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prayer established, as the faithful remnant invoke the blessing of their God: but not till eternity breaks on our wondering visions shall the words 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven' be perfectly fulfilled.

We are but infants of a day, and time bears its sons on towards eternity. Only faintly can we apprehend the distinctive delights and glories that await the ransomed of the Lord. Our finite minds cannot take in the wonders of the things which our God has in reserve for those that love Him, but faith believes God and then the outlook beams with the galaxies of eternal glory.

What a wonderful God we have! What a wonderful portion He has prepared for our eternal enjoyment. He is worthy of our very best, though our very best is oftentimes unworthy of Him!

THE JOYS OF BIBLE STUDY

HAROLD ST. JOHN

I was once visiting a young university student and during my stay he took me into his study to show me his note books. I examined with pleasure some scores of neatly written little volumes representing months of careful research in biology, physics, chemistry, etc. After examination of these proofs of his industry I remarked, "and now show me your Bible Study books." To my surprise he looked embarrassed and replied, "I haven't any, and, indeed, I don't treat the Bible in that way, I should *not know how*."!

This incident gave me furiously to think—here was a young Christian man, with fine mental equipment, able to give hours daily to studies of *lesser* importance, and willing to register the results of such study with meticulous accuracy, and yet I found that occasionally he carelessly flung a few scraps of fag ends of time to the profoundest subject that can engage the human mind. No wonder that his spiritual life was fitful and **unsatisfactory**!

Fearing as I do that the experience of most young Christians is no more satisfactory than that of my friend, I would like to suggest a simple method by which we can at least mentally master the contents of a Book so marvellous that it cost the death of the Son of God to make its production possible; so powerful that by its teaching alone we can keep ourselves from the path of the Destroyer (the Devil).

The subject is especially urgent to those whose place is to minister God's Word in public. We have no right to condemn our audience to listen to ill-digested or intellectually impoverished preaching. If the preacher is not master of his Book he will merely fill up his time by the reiteration of stale and powerless truths which, like rubbed coins, will lose all edge and brightness as they pass from hand to hand.

The Results of Bible Study

The direct results of Bible Study may be summarized as follows :

(1) *The mental horizon widens.* It is impossible to live in an intellectual prison if we are in constant contact with this unique Library, in which the world's finest poetry, deepest philosophy, and noblest literature are found. In Scripture alone do we discover a lucid and trustworthy account of earth's origin, and our own descent; a history of our Race, written from the standpoint of its Creator; a final interpretation of the meaning and glory of life; and above all a Light whose rays illuminate the farflung future, enabling us to peer down into, what the Bible describes as, the Lake of Fire, as well as to look upwards and count the "towers of the City of God."

In a sentence—no man can be rightly called "well educated" if he does not know his BIBLE, nor "badly educated" if he *does!*

(2) *The manners are refined.* To breathe the pure air of Holy Writ and to keep company with the holiest and highest of our race necessarily softens our natural roughness, and we insensibly adopt the court manners of Heaven.

Some time ago I listened to a Christian brother who, while preaching, so far forgot himself as to refer to a fellow-servant of Christ in a disparaging and critical way. Later, as we walked home together, I felt that he was uncomfortable, but said nothing, until at length he asked me outright what I thought of his performance. "Well", I replied, "I thought that you had been neglecting Paul's Epistles lately." "What do you mean" said he. I answered, "I do not think that one could be much in the company of such an exquisitely courteous gentleman as the Apostle without learning not to criticize our fellow Christians"!

(3) *Bible study feeds and fortifies faith*, thus making it sane and robust. We live in a time when freak and fancy religions flourish like poisonous fungi. Christian Science (so-called) is a warmed-up legacy from 2nd century philosophy. Seventh-Day Adventism is but a carnal caricature of the debased coinage of Judaism; and scores of similar vagaries, usually hatched in the unsteady brains of "silly women" (as the Scripture phrase has it), are flourishing on every hand.

These Systems owe their success to the fact that Christians do *not know* their Bibles, and hence are easily caught in their toils. It is the absence of fixed beliefs and of spiritual landmarks that make men an easy prey to error.

(4) But after all Scripture is only a road, the home of the heart is GOD, known and loved as Christ knew and loved Him. And if we will follow the Light it will lead us to our resting place, which perhaps we had forgotten (Jer. 50:6). Here is the glory of Bible study, that if we learn God's will and then do it we shall grow like God, but its peril is that we rest content with a knowledge of the *text* merely and go no further, like travellers who should sit down in the road and imagine that they had reached the king's palace!

The Method

We must come now to our "method." The first point to decide will be how much time we can covenant to give, and this will depend on circumstances and intellectual advantages. For my purpose now I assume that my reader is willing is to devote

twenty minutes a day, and this is certainly not an excessive outlay. We spend far more time than this on our meals.

The Tools

Then the tools must be considered, and for the beginner the following will be sufficient:

A copy of the Authorised Version and one other translation—either the R.V. or Darby's "New Translation" of the whole Bible.

As mere text-finders, Concordances like Walker's or Cruden's are useful, but for serious study would only mislead, as no distinction is drawn as to the actual words employed by the Holy Spirit.

Strong's and Young's are truly "exhaustive" and excellent, but are based on the English version merely. The easiest to use and most satisfactory of all are the "Englishman's Greek" (one volume), and "Englishman's Hebrew" (2 vols.) Concordances by Wigram (published by Bagster & Sons, London). The excellence of these is that they enable the student to see at a glance every occurrence of the Greek and Hebrew word chosen by the Holy Spirit, however such word may have been translated. As the name implies, no knowledge is needed of any language except the English.

Then a few loose slips of paper and a fair copy exercise book complete our equipment.

The Plan

Now let us imagine that we are to begin on January 1st, and that we propose to devote the whole month to the Letter to the Ephesians, giving twenty minutes each morning after our prayer season or before it, as we prefer. George Muller advocated Bible reading first and then prayer, but he was not thinking so much of study as of devotional reading.

On January 1, we quietly read our book through *without stopping*, using the A.V.

On January 2, we again read it, but now from our Revised or other translation; this time noting important variations that

may strike us. The references to these may be jotted down on a separate slip of paper for verification later.

On January 3, we re-read, this time noting the *paragraphs*.

Making Notes

or main divisions into which the Epistle falls—make your own paras and then see if the R.V. agrees with you. At the same time jot down the principal *topics* and dominant ideas which run through the book.

The following out of these notes will occupy about the next ten days—as for instance—

You will undoubtedly have been struck by the occurrence of the phrase “the heavenly places” (or “the heavenlies”—“*places*” is in italics, implying that the translators have added that in order to make it read better). It is found nowhere else in scripture. So that on the fourth morning of your study you would trace this phrase as your “morning meal”, and you would find the following five passages :

Ch. 1 : 3—“We are blessed with Christ in the heavenlies.”

Ch. 2 : 20—Christ has gone up and is enthroned there.

Ch. 2 : 5—We too are “seated in Him” in the same place.

Ch. 3 : 10—The heavenly beings up there must learn in us the “many-coloured wisdom of God.”

Ch. 6 : 12—There also we meet Satan face to face in our hidden prayer life, and on that battle-field we win our victories.

Imagine going out to business with your heart overflowing with such thoughts as these! You meet a downcast friend on the train or at lunch and you tell him your morning’s find, and the going over it again will bless you and will restore to him the joy of salvation. Always try and hand on what you get, and meditate on it in spare moments. This is literally “eating the book” (see Ezekiel 2 : 8 ; Jerem. 15 : 16).

The following day, Jan. 5, we take the thought of “walking”—incidentally noticing the various attitudes referred to in the Epistle, e.g. “kneeling” (chs. 2 and 3); “standing” (ch. 6);

and this "walking" (ch. 4). The verb occurs eight times and we can divide it up thus:

(a) How not to walk (chs. 2: 2; 4: 17), three ways in each reference.

(b) How to walk (chs. 2:10; 4:1; 5:2, 8, 15), five ways.

Then on Jan. 6, we take the allusions to *love*—first as a noun ten times (chs. 1: 4, 15; 2: 4; 3: 17, 19; 4: 2, 15, 16; 5: 2; 6: 23); then as a verb ten times (chs. 1: 6; 2: 4; 5: 2, 25, 28, 33; 6: 24). Also "beloved" twice (chs. 5: 1; 6: 21. Ch. 1: 6 is a verbal form). It would not be a difficult thing to love your fellows as you went about that day!

On Jan. 7, you would consider the question of measurements throughout the book. First, in ch. 4, the three things measured—the "gift" of Christ, the "stature" of Christ, the "increase" of the Body (the Church), vs. 7, 13, 16. Then there are the four dimensions of ch. 3: 18 to be considered; also the height of Christ's ascent and the depth of His descent shown in ch. 4: 8–10. Finally, the 21 places where the word *kata* (= "according to") erects a standard for the mind; e.g. ch. 1: 5, 7, 9; but this can only be done fully with the help of the Greek Concordance named above or by those knowing the Greek itself. (Note also the phrase "in Him").

The day following you would consider the expression "*in Christ*", occurring ten times, noticing that the phrase is always found in chs. 1–3. This would remind you of the structure of the Epistle, viz., chs. 1–3, the Christian's *calling* in Christ; chs. 4–6: 9, the Christian's *conduct* in the world; ch. 6: 10–24, the Christian's *conflict* in prayer. (Make a point of verifying this carefully.)

Incidentally, note the names and titles of Christ in the Epistle: "Head of the church" (ch. 1: 22; 5: 23). "Our Peace" (ch. 1: 14). "Chief corner stone" (ch. 2: 20, etc).

Finally, you will want to trace the early *history* of the Ephesian church. Turning to Acts 19, you will be amazed at the skill with which Luke, the supreme literary artist of the N.T., has chosen to record just those incidents which illuminate the subjects of the Epistle.

For instance, Luke tells how the original members of the church were twelve disciples who had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. How instructive in the light of such a beginning to notice the full and varied teaching in this Epistle as to the operations and offices of the Spirit (perhaps twelve passages), in contrast with the sister Epistle to the Colossians, in which, probably, He is not once named.

Then Luke records the incident of the seven sons of a Jewish chief of the priests, who sought to expel evil spirits but were put to shame. In the light of this note the warning of ch. 6:12. Just as the would-be exorcists fled away naked and wounded, so shall we unless we learn *how* to stand our ground, fully clad with the spiritual panoply of God (vs. 14-18).

Lastly, in this same connection, the memory of the riot in Diana's temple may have suggested the analogy of that fair radiant shrine (the church) which "groweth into an holy temple in the Lord" seen in ch. 2:21-22.

Your next task will be to divide the book into about ten sections, one of which will be studied carefully each day, especially noting the thread of the writer's thought. As you will be fairly familiar with the text by this time, it would be quite an easy task to commit the daily section to memory. A friend of mine memorized the whole of Paul's epistles during his morning walk to business! Try it out for yourself.

In conclusion, you will undertake the pleasantest and most valuable part of your study by devoting the last week of the month to *revision* and to permanently recording the results of your work. Take each day's rough slips, check your findings with the Concordance, and then as neatly as possible enter in the fair copy book the references and the spiritual lessons gathered. When your month's labour of love is finished and you look at your gains, what will you find?

First, you have acquired a working foundation knowledge of one book of the Bible; the work done once in this way need never be repeated, and you can refresh your memory at any time with a glance at the note book, and another reading of the Epistle.

Secondly, you will have begun one of those *habits* by which we discipline ourselves into godliness, and make high and holy things almost instinctive.

Lastly, you will have climbed the highest altitude and breathed the purest air in all the New Testament.

Our readers will miss in this issue the usual instalment of Prof. Bruce's studies of St. John's Gospel: but owing to heavy pressure of circumstances arising from his transfer from Sheffield University to Manchester University, it has been impossible for him to get it ready in time. He hopes however, to have the article ready for the April issue.

Our readers will join in wishing him the Lord's blessing in this new and important appointment; and thank him also for his very helpful studies in St. John's Gospel.