wants us to know is all within the pages of this book, the Bible. How he wants us to live, is in these pages. And the amazing thing about the Bible is that it is a living Word. It is powerful. It is energizing. This is the means that the Holy Spirit uses to make us what God wants us to be, and to live for Him in the way that is pleasing to the Lord. All that we need to know about serving the Lord is right here in God's book. There is no other book that has ever been written that can equal it. And we need to read it over and over as books. And one thing about reading and re-reading the Word, the more you do it, the more you will find that you are memorizing much of it just by reading it.

Now let us go back to think about 1 John.

Why did the Apostle John write it? Well, from reading it, it seems that by the end of the first century conditions had developed in the Church much like we are facing in the Church today. There must have been a great deal

of misunderstanding as to what a Christian is. And so he wrote this letter, a general epistle, to clarify what it means to be saved. It is a book which is greatly needed in the Church today. When any person professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he, or she, needs to be told that he, or she, needs to read the Bible. And to read it every day. But where should they start? Why not start with 1 John? Eventually we want to get them on a schedule of reading the Bible from start to finish, but it is best to get them started with some individual books. 1 John is a short epistle. You can read it slowly and thoughtfully easily in thirty minutes or less. But the time is not the main point; the main point is learning what is in the book. This is a tremendous little epistle for getting a new Christian started in the right way, and it is good for older Christians to be brought back to the basics of what the Christian life is.

As I have said, and as you know, we have just finished going through this little epistle, but in memorizing it I have seen an emphasis and a pattern in the book more clearly than ever before. Sometimes if I have trouble with a verse here or there, I just get my Bible out and read the assignment several times as an aid to memorizing it. We all have to admit that it does something really good and worthwhile to us, to memorize the Word, and to be forced to meditate on it.

Now I want to suggest to you tonight that the verse which I believe is the foundational verse of the epistle, and the foundation truth of the Christian life is, 1 John 1:5.

In fact, John says that “this . . . is the message.” And this wonderful truth was revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Who came to reveal to us the very nature of God, His Father, and, if we are saved, our Father.

(Read down from verse 1 through verse 7.)

We all know, or should know, that the Bible is not only a revelation *from* God, but it is a revelation *of* God! We can’t understand why we need a Savior until we understand something of the nature of God. And we can’t understand either why we can’t save ourselves until we learn this simple but profound truth about God, and that is that *He is light!* This is a figure of speech which means *He is holy*, and since there is no darkness at all in Him, *He is perfectly wholly*. You will never find anything that even faintly resembles sin in Him. “Light” signifies purity, holiness. John’s message was that a Christian is one who is in fellowship with a holy God.

Cf. Paul's words in his charge to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:13-16, esp. v. 16.

If you are reading according to our Bible Reading schedule, you have just finished Leviticus with all of its rules and regulations for the children of Israel. And if you ask why the Lord told His people to do those things, the answer is given more than once in that book, but let me quote from Lev. 11:44, 45.

When the Lord called Isaiah to be a prophet, how did the Lord prepare him? Turn to Isaiah 6.

The Christian life is a life of fellowship with a holy God. And so this means that we have been called to holiness. The world knows nothing about holiness. Our Bibles are correctly called the Holy Bible. If we are going to know what fellowship with God is, it has to be on the basis of what He is, and He is a holy God.

Concl: This is as far as I will go with this tonight, but I want to continue with this theme as we think more about the Christian life. The only way we can be holy is by the transforming power of the Gospel, and through the work of the Holy Spirit Who continually is working in our lives to make us a holy people.

The instrument which the Lord uses to make us holy is the Word of God. That is why it is absolutely imperative that we be reading the Word daily, and as often during the day as we can. And the starting point, the foundational message, is that "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

This vital truth, which is basic to all of Christian living, is sadly lacking in the understanding of many today who claim to be Christians. They have no understanding of God's holiness, and they do not speak of God, or supposedly worship Him, as One Who is Holy. May this great truth be revived in our hearts that we may know the real meaning of fellowship with God and with His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.