

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16

There are probably very few homes in the United States that do not contain at least one Bible. It is the most quoted single book in the world. Some newspapers across our land still run daily Bible verses even though many have ceased the practice for the sake of political correctness. The majority of people in our nation (at least in the south) would claim to believe that the Bible is true. There are hundreds, even thousands of churches that have vacation Bible schools each summer and Sunday schools each week where (supposedly at least) the Bible is taught. There is perhaps not a state in our nation that does not have at least one "Bible School" or seminary. The Bible is the very basis upon which many of the laws of our nation are founded. Many politicians make a habit of quoting from it quite often when they see an opportunity to gain popularity by doing so. Yet there is no book in all the world that is more neglected and ignored than the Bible which contains the holy scriptures. This is not a phenomenon which only affects unbelievers but is also a glaring problem among those who profess to be the followers of CHRIST.

Nothing in all the earth astounds me any more than the lack of knowledge of the scriptures which infects many of those who claim that the Bible is the very textbook of their lives. It seems to me that there is no greater shame for a follower of JESUS CHRIST than neglecting the study of that book which HE has given us as a written testimony of HIS word. Did HE not say, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" (John 14:15)? Yet how can we expect to know what HE expects of us if we are too busy with other pursuits to even take the time to read it? Now in the early days of Christianity, not many people had access to, or the necessary literacy to read the scriptures. Such is not the case today. But many have grown lazy, expecting that they will rely on the study of others rather than searching the scriptures for themselves. (see Acts 17:11; I Pet.1:10-12) This is a sluggard's practice not to mention, a dangerous one, for there are many false prophets and wolves among the sheep whose desire it is to scatter the flock of GOD with false doctrine. (see Mat.7:15; Acts 20:29) Some "teachers" who desire to have the pre-eminence of clerical distinctions are of the mindset that it is dangerous to encourage the flock to study without their direction and guidance. They are afraid of anybody who is "freelancing". We see a growing trend, (among scores of those who make claims of being believers), of substituting the reading and studying of books that other men have written about the scriptures for the reading of the scriptures themselves. It is the exception rather than the rule to find very many "bible studies" which use the scriptures exclusively without "guiding material". Many so-called Bible studies should really be called book studies. Now there is nothing at all wrong with reading and studying books about the scriptures, (II Tim.4:13) but we should not allow that form of study to replace the actual perusal of the Word itself nor should it ever take precedence.

One of the reasons that men rely heavily on the scholarship of others is the fact that an understanding of Holy Writ only comes by revelation; not natural learning. Because of this fact it is simpler (and the masses can be processed more efficiently) and quicker just to read the "revelation" given to someone else without taking time and effort to pray and study. This is a more

trouble free method of learning but it most often produces multitudes who have heads full of doctrines and practices rather than hearts that are humbled before the LORD. Often, I hear people say, well I just don't understand the Bible. This is not a problem of natural perception but rather a lack of spiritual light. This is not to say that GOD does not use human teachers, of course HE does (see Eph.4:11) but spiritual illumination cannot be imparted by men; only GOD through the work of HIS HOLY SPIRIT can accomplish this task. (see John 3:3,19; Mat.13:13-23; Isa.44:18; II Cor.4:3,4) The best study aid for helping us to understand the Holy Scriptures is prayer. *"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the DAY STAR arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of GOD spake as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST."* (2 Peter 1:19-21) If they could not write it without the moving of the HOLY GHOST then it is certain that we cannot understand it without the same. As the SPIRIT enlightens us; *"ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32); the scriptures will guide us and shape our lives by:

Doctrine. Sound teaching and learning. *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of CHRIST, hath not GOD. He that abideth in the doctrine of CHRIST, he hath both the FATHER and the SON."* (2 John 1:9)

Reproof. The Greek word literally means a proof or conviction. Of the gospel that he wrote, Luke said, *"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."* (Luke 1:1,4)

Correction. Restoration to an upright state. All of us are prone to get sidetracked and out of the pathway from time to time, the LORD uses the scriptures to bring us back. *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."* (Gal 6:1)

Instruction in righteousness. Literally to train or teach children, including chastisement. *"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the LORD, that we should not be condemned with the world."* (1 Cor 11:32) *"For therein (i.e.; the Gospel) is the righteousness of GOD revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."* (Romans 1:17)

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