

The Neglected Book

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Do you find troubles all around you? Just how bad can things get? There was a time in the history of Israel when many must have asked that very question. Their king Manasseh, had so perverted the religion of Israel that he offered one of his own sons to the flames as a sacrifice to the heathen god Moloch. The streets of Jerusalem were filled with the blood of God's faithful martyrs. He even had Isaiah sawn in two. When he passed from the scene, his son Amon was no better for we read "He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done." (2Kings 21:20).

When Amon was assassinated, his son Josiah stepped to the throne. At the age of 16 he sought the Lord, at the age of 20 he began purging the land of heathen altars, and then at 26, Josiah set himself on restoring the Temple of God. According to 2Chron. 34:11 the rafters had been destroyed by the kings of Judah in their efforts to retrieve the gold that covered the timbers. How low things have gotten! Just think! The kings of Judah have been stripping gold from the Temple of God! Terrible things happen when the Bible is forgotten. Historians tell us that during the French Revolution, a time when Bibles were banned, people went through a pretty radical revolution all right! Half of the children in Paris were born out of wedlock. Some 10,000 babies were fished out of the sewers of Paris in one year. Don't we need to get back to the Word of God today?

Now as the work in the Temple proceeded, something remarkable happened! The only surviving copy of the five books of Moses was found. Idolatry (which only prospered when the reading of the Word of God was neglected) had been the state-religion for nearly 70 years, so that the present generation knew nothing, or next to nothing of the faith of their fathers. And when these biblical books were read for the first time to King Josiah, a tremendous reformation took place in his own heart. The effect was much like the one produced on Martin Luther when he found an old Latin Bible in the library of the Augustine convent at Erfurt. This monk had never before seen a copy of the Holy Scriptures. He had received all sorts of theological training, and read what the theologians had to say about the Bible, but never, had he ever even seen a Bible before! After reading the Scriptures, what a radical revival took place and what a reformation was started in his own life and in all of Germany.

The parallels between the days of Josiah and the days of Luther are very striking. At the time of Luther, the Gospel lay hidden under a mass of human traditions, penances, pilgrimages, indulgences,

relic-worship. How was all this darkness cleared away? It was not accomplished so much by the 95 Theses as it was by translating the Bible into the German language and getting it out to the people. This is what drove the dark superstitions out of Germany. England went through such a revival, not inspired so much by Henry VIII's desire for another wife, but by Wycliffe's translation of the Bible in the language of the people. Once the common people learned what was in the Word of God, they would not go back to Egypt. They were freed! And every great reformation, be it that of Josiah, or of Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, Miller, Finney, or Moody, every great reformation was sparked and fueled by an extended circulation and study of the Word of God.

And have you considered the greatest Reformer of them all, the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you notice how many times He quoted from the Old Testament? Jesus was not only acquainted with the 23rd Psalm but also with the less read portions of this Book. Indeed, we can be assured that we can travel nowhere in the Old Testament writings and find that the blessed feet of Jesus have not gone there before us. Yes Jesus drank from the same living waters - the Word of God!

Let's consider some of the values of studying the Bible:

1. A study of the Scriptures offers us a defense against temptations. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He responded time and time again, "It is written", and then quoted Scripture. The Bible was His defense. The Bible today, suffers from being respected in the wrong way. It is honored and treasured like a rare antique in a museum; roped off by cords of admiration, while too few use it. Many leave the study of Scriptures to the specialists, the clergymen, the scholars. And so the words of the Bible have reached the people in a second-hand fashion, through the interpretive talents and wisdom of man rather than through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Oh, how the Lord would have us lean on Him, not on the arm of flesh.

Three of the seven last phrases Jesus spoke from the cross were quotations from the Psalms; including His very last words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." We, like Jesus, need the Word of God in order to meet trials and temptations. Dear friends, it's only in our study of the Word of God that we are fortified to resist temptation.

2. We need to study God's Word in order to find direction in life. Psa. 119:105 states, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Here are a couple of stories from Sicily which illustrate

how God's Word enlightens our path in life:

In a Sicilian forest, in the middle of the night, a colporteur was stopped by a gun-toting robber. The thief told him to light a fire and burn all his books. The colporteur asked if he could read a little from each book before burning them. From the first one, he read the 23rd Psalm. From the next one, the story of the Good Samaritan. From another, the Sermon of the Mount. From another, Paul's hymn of love, 1Cor. 13. Yes, he was reading from different sections of the Bible! In each case, the robber said, "That's a good book. We won't burn that one. Give it to me." In the end, not a single book was burned, and this hoodlum went off with the lot. Years later, the thief and the colporteur met again. But now the one-time robber was an ordained minister of the Gospel. He told the colporteur, "It was your books that did it." Studying the Word of God leads us in paths of righteousness.

Here's the second story. Another Sicilian man bought a bunch of nails. They were wrapped up in a sheet of paper. When he read this page, he was really impressed. He read it over and over again and then found out that it was a page from the Bible. Now, he knew nothing about the Bible, but he was thirsting for more. The man searched around and discovered that the local blacksmith had a Bible. He borrowed it and read each evening until the middle of the night. His wife thought that he was losing his mind. But she soon saw that studying the Word of God only made him a better man. He read it in its entirety in six months and discovered Bible truths concerning the Biblical Sabbath, healthful living, and tithing. Doesn't God's Word lead beautifully!

And so we do not recommend that you read a catechism, but study the Bible for yourself, for He speaks to us today through His Holy Word. The Apostle Paul warns us of these last days in 2Tim. 3:13 "But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived." NASV Then in the following verses Paul explains how we can protect ourselves against these deceptions: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work." In 2Thes. 2: 8-12 we are told, "And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the

manifestation of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they **refused to love the truth** and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned.”

In that insightful book, *The Great Controversy*, we read on pg. 625, “Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive.” And on pg. 593 it says, “So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures.” For guidance, we need to seriously study the Word of God!

3. For inspiration, for a deeper communion with God we need to study His Word daily. D. L. Moody once remarked, “In prayer we talk to God, in Bible study, God talks to us, and we had better let God do most of the talking.” So, study daily! Do as the Israelites did in the wilderness; gather your manna fresh every morning. In Acts 17:11, the Bereans are praised for studying the Scriptures daily. And Job could say, “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food”. (Job 23:12). Let’s study God’s Word and we will see tremendous changes in our lives and we’ll experience a peace we have never had before.

When Sir Walter Scott lay dying, he asked his son-in-law to read to him. The son-in-law thinking of the many books that Sir Walter had written, and of the hundreds of thousands of volumes at the Abbotsford Library, asked him, “From what book shall I read?” Scott answered, “Need you ask? There is but one!” Yes only one Book brings peace of mind. Psa. 119:165 reassures us, “Great **peace** have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.” In his parting words to Joshua, Moses gave this counsel, “This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.” (Jos. 1:8). Yes, Joshua was told, “you shall **meditate** on it day and night”. We are not to speed-read the Bible, but carefully, prayerfully, meditate on it. To be strong, Spirit-filled Christians, we must feed on the Word of God! Jeremiah was anchored in God that could stand alone against apostasy, but he explains the secret of his strength, “Thy

words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer. 15:16). What a steadying power we find in the Word of God!

Through a study of God’s Word, we may be born again. Tockishi Ishii was a fiendish and brutal murderer. He massacred men, women, and even little children throughout Japan. Finally, he was captured and waited his execution. He was visited by two Christian ladies. He wouldn’t listen to their witness but only glared at them. As they left, they gave him a Bible. Ishii began to read the Book, and, upon starting, he found he couldn’t stop. He continued until he came to the story of the cross and read Jesus saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” This cut him to the heart. And when the jailer led him to the scaffold, Ishii went to his death with a gentle radiance. For Tockichi Isshi, the murderer, had been reborn by reading the Word of God.

According to 2Pet. 1:4, through the “exceeding great and precious promises” contained in this Book, we may become partakers of the divine nature. There is a miraculous power in the God’s Word! By His word, the Lord created this world, by His word, Jesus healed the sick, cast out demons, stilled the sea, raised the dead. There is power in the Word of God! In fact, it is our only source of power! Psa. 119:9 reads, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.” There is unlimited power in this Book! It can bring us eternal life, it can make us “wise unto salvation”. Let us study our Bibles as never before. Paul’s prayer found in Col. 3:16 was, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”.

Holy Bible, book divine,

Precious treasure, thou art mine.

Dear friend, see to it, that you do not allow the Bible to become to you, a lost book!