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A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php

NEW TESTAMENT WORD STUDIES

W. WILCOX

Didaktikos—'Able to Teach'

Didaskalos—'Teacher'

In all schools of study there are the labours of the teacher and scholar to be considered. In the former of these two words we think of the aptitude to teach, and in the latter of the teacher himself. The former appears only in the Pastorals and is there rendered by the phrase 'apt to teach'; the latter is of frequent occurrence throughout the New Testament and is consistently rendered by the word 'teacher'.

Wherever there are great truths to be inculcated, wherever there are new converts to be instructed, wherever there are deeper truths to be sought out and communicated to others, there the work of the teacher is needed. Not only so, the Gospel needs to be taught as well as proclaimed; so that there is a teaching of the Gospel to be engaged in.

The former word occurs in 1 Tim. 3:2, and 2 Tim. 2:24, where the bishop in particular, and the Lord's servants in general are both reminded of this necessary element in their undertaking of their respective tasks. They are to be 'apt to teach'. As in so many of the tasks of life, it is the aptitude for the task that really makes the doer of it successful. But this is particularly so in the teacher's task, where his aptitude for his task is of great importance.

This teaching of the Word is one of the greatest needs of the Church today, viz., the unfolding of the sacred Word as that which is truth sent from God, the feeding of the sheep with those great truths which promote growth in stature and wisdom, and the application of those truths to the daily life of the believer, as they bear upon the practical problems that are current in the stream of life from day to day.

Such teaching will tend to produce spiritual maturity, to develop spiritual power and to encourage spiritual approximation to the likeness of our Lord.

It is not intended to produce spiritual pride, to induce a rigidity of orthodoxy, or to reduce men to a narrowness of exclusivism. There *are* principles which form the basis of the New Testament teaching from which no departure can be tolerated: there are other elements which, while not fundamentally basic, are useful but may be interpreted or adapted in different ways and yet cohered in the one great purpose of giving glory to God, and magnifying the Person of our Lord.

Let the teacher wait on his teaching and so prove its usefulness, and so be able to give to others that which will minister to their spiritual welfare.

The latter word occurs in several different connexions which we may classify under four heads:

1. In 1 Cor. 12:28, 29, and Eph. 4:11, the *Gift* is stressed. The teacher is one who has received a gift from God, and as such is himself a gift to the Church. We may notice this gift is,—

(a) A Gift of the Sovereign Head of the Church,—no man can arrogate to himself this gift; it can only be received as *given*, but once received it may be developed and used. It is not obtained by process of education and training, although the advantages gained by education may make it more useful. It is not obtained by appointment by men, but its being found in a man is to be discerned and its use gladly received by men. It is not to lead to official positions or the use of titles, but to be used for the edification of the Church.

(b) A Gift recognized by the Church. The fact that one endowed with this gift ministers to edification, leads to his recognition in the Church. This is far different from the modern set up, where a man announces his intention to enter the ministry, and then seeks some institution where he may be educated and trained to take a position in some church to which some external authority may choose to send him, or in which some elected authority may invite him to become their minister. Such methods are unknown in the New Testament. Here the gift in exercise gains for the one endowed with such gift recognition within the Church and room is made for him to exercise that gift.

This gifted brother may then become known amongst several Churches and his ministry be called into exercise there also and so his sphere of usefulness be enlarged.

(c) The Gift thus becomes used for the good of the whole Church many being edified and blessed. This fact is frequently insisted upon in the Epistles and forms the basic rule regulating its exercise in the Church, namely, that it is for edification. That which does not so minister, if given place in the ministries of the Church will gender strife, cause disturbance, and end in division. Let every gift then be in exercise for the well-being of the members of the body; let this be the aim of every one who engaged in ministry, in service, or in labour in the gatherings of His people, to promote the building up, the growth, and the maintenance of the spiritual health of the people of God.

In the ministry of the Word there will be that impartation of the knowledge of God and of His truth that have been gained by dwelling in the secret places with God, and that will aid the taught to walk so as to be pleasing to God. Here is the need for that constant waiting upon God, that ardent study of the Word and that daily meditation on the Word, on the part of him who would minister to edification. It is not an easy task that such undertake nor is it to be lightly entered upon.

2. In 1 Tim. 2:7 and 2 Tim. 1:11 the teaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles is emphasized.

This Gospel has sometimes to be proclaimed, sometimes to be ministered with the tuneful harmonies of the Gospel bells, and sometimes to be taught, giving exercise to mind and heart as the ways of God therein are manifested. Thus the herald, the evangelist and the teacher all have their parts to play in the presentation of the Gospel message, for it is a Word to be received as authoritative, good news to be believed joyfully, and a way of salvation to be entered upon intelligently.

The teacher must therefore get to know the bases of the Gospel truth, the terms in which that Gospel truth is expressed, e.g., redemption, reconciliation, justification, and the ends of the Gospel both in the present issues of daily living and the prospects of the future inheritance promised to the believer.

Wherein do we come short? Failure in being taught ourselves leads to failure in the presentation of the Word to be taught to others. When we consider the eternal issues dependent upon the acceptance of the Gospel it surely behoves all who essay to preach it, to so understand it and its implications that from its presentation his hearers may not fail to get clear perception of what it is, and of his responsibility towards it.

3. In Heb. 5:12 it is implied that this ability to teach may be developed, for the writer reminds his hearers that had such growth in the faith been made, as should have been, these Christians ought now to be teachers themselves.

By the intake of the food supplied in the Word, the Christian should grow and increase in the knowledge of God and of His ways amongst men. This should enable him to become a teacher of others, enabling him to impart to his brethren what has been of such benefit to himself. Evidently with the Hebrew saints there had not been such intake and they were turning again to a semi-religious nationalism in which the appeal of their political bias and religious prejudices triumphed over their new-born faith in Christ.

It behoves us to continually avail ourselves of that spiritual food of the Word that we may not easily return to the elements which once we had forsaken, that we may not slip back, and that we may not become men of stunted growth and imperfect development. 'Let us go on to maturity', says the inspired writer, and we do well to heed his words today.

4. We may note some important requirements noted or implied in these passages which we have briefly brought under review, much needed amongst us today.

(a) *A Disposition* to be teachable ere we can essay to be teachers. Our Lord said of the Holy Spirit, that He would teach us all things. Have we been as scholars to His school, sitting at His feet to imbibe the precious truths He teaches? The would-be teacher must first be a scholar himself.

(b) *A Disposal* of one's powers for the use of the Master. Any aptitude we possess must be placed at His disposal to use as He wills, and for such ends as He has in view.

(c) *A Determination* to be of use in the Church where one has been 'set'. Many will use all their energies in every type of Christian activity save that which is connected with their own local company. But surely the right order is the reverse of this. Let us have exercise of heart with reference to the local body first and then to the wider sphere afterwards.

(d) *A Durability* and effectiveness in Service: It is to teach and keep on teaching, there being implied that such continuity of teaching will be effective. Let us not be weary in our Service!

THE KINGDOM AND THE REWARDS

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The Lord Jesus Christ made numerous allusions to the Kingdom, both in its mystery character and in its manifestation throughout His public ministry, and on occasions intimated that there were rewards associated with the Day of Manifestation. The Father's House is the realm where love abides in its sweetness and unalloyed enjoyment: there the redeemed shall dwell in the undisturbed fellowship of the Lord who paid the price of their redemption in His own precious blood. His coming to the air to call His own to dwell with Him in cloudless light and glory may be expected at any moment: for there are no prophetic scriptures to be fulfilled prior to this great event. Consequent upon the summoning shout and the departure of the saints of God from this scene there will be realised the delights of that Home on high, a scene of eternal ecstasy and worship. Then we shall all appear at the judgment seat of Christ to have our lives reviewed and to be awarded commensurate with our fidelity in this little while of opportunity. Our places in the kingdom will then be allocated to us. The marriage of the Lamb will follow—'his wife has made herself ready'—meaning that the judgment-seat has been passed and the examination has taken place, and in garments of pure white linen the Bride of the Lamb shall be