



The Voice Of Truth

A weekly publication of the
Hillcrest church of Christ

1621 Hillcrest Drive
Green Bay, WI 54313
(920) 499-5677

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com

March 23rd, 2003

Search the Scriptures (1)

By Bill Echols

There are many passages in God's word that emphasize the importance of our studying the scriptures. Among them are these: "Search the scriptures." John 5:39. "Study to show thyself approved unto God." 2 Tim. 2:15. "Giving all diligence, add to your faith . . . knowledge." 2 Peter 1:5.

Why has God given us these commands to study? Since God never commands man to do anything that is not for his own good, there must be value in our studying the scripture or God would not have commanded it. Let us see if we cannot find more than adequate reasons for giving ourselves to a diligent study of the inspired text.

The first passage we will consider is 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." We see first that we should study the scriptures because they are inspired of God. The word scripture, or scriptures, is used in a specific sense to refer to those books written by the direction of God. If the Bible were the work of mere mortals, it would not matter whether you studied it or not. It might help you, but studying it would be left to your own discretion. The Bible, however, is not the word of man but is inspired of God. Peter affirmed, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21. Since the Bible is the work of God, and since it contains commands from Him to study, we must give diligence to do so. If the God of heaven spoke to us directly would we not give heed? Why then should we fail to study His written word?

But from this verse we learn that "All scripture is profitable." There is in the scripture something that is profitable to us. When we have an opportunity to make a profit in a business venture, we seldom, if ever, let the opportunity pass by. In the scripture we have opportunity upon opportunity to profit spiritually; yet we let the opportunities slip by. Remember opportunity means responsibility. Someday we must give an account to God as to why we let the opportunity pass us by.

For what is the scripture profitable? First, Paul says it is profitable for doctrine or teaching. The person who is seeking can find the true doctrine of God. Instead of going to the Bible to prove a certain doctrine, we need to study the scripture to learn the doctrine that God would have us believe. The scriptures then become our only standard of faith and practice.

Sometimes we hear of people who say to a Christian, "I'd come hear your preacher, if he wouldn't preach a doctrinal sermon." If all scripture is profitable for doctrine, the only way a sermon could be non-doctrinal would be for it to be unscriptural. I pray that all my lessons are "doctrinal" because the apostle said, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." 1 Peter 4:11.

It is only then through careful and constant Bible study that we can be assured of remaining sound in doctrine. If we are not to be "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine," we must search the scriptures. A knowledge of the Bible will protect us from false teachers. Some have said that the various issues in the church today are merely "preachers' battles." God pity us if this be true. If the preachers are the only ones studying and the only ones interested in "contending for the faith," then the battle is lost. Any Christian or congregation that depends entirely on the preacher to "spoon feed" them the doctrine of Christ is liable to the sleight of men and to false teachers who would make merchandise of them. 2 Peter 2:3.

Paul goes on to say that the scripture is profitable for reproof. We need to study that the mistakes and wrongs in our lives may be reproof. Regardless of how loud the cry may be for "positive" sermons, reproof is still a part of God's way of making men fit for heaven. Timothy was told to "reprove, rebuke." 2 Tim. 4:2. One cannot read many verses in God's word without receiving a rebuke for his manner of living or thinking. Perhaps this is why some do not enjoy searching the Scriptures.

Paul wrote in Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The word of God is powerful in piercing the hearts of men. Since evil thoughts and evil deeds come forth from the heart, Acts 5:4; Matt. 12:34; 15:18, 19, we need our hearts pricked by the power of the word. We can see this power at work in Acts 2:37 where Luke records that the people on Pentecost were "pricked in the heart" at the preaching of Peter. Not only so, but we can attest to this power in our own lives as the word has reproofed us for our misdeeds.

Paul further states that the scripture is profitable for correction. Not only does it point out to us our errors, but it also shows us how to live a corrected life as

new creatures in Christ. A good example of this is Colossians 3:1-17. In verses 5, 8 and 9 Paul points out things that should not be a part of our life. If they are, we are reproved. To correct our lives he lists in verses 12 through 14 some of the worthy attributes we are to add.

Before we can correct our life we must first realize its errors. The prodigal son could not return to his father until he came to himself to see himself as he really was. James likens the word of God to a mirror which is able to reveal to man his true self. James 1:23-25. It is extremely easy to deceive ourselves into thinking that we are better than we actually are. God's word will at all times help us to see ourselves as God sees us. Friend, do you want to live a better life? Do you want your life corrected? Then "search the scriptures" for they are profitable for this.

Going back to 2 Tim. 3:16, 17 we see that Paul tells us that the scriptures are profitable for instruction in righteousness. Righteousness is "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord." Luke 1:6. The study of the Bible will thus guide us by proper instruction in living righteously. In this world of uncertainty and confusion, we need instruction. Man knows not how to direct himself. Jer. 10:23. It is through a study of the word that a safe pathway through life can be known. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105. If we do not study the word, we are choosing to walk in darkness when the light of heaven is available to us. Christ said men love darkness when their deeds are evil. John 3:19.

The apostle sums it all up by saying that the scripture is able to thoroughly furnish us to every good work. The writers of the scriptures left out nothing that is necessary for us to know to live obedient and acceptable lives. All these things we need and the Bible supplies every need. The next time you think, "I don't need to read the Bible today," or "I don't need to attend Bible study this week," just remember what Paul said the scriptures will provide and remember you need these things.

But there are other blessings and benefits to be found in searching the scriptures. Among these is food for the soul. The scriptures are spoken of as food in 1 Pet. 2:2 and Heb. 5:12-14. It is as milk for the new-born babe yet is meat for the stronger Christian. It is the diet the Christian must consume if he is to be spiritually strong. It is sad to see so many people, even Christians, feeding their bodies and starving their souls. How often do we miss a meal? Not very often, if ever. How often do we fail to study God's word? One time is too much. A parent that is guilty of starving a child is not fit to be a parent. Of how much sorer punishment should one be worthy that starves not only the children but themselves as well by not making the Bible a daily companion. The Church today is suffering from spiritual dwarfism because we fail to study. The Lord said, "Search the Scriptures." He is not going to do for us what we can do for ourselves. If we are going to gain spiritual food, we must work for it just as we work: to provide our daily bread. That work is diligent study.

Another power given to the word for our benefit is the power to produce faith. In the case of the Christian, the word will increase or strengthen existing faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. 10:17. John said, "These are written, that Ye might believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." John 20:31. We need faith to overcome the evil one. Every day brings a new test to our faith and trust in the God of heaven. Only through the assurance of God "that all things work together for good to them that love God," Rom. 8:28, can we continue to fight the good fight. As faith is the shield in the armor of the Christian, we need to search the scriptures.

Since the devil is constantly seeking whom he may devour, we must study the Bible to protect ourselves from falling prey to his devices. It is our only protection against apostasy. After discussing the apostasies of Israel in the wilderness Paul comments, "These things happened unto them for

ensamples: and they are written for our admonition." 1 Cor. 10:11. It was Hosea the prophet that reviewed the history of Israel in these words, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Hos. 4:6. A failure to study the Bible will lead us into the pitfalls prepared for us by Satan. Peter, in encouraging Christians to add the Christian graces, said that "if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." Knowledge is among the things we must add. 2 Peter 1:5-10.

Everyone wants to know what the future holds. The Bible gives us a picture of the end of this world and the events that will occur then. Among these events will be the judgment. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Heb. 9:27. John pictures the judgment in Rev. 20:12. Everyone is going to be there. It is an appointment we can't break. How can we prepare? "Search the scriptures" as Christ said that His word will judge us in the last day" John 12:48.

(In our next article we want to point out the attitude one should possess in searching the scriptures.)

Truth Magazine III:9, pp. 13-15
June 1959

Discipleship: Blessings and Sacrifice

By Allen Dvorak

The atmosphere at the supper may have been a little tense after the parable. Actually, Jesus had already healed a man as He was arriving at this Sabbath supper, an act that had surely scandalized some of the lawyers and Pharisees present. As if things were not already uncomfortable enough, Jesus told this parable and then advised his host to invite the poor, maimed, lame and blind to future suppers because they could not repay him with reciprocal invitations. Rather, he would be blessed by God (Luke 14:12-14)!

As if inspired by this thought—or perhaps simply to break the icy quiet which may have fallen upon the supper—someone exclaimed that it would be a blessing for all who "ate bread" in the kingdom of heaven. To eat bread in the kingdom is probably a figurative way of referring to the spiritual blessings which are now available in Christ Jesus.

Jesus responded to this remark with another parable, but the purpose of this second parable was not to emphasize the blessings which adhere to a relationship with God. Jesus chose instead to make the point that not all who were invited to enjoy these blessings appreciated their value. In His parable, Jesus told of those who were invited to a great supper. When, however, the supper was ready, the prospective guests sent notice that they would not be attending the meal, giving excuses that were patently ridiculous and that demonstrated the low esteem they placed upon the invitation!

As He left this supper later or perhaps even on another occasion altogether, Jesus made more observations about discipleship (Luke 14:25). Even among those who appreciate the value of the spiritual blessings in Christ (i.e., those who want to attend this spiritual supper), not all are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to be a disciple. Some will not put God ahead of their families (vs. 26) or even ahead of their own desires (vs. 27). Jesus affirmed that such people cannot be His disciples. Discipleship is an all or nothing proposition; there are no "kind of" disciples. The sacrifice is nothing, compared to the tremendous blessings!