

The Importance of Bible Reading

Ps.1:1~2 tells us the very first condition for us to be blessed is not of how much we offer, time we give to church or fellowship, or charity work on streets, but God's words, that is, to spend time on Bible by reading, studying and meditating. Accepting Jesus Christ as our personal savior is the first condition for us to be saved, and to be blessed after that, we need God's words. With such understanding, we are going to look at the importance of Bible reading from four aspects. In fact, since God's words is the condition for us to be blessed, we are going to look at more than one verse today for we want more blessings. And I want to make sure all of you get all of the verses I present to day so that you may be as blessed as I am. So please follow me attentively.

2 Tim.3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" speaks of the following values of the Bible itself: Divine authority, teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training.

The first point the verse makes is that the Bible is breathed by God. What does it mean is that the writers of the Bible were inspired by God when writing the scriptures. Therefore, the Bible has special meaning in it: The Bible is perfect, infallible because God is perfect. As a human being, we realize there is no perfect human on earth as long as he has breath. Longer you live, more you will agree on this fact. And of course, an honest person will never claim himself to be perfect. Therefore, whatever tradition is, church tradition, family tradition, or tribal tradition, which are all the product of human being, of course, are not perfect at all. For instance, you can not say my marriage is perfect because I marry a mistake person, or my stomach feels good because I drank a cup of polluted water. Therefore, it is a mistake to equal a mistake product, tradition, to a perfect product, Bible.

With such understanding in mind, it will be easier for you to value the following verses we are going to look at.

On Teaching

Ps.1:1~2 teaches us the condition for us to be blessed is God's words. Therefore, it is important for us to read God's words. But does the privilege of Bible reading belong to a certain group of hierarchical people as you believed before? Let us look at *Acts 17:11*, "*Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they*

received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." The background of this verse is that apostle Paul's preaching at different areas. Before he went to Berea to preach, he was working in Thessalonica but was rejected and kicked out by people there. Therefore, he went to Berea to preach. Now you see that preaching should never stop, instead, it should carry on. If it is hindered in one area or by some people, then the preacher should change his audience or area to continue the spreading the word of God.

If you take a closer look you will find that Bereans were said noble people by the Bible. If you are acclaimed by secular people, it may not count, but if its Bible's claim for you, it counts from the point of eternity. What acclamation you desire to get, from secular people, or from God?

Why were they more noble, because they were born with silver spoon in mouth, or they were high officials already, or they had been reputed Christians yet? No, but because *they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*" They were still non-Christians yet! So you see the Bible reading and studying privilege belong to those who are desired to know God's word, whether Christian or non-Christian.

I don't know how the Bible looks to you, an ancient document, a historical record, or some mythical information from outer space? To me, it is a love letter from my lover, Jesus Christ and from my loving home in heaven. Have you received a letter from your lover or beloved one in Philippines? How you read it when the letter comes to you, with great eagerness and read it over and over again, or file it up even without taking a look? Who is going to believe you love your spouse if you never spend time reading his/her letter to you? So is your attitude toward Jesus.

On Rebuking

Many of us knew that the Bible has many places describing God's rebuking his children for discipline, but few realized it is also for God's children to rebuke their enemy, the devil. Lets look at how God rebuked his children first. *Ex.20:4-5, "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not **bow down** to them or **worship** them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who **hate me.**"* You may excuse yourself of wrong deeds of

serving idols before by saying I neither worshiped them nor prayed to them, but only paid reverence to them by bowing my head. And indeed I love God. But look at the passage again and you will find out the passage is making a mathematical equation of

‘bowing down to idols’ = ‘worshiping idols’ = ‘hating God.’

Wow, it is scaring, isn't it? God made his statement so harsh, giving you no excuse when rebuking. I knew many of you were taught to worship idols in the past. The reason you did this is based on a tradition. But you never knew it wrong until you read the Bible. So again, the super importance of Bible reading is proved here again.

Lets look at how we are permitted to rebuke the devil. Many of Christians were being tortured by the devil simply because without knowing the privilege given to them that they can rebuke the devil by the words of God. Take Jesus for example. He was led into a desert for training for at least forty days before beginning his 3-year ministry on earth. In the desert he was under the devil's attacks of no break. *Mt.4:10, Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"* Jesus was quoting Deut. 8:3 for that occasion. The verse tells us Jesus rebuked Satan by Scripture verses. That is one of the recipes Jesus used to go through tough times, right? Jesus here showed us an example of how powerful and useful the words of God is when we encounter the devil. But how can one use the Bible accurately if you never or seldom read the Bible?

Last year in 1999 we had a sister here who got possessed by the devil instantly. She was eloquent in speaking but became almost dumb when caught by the devil. She did try to kill herself by jumping down from the fifth floor. We knew it was not herself wanting to do it herself, but by the devil. And we prayed for her by laying on our hands upon her head and shoulders, and used the words of God to rebuke the devil out. After a while, she started to throw up, to vomit and cry. At last, she could speak.

On Correcting

Many of us have erroneous thought without awareness. It is natural for us to have such wrong because as I said none of human being is perfect, or infallible. That is why we need a reference for us to check ourselves against. But if the reference is of human such as family tradition or church tradition, then the reference will become useless. That is why we need the Bible, for it is the sole reference for our lives and thoughts. Lets look at the several correction the Bible made for us.

Was Apostle Peter married? Some of you may say, 'No.' But let's look at how the Bible says about him. *Mt.8:14 "When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever."* Who is not married here? Who is single and yet has a mother-in-law? If you know who he/she is, bring him/her to me and I will rebuke him/her. It is adulterous for an unmarried person to have a mother-in-law, right? Therefore, by claiming Peter was unmarried we are saying Peter was adulterous. So please made such claim to Peter any longer if you love Peter.

Was Peter infallible as some of people claim to be? Of course not. Let us look at the Bible again. *Gal.2:11, "When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong."* The Background of the verse is that Peter was acting like a hypocrite and then Paul rebuked him. Would an infallible person be rebuked or corrected? This was not the only place Peter got rebuked in the Bible. Some other places Peter was rebuked by Jesus for his lack of faith, his deny of the Lord, and his limited mind of understanding God's mind. 'Deny of the Lord' to a Christian is no different than deny his own Christianity. Therefore, Peter even denied one time of his Christian identity.

Is it ok to pay homage to Peter for his apostleship by bowing down to him? Now we should understand it is not right to do it again, as some of you did in the past. Let's look at what Peter reacted upon such tribute from his mob. *Acts 10:24-26, "The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."* The background of this passage is that Peter was expected by a celebrity and his household. By the time he presented, they could not wait to pay him respect by bowing down to Peter. But what did Peter say about this, 'Very good,' or 'No, do not do it. I am like you, a mere man?' You see it is very natural for mankind to pay desired reverence by bowing down or falling at somebody's feet. But it should never be the case for Christians. And an honest Christian like Peter would never deem such motion toward him right. If Peter said no on this motion when he was present, why some of you keep saying yes when he is absent? Are we obeying Peter or disobeying Peter by doing what he told us not to? You judge for yourselves.

If Peter is not ok for us to bow down, how about angels? *Rev. 19:10, "At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."* Apostle John was led to see a marvelous sign in heaven and he could hold his going-to-be exploding awesome respect any more, so he bowed down to the angel who showed him the sign. But did the angel say anything good about John's motion? Of course not. Instead, he directed John to worship God alone! A true and honest Christian will always re-direct people's reverence or salute from himself to God. Only a false Christian does receive and enjoy people's tribute. However, if Apostle John could even make such mistake, we are not exempted, either. But it is alright as long as we repent of past stupid mistake by praying to Jesus alone and the lord will forgive.

Are saints meant to be dead people and deserved our reverence in bowing down or worshipping or prayer to them? *Eph.1:1-2 "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."* Was the letter addressed to the dead or the living from Paul? Of course the living. If the letter were for the dead, you would be appalled at Paul's weirdness, wouldn't you? By the passage saints meant the Christians in Ephesus. By etymology, the word saint is *hagio*, meaning 'holy or a separated person for God's purpose. Therefore, we are saints because we are God's saved generation, being redeemed for serving the Lord of all lords.

One more. is Jesus so harsh, stern or unapproachable that you have to have a mediator between you and the Lord? Lets look at how Jesus himself said about himself in the Bible. *Mt.11:28-30, "Come to **me**, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light,"* said by Jesus. Will you say a gentle-and-humble-in-heart person harsh, stern, and unapproachable? Who dare to be in place of '**me**' except the false people? Jesus desires all of those who are seeking eternal life to come to him without any thing or person in between.

On training.

As stated above, Jesus received a tough training or discipline in a desert before his ministry. In those forty days and nights he ate and drank nothing. This was definitely an ordeal training. How could he tough through? The Bible clearly said he used Scripture verses to deal

with the inhuman temptation from the devil, Sata. And finally he beat off the devil with Deut.8:3. If Jesus used words of God much, why not we do the same since we claim to be his followers? Some of you may think that you have no training and therefore the words of God are not that necessary to you. But in fact we are under training or God's discipline most of time, which present in different forms such as a trial, a difficult situation, a dilemma, or a persecution.

Conclusion:

Man is sinner, fallible, and therefore his product, tradition, is not perfect. The Bible is breathed by God, and therefore, is perfect and infallible in thought. The Bible speaks to every one of who read, memorize and meditate it. Ps.119:11 says "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." How can we hidden God's words in my heart, by putting the Bible in pocket, or by eating it up? Take our fingers for example. Little finger stands for listening, ring finger reading, middle finger studying, index finger memorizing and thumb meditating. With only the little finger, one will be easily to let the Bible in his grasp be snatched away. With one more finger, ring finger, the grasp might be stronger, but still, the Bible can be taken away by force. Only with five fingers together, the Bible can be firm in your grasp.

I encourage all of you to follow this guideline to hide the words of God in you so that you will experience what Paul exclaimed in *Ph.3:8*, "*What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to **the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*"