

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS BIBLE

1 Timothy 4:12-16

Intro: It is absolutely certain that from the time a person receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his, or her, Savior, there is one book that becomes an indispensable part of that person's life. That book is the Bible. A Christian may read many books, and possess many books, but the one book that a Christian cannot do without, is the Bible. The Bible is to a Christian's mind and heart what food is to his body. As long as a Christian lives, he, or she, cannot do without the Bible. A Christian may begin to read the Bible because he is told to do so, but the more he reads, the more he will learn, and the more he learns, the more he will love what he reads.

There is no book like the Bible. It is distinctly God's book. The Apostle Peter said of it that it was produced by "men of God" who "'spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). The Apostle Paul said the same thing, but with different words. His description of the Bible was that it was "given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16), and he applied that statement to "all Scripture." It would have been wonderful to have heard the Lord Jesus teach while He was here on earth, but the main part of what He had to say has been preserved for us in the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But that is equally true of concerning the history of God's dealings with His people from the beginning of time, and for approximately one hundred years after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have in the NT the teaching of the apostles of our Lord. No one has ever been able to learn everything that there is in the Bible, and so reading it continues to bring great blessing to the child of God regardless of how long he lives.

In the verses which I have chosen for my text tonight the Apostle Paul was writing to Timothy, an older servant of the Lord who was nearing the end of his earthly ministry was writing to a younger servant of the Lord upon whom, in many ways, the Apostle Paul was casting his mantle, so to speak. Please open your Bible to 1 Timothy, chapter 4, while I read verses 12 through 16. (Read.)

There are three points which the Apostle Paul was making with the younger Timothy that I was to make for all of us tonight.

The first is in the words, "Till I come give attendance to reading, to

exhortation, to doctrine.” The second is, “Meditate upon these things.” And the third is, “Give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.”

Now you can see that while Paul had much to say in this epistle about how Timothy should carry on his own ministry, in these words the Apostle was focusing upon the way Timothy himself lived, not just as a minister of the Gospel and of all the Word of God, but as a Christian, as a child of God. Always, with the prophets of the OT as well as with the apostles of the NT, they were to be examples to the people as to how all of the people of God should live. That was true of elders and deacons. The standards were high for them because God’s standards are high for all of His people. In fact, they are so high that it is impossible to live like the Lord wants us to live unless we have the help of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

But let at the first of these exhortations.

I. “GIVE ATTENDANCE TO READING” (1 Tim. 4:13).

When Paul wrote these words, the OT had been completed, and the NT was in the process of being written. This letter to Timothy was a part of what Paul had in mind when he spoke of the Scriptures. “Scriptures” are basically *written documents*. There would have been no question in Timothy’s mind as to what the Apostle Paul had reference to when he spoke of “reading.” Paul meant by the verb “give attendance,” that Timothy was not only to read the Scriptures, but he was to pay the closest attention that what he was reading. He was not to let his mind drift off to other things while his mouth was saying words. Paul was urging Timothy to use the greatest concentration upon his reading. And he was indicating that this reading was not just to be now and then, but continuous, day after day, and even as often during the day as it was possible for Timothy to give to reading. Paul meant that Timothy was to plan everything else in his life around the reading of the Word of God. If he found that the “busy-ness” of his life was encroaching upon his time of Bible reading, or crowding it out altogether, he must make immediate adjustments in his daily routine to make sure that his reading of the Word was given the greatest priority. Bible reading needed to be daily, and nothing must be allowed to crowd it out.

Paul’s words, “till I come,” indicated that Timothy might even have some

free time while he was waiting for Paul. If so, it was to be spent profitably in the reading of the Scriptures. That is something else for us to remember. Often we may be waiting for someone, and we have some time that we did not expect to have. We need to be prepared to give that time to the reading of the Bible. You can see that this was a real passion with the Apostle Paul. So it is important for us, if it possible, to have a copy of the Word with us.

How thankful we should be that we can read! Reading can corrupt us, or reading can bring us great blessing. It is good to read good books about the Bible, but even they must not be allowed to take the place of the reading of the Scriptures.

In Deut. 17:18-20, a part of what was to be required of the kings of Israel had to do with the Word of God. This is what Moses wrote from the Lord:

18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites:

19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:

20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel (Deut. 17:18-20).

Obviously the kings of Israel were very, very busy men, but always it was the Lord's will for them that every day included special time for the reading of the Word of God.

In our Tuesday Bible Class, as you know, we are studying the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. And right at the beginning of that book we come to these words: "Blessed is he that readeth" (Rev. 1:3).

When the Lord told Philip to go to speak to the Ethiopian eunuch, he found him reading! Reading what? Read the prophecy of Isaiah. Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. He responded by saying that he couldn't understand it unless someone would help him. So Philip began at that very Scripture, Isaiah 53, and preached Jesus to him. The result was that the Ethiopian official was saved, and he proceeded on his way a child of God.

The Word of God has had a part in the salvation of every single one of us. Peter was led by the Holy Spirit to tell us that we have been “born again . . . by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23).

Sometimes I find my schedule crowding in on me, and I have to make some adjustments so that my time of Bible reading every day is not interrupted, or replaced, by anything else. Perhaps some of you need to do that tonight. I can’t overemphasize how important it is for all of us to be reading and re-reading the Word of God. Read it through at least once a year, and more than that if you can work in the time. I had one professor in seminary who read the whole Bible four times every year. Not everyone can do that, but we can all read it at least once. Children, as soon as you learn to read, make it your habit to read some in Bible every day.

But there is a second point that Paul made with Timothy in our text. You will find it in verse 15. It was this:

II. “MEDITATE UPON THESE THINGS” (1 Tim. 4:15).

This means to turn it over and over in your mind. To meditate is to think about what we are reading. Stop and pay special attention to what you are reading. Seek to understand what you are reading. And it is at this point that each one of us has special help, and that help comes from the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us to “guide us into all truth,” *i.e.*, all of the teaching of the Word of God. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us to understand the Word, and it is good to ask Him for His help every time we read the Word, or every time we hear the Word taught or preached.

The writer of Psalm 119 wrote in verse 97, “O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.”

When the Lord was preparing Joshua to lead the children of Israel after the death of Moses, this is what He told him to do:

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).

And who can possibly forget what the first Psalm has to say about meditation on the Word:

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 (Psa. 1:1-3).

One reason our Bible reading is not more enjoyable is because we do not take the time to meditate on what we are reading. And by the way, Scripture memorization is an excellent aid to meditation.

Read, and then meditate on what you are reading. Meditate as you read, and often come back to what you have read, and read it again. Reading a passage over and over is one way to meditate. God promises us blessing if we meditate. It indicates that our reading must not be hurried, but careful and thoughtful, and prayerful.

What was the third thing that the Apostle Paul told Timothy to do?

III. “GIVE THYSELF WHOLLY TO THEM” (1 Tim. 4:15).

By this the Apostle Paul meant that in addition to understanding what we read, we need to practice what we read. James wrote in his epistle.

But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves (James 1:22).

When the Lord Jesus was teaching His disciples in that famous Upper Room just before His arrest and crucifixion, He said this: “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17). He had been teaching them about humility and indicated that the knowledge of God and of His Word always is to lead to obedience. And, in turn, obedience produces changes in us as well as in the way we live. Peter had this in mind when he wrote in his first epistle, chapter 2, verses 2 and 3,

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Pet. 2:2-3).

The Apostle Paul’s emphasis on the practical results of Bible reading are to be seen all through our text. It was the practical emphasis in verse 12

that caused him to write about the importance of reading the Word.
(Comment on verse 12.)

And we also have a practical emphasis in verse 13 after what Paul said about reading. He spoke of “exhortation.” What is exhortation? It has to do with those parts of Scripture where we are told what God wants us to do, and what He does not want us to do. And the result of obedience to God in Scripture is spiritual growth unto holiness of life. We need the Holy Spirit for this also. The Spirit uses the Word in our lives to cause us to desire God’s will, and then He enables us to do what God wants us to do, and in the process we grow. We are changed, and changed so that even other people can see that we are “profiting” (v. 15), which is another way of saying that we are growing.

But going back to verse 13 in our text, reading the Word has another practical effect, and that is in understanding the “doctrine,” the teaching of Scripture. Doctrine affects the way we live. The more we know about God, the greater will be the effect of that knowledge upon our lives. There is such an intermingling of doctrinal teaching and practical instruction that the two are inseparable.

Paul was not actually saying that we save ourselves, or save anyone else. But what he was saying was that reading the Word, and meditating on the Word, and being obedient to the Word, are used of God to make our salvation more evident, and this is what can lead under God’s blessing to the salvation of others.

Concl: And so I hope that we can see through all of this how important it is for all of us to be reading the Word, reading and meditating, reading and obeying. And doing it daily, continuously, giving the Word of God the priority in our lives. This is where we find our joy in the Lord, and where we experience the blessing of the Lord in more ways than we can imagine. All of this is what it means to love the Word. And when we love the Word, we love the Lord more and more because He is the theme of all of Scripture.

So, if you are reading the Word faithfully every day, keep it up. If you are not, then begin tonight to make the changes that need to be made in order to give the Word first place in your life. Ask the Lord to help you, and He will give many blessings in response to your desire to please Him.

1 Tim. 4:12-16 (7)

Look at verse 16 of our text. (Read.)