

Lesson 5: *Reading the Bible (1)*

A believer needs to pray; he also needs to read the Bible. Prayer is likened to breathing, and Bible reading, to eating. Both ought to be practiced daily by every believer.

I. The Origin of the Bible

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed.

2 Peter 1:21 But men spoke from God, being borne by the Holy Spirit.

The origin of the Bible is God; it was God who breathed His words of revelation through His Spirit into and out of the writers of the Scriptures. What was breathed out was not only words but also spirit.

Since the Bible is God's breathing of His words out of men through His Spirit, it is men's speaking of the word of God from God as they were borne by the Holy Spirit. Hence, the Bible is out from God, written by certain Old Testament saints such as the prophets, leaders, and kings among the Israelites, as well as by various New Testament saints, such as the apostles, Mark, and Luke.

II. The Content of the Bible

John 17:17 Your [the Father God's] word is truth [reality].

Acts 5:20 Speak to the people all the words of this life.

The content of the Bible is both extensive and inclusive; the two main aspects of this content are truth and life. Truth brings us revelation and knowledge of all the realities in the universe, such as the reality of God, the reality of man, the reality of the universe, the reality of the things of the present age, the coming age, and the eternal age, and in particular, the reality of the Christ appointed by God and the church chosen by Him. Life is God coming to be our life that we may be

regenerated, grow, be transformed, and be conformed into the image of Christ, who expresses God, that we may become the expression of God. God's word in the Bible is truth; it reveals the reality of God Himself and of His economy for us to obtain.

The words of life are the words of the Bible which the apostles preached. Since the words contain life, they are able to supply life, and this life is God Himself. This proves that the main content of the Bible is not only truth but also life.

II. The Content of the Bible

John 5:39 It is these [the Scriptures] that testify concerning Me [Christ].

2 Timothy 3:15 The sacred writings, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 1:23 Having been regenerated, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God.

1 Peter 2:2 As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word, that by it you may grow unto salvation.

Matthew 4:4 Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God.

Psalms 119:130 The entrance of Your [God's] words gives light.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is... profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.

The first function of the Bible is to testify concerning Christ. Christ is the subject and content of the Bible, and the Bible is the explanation and expression of Christ. Christ is the living Word of God, and the Bible is His written word. Without Christ, the living Word, as reality, the written words of the Bible are but empty doctrines and vain letters. Yet without the written word of the Bible as His expression, Christ, the living Word, would be abstract and intangible. Therefore, we must read the Bible if we desire to know Christ.

On the one hand, the Bible testifies concerning Christ; on the other hand, it makes us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, revealing to us the method of God's salvation in Christ and the way of man's salvation through faith, that we may know how to be saved.

The living word of God in the Bible is the seed of life which enables us to have God's life and to be regenerated.

The milk of the word refers to God's word becoming the nourishing milk. To the newly regenerated spiritual babes, God's word in the Bible is the nourishing milk which causes them to grow.

The words that proceed out through the mouth of God refer to the words of God in the Bible. The words of God in the Bible are not only our spiritual milk but also our spiritual food which nourishes us that we may grow and become mature.

Once we enter into God's word, it becomes opened (unfolded) to us, and it gives us light, shining upon us and giving

us wisdom and revelation.

The word of God in the Bible not only shines inwardly over our hearts and spirits to give us wisdom and revelation, but it also gives light outwardly to our steps and pathways so that we would not be lost. The words of the Bible have the diverse functions of teaching, reproving, correcting, and instructing people in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.

Besides the various functions mentioned above, there are many other functions of the Bible which are not enumerated here.

IV. The Preciousness and Sweetness of the Bible

Psalm 119:72 The law of Your mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

God's word in the Bible is precious and our desire for it is continually stirred up. God's word is sweet and lovely.

Psalm 19:10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold.

Psalm 119:103 How sweet are Your words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.

Study Questions

1. What does the Bible mean to you?
2. What is the function of the Bible?
3. How can the content of the Bible become so sweet to us?

Weekly Challenge

In your small group, come up with a reading plan for a book(s) of the Bible for the remainder of this semester. Remember to pray for the Lord to give you an appetite for His Word each time you come to it.

Song

1

(Do not sing what's in parentheses)

2

The Bible is God's breath; the essence of His Person. (-2 Tim. 3:16)

God's speaking out through man; borne by the Holy Spirit. (-2 Pet. 1:21)

The Bible is God's speaking in the prophets and the Son; (-Heb. 1:1-2)

The Bible is the Holy Spirit's revelation. (-John 16:13)

The Bible testifies concerning the Lord Jesus; (-John 5:39)

The Bible makes man wise, wise unto salvation; (-2 Tim. 3:15)

The Bible causes man to be regenerated (-1 Pet. 1:23);

Our spiritual milk (1 Pet. 2:2), our bread of life (Matt. 4:4); It makes us all complete (-2 Tim. 3:17).

