

## "Importance of Bible Study"

Ellet J. Waggoner

No one will question the statement that those who presume to teach the Scripture should have a good knowledge of them. "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and *people* should seek the law from his mouth" (Mal. 2:7). This fact is so well established that dishonest men often take advantage of it to lead people astray; professing to be Bible teachers, they gain the confidence of those not familiar with the Bible, and palm off upon them the theories of man's devising, in the place of sacred truth. There are, however, but few, even of those who profess to love the Bible and to be guided by its teachings, who recognize the necessity of a thorough study of the Bible for themselves. It is for this reason that ignorant and unscrupulous men so easily deceive them.

If there were nothing in the Bible itself on this point, our own reason ought to teach us that if the Bible is to be our rule of life, we ought to know it for ourselves. If It is a guidebook to tell us whereabouts we are on our journey to the celestial city; if It is to warn us of the dangers and difficulties along the way, certainly everyone who is making the journey needs to be thoroughly acquainted with its contents. It was for this purpose that the Bible was written; the inspired penmen did not write for the benefit of a few, but for all. Moses taught us the way that the Bible was intended to be studied: —

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes" (Deut. 6:6-8).

The last part is a figure to give expression to the note that the sacred truths were to be studied until they would be constantly in the mind, before the eyes, and influence both the thoughts of the head and the actions of the hand. David had the correct the idea of this injunction, for he said: "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Ps. 119:11). There two points to be noted in this text: **(1)** "Your word I have hidden in my heart." How did he do this? The following verses tell: "I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways" (v. 15). (Also see vvs. 23, 48, 78). "My eyes are awake through the *night* watches, that I may meditate on Your word" (v. 148). It was by constant study that David was able to hide the word in his heart. Any one who reads these verses thoughtfully, will be convinced that David was not content with having a copy of the law in his possession, but that he studied it until he had, as we say, "learned it by heart." How else could he meditate upon it in the night? **(2)** "That I might not sin against You." This is why he studied the word so carefully.

A blessing is pronounced on the man who meditates day and night in the law of the Lord: "Blessed *is* the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight *is* in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:1, 2); and this blessing consists

primarily in the fact that by so doing *he is kept from sin*. "The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of the law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide" (Ps. 37:30, 31).

There is no other way than this in the Bible, whereby *we may be kept from sin*. We are to be sanctified through the truth, and it is by obeying it that our lives are purified. Now since none can enter heaven except those who are free from sin, it follows that it is as necessary for lay members to have the word of God in their hearts (not on their tables, or simply in their hands), as it is for preachers of the gospel. Of course the latter will be, from constant exercise, more ready in handling the word than others, but this should be the only difference. We, as a general thing, have not realized the necessity of close, personal study of the Bible. It is our standard; we draw our faith, pure and simple, from its pages; it is that which is to be our "shield and buckler," - our defense, in the time of trouble. It is important then that we make it our constant study.

The Bible is able not only to make us "wise unto salvation," but it furnishes the best possible discipline for the mental faculties. The psalmist says: "The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (Ps. 119:130). When Moses was giving his final charge to the children of Israel, he said, "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to *them* in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people'" (Deut. 4:5, 6).

The Signs of the Times | December 6, 1883