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**HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE
FOR GREATEST PROFIT**

**THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE
OF PROPER BIBLE STUDY**

**HOW PROPERLY TO STUDY
AND INTERPRET THE BIBLE**



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PREFACE

This book has been written for two reasons: first, because it seemed to be needed; second, to save the writer time and labor. Letters are constantly coming in from all quarters asking how to study the Bible. It is impossible to refuse to answer a question so important as that, but it takes much time to answer it at all as it should be answered. This book is written as an answer to those who have asked the question, and to those who may wish to ask it. Nothing is more important for our own mental, moral and spiritual development, or for our increase in usefulness, than Bible study. But not all Bible study is equally profitable. Some Bible study is absolutely profitless. "How to study the Bible so as to get the largest profit from it," is a question of immeasurable importance. The answer to the question, found in this book, has been for the most part given in addresses by the author, at the Chicago Bible Institute, before the summer gatherings of college students, at ministerial conferences and Y. M. C. A. conventions. Many, especially ministers, who have heard these addresses have asked that they might be put in a permanent shape. I have promised for two years to comply with this request, but have never found time to do so until now.

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PART I
THE METHODS OF THE MOST
PROFITABLE BIBLE STUDY

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER TO
METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY

We shall consider the most profitable Methods of Bible Study before we consider the Fundamental Conditions of Profitable Bible study. Many readers of this book will probably be frightened, at first, at the seeming elaborateness and difficulty of some of the methods of study suggested. But they are not as difficult as they appear. Their practicability and fruitfulness have been tested in the class-room, and that not with classes made up altogether of college graduates, but largely composed of persons of very moderate education; in some cases of almost no education. They do require time and hard work. It must be remembered, however, that the Bible contains gold, and almost any one is willing to dig for gold, especially if it is certain that he will find it. It is certain that one will find gold in the Bible, if he digs. As one uses the methods here recommended, he will find his ability to do the work rapidly increasing by exercise, until he can soon do more in fifteen minutes than at the outset he could do in an hour.

The first method of study suggested will be found to be an exceptionally good mental training. When one has pursued this method of study for a time, his powers of observation will have been so quickened, that he will see at a glance what, at first, he only saw upon much study and reflection. This method of study will also train the logical powers, cultivating habits of order, system and classification in one's intellectual processes. The power of clear, concise and

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strong expression will also be developed. No other book affords the opportunity for intellectual development by its study, that is to be found in the Bible. No other book, and no other subject, will, so abundantly repay close and deep study. The Bible is much read, but comparatively little studied. It will probably be noticed by some that the first method of study suggested is practically the method now pursued in the study of nature; first, careful analysis and ascertainment of facts; second, classification of facts. But the facts of revelation far transcend those of nature in sublimity, suggestiveness, helpfulness and practical utility. They are also far more accessible. We cannot all be profound students of nature; we can all be profound students of Scripture. Many an otherwise illiterate person has a marvelous grasp of Bible truth. It was acquired by study. There are persons who have studied little else, who have studied the Scriptures, by the hour, daily, and their consequent wisdom is the astonishment and sometimes the dismay of scholars and theologians.

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CHAPTER 2

THE STUDY OF INDIVIDUAL BOOKS

The first method of Bible study that we shall consider is the study of the Bible by individual books. This method of study is the most thorough, the most difficult, and the one that yields the largest and most permanent results. We take it up first because in the author's opinion it should occupy the greater portion of our time.

I.—*The first work to do, is to select the book to study.* This is a very important matter. If one makes an unfortunate selection he may become discouraged and give up a method of study that might have been most fruitful.

A few points will be helpful to the beginner:

1. *For your first book-study, choose a short book.* The choice of a long book to begin with, will lead to discouragement in any one but a person of rare perseverance. It will be so long before the final results, which far more than pay for all the labor expended, are reached, that the ordinary student will give it up.

2. *Choose a comparatively easy book.* Some books of the Bible present grave difficulties not to be found in other books. One will wish to meet and overcome these later, but it is not the work for a beginner to set for himself. When his powers have become trained by reason of use, then he can do this successfully and satisfactorily, but, if he attempts it, as so many rashly do, at the outset, he will soon find himself floundering. The First Epistle of Peter is an exceedingly precious book, but a few of the most difficult passages in the Bible are in it. If it were not for these difficult passages, it would be a good book to recommend to the beginner, but in view of these difficulties it is not wise to undertake to make it a subject of exhaustive study until later.

3. *Choose a book that is rich enough in its teaching to illustrate the advantages of this method of study and thus give a keen appetite for further studies of the same kind.* When one has gone through one reasonably large and full book by the method of study about to be described, he will

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have an eagerness for it, that will make it sure that he will somehow find time for further studies of the same sort.

A book that meets all the conditions stated is the First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians. It is quite short, it has no great difficulties of interpretation, meaning or doctrine, and it is exceedingly rich in its teaching. It has the further advantage of being the first in point of time of the Pauline Epistles. The First Epistle of John is not in most respects a difficult book, and it is one of the richest books in the Bible.

II.—*The second work to do, is to master the general contents of the book.* The method of doing this is very simple. It consists in merely reading the book through without stopping and then reading it through again, and then again, say a dozen times in all, at a single sitting. To one who has never tried it, it does not seem as if that would amount to much, but any thoughtful man who has ever tried it will tell you quite differently. It is simply wonderful how a book takes on new meaning and beauty upon this sort of an acquaintance. It begins to open up. New relations between different parts of the book begin to disclose themselves. Fascinating lines of thought running through the book appear. The book is grasped as a whole, and the relation of the various parts to one another apprehended, and a foundation laid for an intelligent study of those parts in detail. Rev. James M. Gray of Boston, a great lover of the Bible and prominent teacher of it, says that for many years of his ministry he had “an inadequate and unsatisfactory knowledge of the English Bible.” “The first practical idea which he received in the study of the English Bible was from a layman. The brother possessed an unusual serenity and joy in his Christian experience, which he attributed to his reading of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Mr. Gray asked him how he had read it, and he said he had taken a pocket copy of the Epistle into the woods one Sunday afternoon, and read it through at a single sitting, repeating the process as many as a dozen times before stopping, and when he arose he had gotten possession of the Epistle, or rather its wondrous truths had gotten possession of him. This was the secret, simple as it was, for which Mr. Gray had been waiting and praying.” From this time on Mr. Gray studied

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his Bible through in this way, and it became to him a new book.

III.—*The third work is to prepare an introduction to the book.* Write down at the top of separate sheets of paper or cards the following questions: (1) Who wrote this book? (2) To whom did he write? (3) Where did he write it? (4) When did he write it? (5) What was the occasion of his writing? (6) What was the purpose for which he wrote? (7) What were the circumstances of the author when he wrote? (8) What were the circumstances of those to whom he wrote? (9) What glimpses does the book give into the life and character of the author? (10) What are the leading ideas of the book? (11) What is the central truth of the book? (12) What are the characteristics of the book?

Having prepared your sheets of paper with these questions at the head, lay them side by side on your study table before you, and go through the book slowly, and, as you come to an answer to any one of these questions, write it down on the appropriate sheet of paper. It may be necessary to go through the book several times to do the work thoroughly and satisfactorily, but you will be amply repaid. When you have finished your own work in this line, and not until then, it will be well, if possible, to compare your results with those reached by others. A book that will serve as a good illustration of this introductory work is "The New Testament and Its Writers," Rev. J. A. McClymont.

The introduction one prepares for himself will be worth many times more to him than any that he can procure from others. The work itself is a rare education of the faculties of perception, comparison and reasoning.

The answers to our questions will sometimes be found in some related book. For example, if we are studying one of the Pauline Epistles, the answer to our questions may be found in the Acts of the Apostles, or in the Epistle written to the place from which the one studied was written. Of course, all the questions given will not apply to every book in the Bible.

If one is not willing to give the time and labor necessary, this introductory work can be omitted, but only at a great sacrifice. Single passages in an epistle can never be correctly

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understood unless we know to whom they were written. Much false interpretation of the Bible arises from taking some direction manifestly intended for local application to be of universal authority. So, also, oftentimes false interpretation arises from applying to the unbeliever what was intended for the saint. Noting the occasion of writing, will clear up the meaning of a passage that would be otherwise obscure. Bearing in mind the circumstances of the author when he wrote, will frequently give new force to his words. When we remember that the jubilant epistle to the Philippians, with its oft-repeated "rejoice in the Lord" and its "in nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus," was written by a prisoner awaiting possible sentence of death, how much more meaningful it becomes. Bearing in mind the main purpose for which a book was written, will help to interpret its incidental exhortations in their proper relations. In fact, the answers to all the questions will be valuable in all the work that follows, as well as valuable in themselves.

IV.—*The fourth work is to divide the book into its proper sections.* This work is not indispensable, but still it is valuable. Go through the book and notice the principal divisions in the thought, and mark these. Then go through these divisions and find if there are any natural subdivisions and mark these. In this work of dividing the epistle, the Revised Version, which is not chopped up by a purely mechanical and irrational verse division, but divided according to a logical plan, will be of great help. Having discovered the divisions of the book, proceed to give to each section an appropriate caption. Make this caption as precise a statement of the general contents of the section as possible. Make it also as terse and striking as possible, so that it will fix itself in the mind. As far as possible let the captions of the subdivisions connect themselves with the general caption of the division. Do not attempt too elaborate a division at first. The following division of 1st Peter, without

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many marked subdivisions, will serve as a simple illustration of what is meant:

1. Chap. 1:1, 2. Introduction and salutation to the pilgrims and sojourners in Pontus, etc.
2. Chap. 1:3–12. The Inheritance reserved in heaven and the Salvation ready to be revealed for those pilgrims who in the midst of manifold temptations are kept by the power of God through faith.
3. Chap. 1:13–25. The pilgrim's conduct during the days of his pilgrimage.
4. Chap. 2:1–10. The high calling, position and destiny of the pilgrim people.
5. Chap. 2:11, 12. The pilgrim's conduct during the days of his pilgrimage.
6. Chap. 2:13–17. The pilgrim's duty toward the human governments under which he lives.
7. Chap. 2:18–3:7. The duty of various classes of pilgrims.
 - a. Chap. 2:18–25. The duty of servants toward their masters—enforced by an appeal to Christ's conduct under injustice and reviling.
 - b. Chap. 3:1–6. The duty of wives toward husbands.
 - c. Chap. 3:7. The duty of husbands toward their wives.
8. Chap. 3:8–12. The conduct of pilgrims toward one another.
9. Chap. 3:13–22. The pilgrim suffering for righteousness' sake.
10. Chap. 4:1–6. The pilgrim's separation from the practices of those among whom he spends the days of his pilgrimage.
11. Chap. 4:7–11. The pilgrim's sojourning drawing to a close and his conduct during the last days.
12. Chap. 4:12–19. The pilgrim suffering for and with Christ.
13. Chap. 5:1–4. The duty and reward of elders.
14. Chap. 5:5–11. The pilgrim's walk—humble and trustful, watchful and steadfast—and a doxology.
15. Chap. 5:12–14. Conclusion and benediction.

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V.—*The fifth work is to take up each verse in order and study it.* The first thing to be done in this verse by verse study of the book is to get the exact meaning of the verse. How is this to be done? There are three steps that lead into the meaning of a verse.

a. The first step is to get the exact meaning of the words used. There will be found two classes of words: those whose meaning is perfectly apparent, those whose meaning is doubtful. It is quite possible to find the precise meaning of these doubtful words. This is not done by consulting a dictionary. That is an easy but dangerous method of finding the scriptural significance of a word. The only safe and sure method is to study the usage of the word in the Bible itself, and especially in that particular Bible-writer, one of whose writings we are studying. To study the Bible usage of words one must have a Concordance. Altogether, the best Concordance is Strong's "Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible." The next best, Young's "Analytical Concordance." Cruden's Complete Concordance will do, if one cannot afford a better. But the student should, as soon as possible, procure Strong's "Exhaustive Concordance." All the passages in which the word, whose meaning is being sought, occurs should be found and examined, and in this way the precise meaning of the word will be determined. Many an important Bible doctrine turns upon the meaning of a word. Thus, for example, two schools of theology divide on the meaning of the word "justify." The critical question is, does the word "justify" mean "to make righteous," or does it mean "to count or declare righteous"? The correct interpretation of many passages of Scripture turns upon the sense which we give to this word. Let one look up all the passages in the Bible in which the word is found, and there will be no doubt as to the Bible usage and meaning of the word. Deut. 25:1; Ex. 23:7; Is. 5:23; Luke 16:15; Rom. 2:13; 3:23, 24; Luke 18:14; Rom. 4:2–8, R. V., will serve to illustrate the Biblical

¹Torrey, R. A. [. o. c. 1896. *How to study the bible for greatest profit ...* (1). n.p.

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usage. By the use of Strong's Concordance, or Young's, the student will see that the same word may be used in the English version as the translation of several Greek or Hebrew words. Of course, in determining the Biblical usage, we should give especial weight to those passages in which the English word examined is the translation of the same word in Greek or Hebrew. Either of the Concordances just mentioned will enable us to do this, even though we are not at all acquainted with Greek or Hebrew. It will be much easier to do it with Strong's Concordance than Young's. It is surprising how many knotty problems in the interpretation of scripture are solved by the simple examination of the Biblical usage of words. For example, one of the burning questions of to-day is the meaning of 1 Jno. 1:7. Does this verse teach that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us" from all the guilt of sin; or does it teach us that "the blood of Jesus Christ" cleanseth us from the very presence of sin, so that by the blood of Christ, indwelling sin is itself eradicated? Many of those who read this question will answer it off-hand at once, one way or the other. But the off-hand way of answering questions of this kind, is a very bad way. Take your concordance and look up every passage in the Bible in which the word "cleanse" is used in connection with blood, and the question will be answered conclusively and forever. Never conclude that you have the right meaning of a verse until you have carefully determined the meaning of all doubtful words in it by an examination of Bible usage. Even when you are pretty sure you know the meaning of the words, it is well not to be too sure until you have looked it up.

b. The second step in ascertaining the meaning of a verse is to carefully notice the context (what goes before and what comes after). Many verses, if they stood alone, might be capable of several interpretations, but when what goes before and what comes after is considered, all the interpretations but one are seen to be impossible. Take for example Jno. 14:18, "I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you." (R. V.) To what does Jesus refer when He says "I come unto you"? One commentator says, He refers to His reappearance to His disciples after His resurrection to

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comfort them. Another says that He refers to His second coming, as it is called. Another says He refers to His coming through the Holy Spirit's work to manifest Himself to His disciples and make His abode with them. Which does He mean? When "doctors disagree," can an ordinary layman decide? Yes, very often. Surely in this case. If any one will carefully note what Jesus is talking about in the verses immediately preceding (verses 15–17) and in the verses immediately following (verses 19–26), he will have no doubt as to what coming Jesus refers to in this passage. You can see this by trying it for yourself.

A very large proportion of the vexed questions of Biblical interpretation, can be settled by this very simple method of noticing what goes before and what comes after. Many of the sermons one hears, become very absurd when one takes the trouble to notice the setting of the preacher's text and how utterly foreign the thought of the sermon is to the thought of the text, regarded in the light of the context.

c. The third step in ascertaining the correct and precise meaning of a verse, is the examination of parallel passages, *i. e.*, passages that treat the same subject—passages, for example, that give another account of the same address or event, or passages that are evidently intended as a commentary on the passage in hand. Very often, after having carefully studied the words used and the context, we will still be in doubt as to which of two or three possible interpretations of a verse is the one intended by the writer or speaker. In such a case there is always somewhere else in the Bible a passage that will settle this question. Take for example, Jno. 14:3, "I come again and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (R. V.) A careful consideration of the words used in their relation to one another, will go far in determining the meaning of this passage, but still we find among commentators whose opinion ought to have some weight, these four interpretations: First, the coming here referred to is Christ's coming at death to receive the believer unto himself, as in the case of Stephen. Second, the coming again at the resurrection. Third, the coming again through the Holy Spirit. Fourth, the coming again of Christ when He returns

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personally and gloriously at the end of the age. Which of these four interpretations is the correct one? What has already been said about verse 18 might seem to settle the question, but it does not; for it is not at all clear that the coming in verse 3 is the same as in verse 18, for what is said in connection with the two comings is altogether different. In the one case it is a coming of Christ to “receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also”; in the other case it is a coming of Christ to manifest Himself unto us and make His abode with us. But fortunately there is a verse that settles the question, an inspired commentary on the Words of Jesus. This is found in 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. This will be seen clearly if we arrange the two passages in parallel columns.

Jno. 14:3.

I come again
and will receive
you unto myself
that where I am
there ye may be
also.

1 Thess. 4:16, 17.

The Lord himself shall descend
we...shall be caught up...to meet the
Lord
so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The two passages manifestly match exactly in the three facts stated, and beyond a doubt refer to the same event. But if any one will look at all closely at 1 Thess., 4:16, 17, there can be no doubt as to what coming of our Lord is referred to there. “The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge” will be of great assistance in finding parallel passages. These are the three steps that lead us into the meaning of a verse. They require work, but it is work that any one can do, and when the meaning of a verse is thus settled we arrive at conclusions that are correct and fixed. After taking these steps it is well to consult commentaries, and see how our conclusions agree with those of others. Before we proceed to the next thing to be done with a verse after its meaning has been determined, let it be said, that God intended to convey some definite truth in each verse of scripture, and any one of from two to a dozen interpretations of a verse is not as good as another. With every verse of scripture we should ask, not What can this be made to teach? but What

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as this intended to teach? and we should not rest satisfied until we have settled that. Of course, it is admitted a verse may have a primary meaning and other more remote meanings. For example, a prophecy may have its primary fulfilment in some personage or event near at hand, *e. g.*, Solomon, and a more remote and complete fulfilment in Christ.

2. We are not through with a verse when we have determined its meaning. The next thing to do is to analyze the verse. This is most interesting and profitable work. It is also a rare education of the various faculties of the intellect. The way to do it is this: Look steadfastly at the verse and ask yourself, What does this verse teach? and then begin to write down: This verse teaches, 1st, —; 2d, —; 3d, —, etc. At the first glance very likely you will see but one or two things the verse teaches, but, as you look again and again, the teachings will begin to multiply, and you will wonder how one verse could teach so much, and you will have an ever growing sense of the divine authorship of the Book. It is related of the younger Prof. Agassiz that a young man came to him to study ichthyology. The Professor gave him a fish to study and told him to come back when he had mastered that fish and get another lesson. In time the young man came back and told Prof. A. what he had observed about the fish. When he had finished, to his surprise he was given the same fish again, and told to study it further. He came back again, having observed new facts, and, as he supposed, all the facts about the fish. But again he was given the same fish to study, and so it went on, lesson after lesson, until that student had been taught what his perceptive faculties were for, and also taught to do thorough work. In the same way ought we to study the Bible. We ought to come back to the same verse of the Bible again and again, until we have gotten, as far as it is possible to us, all that is in the verse. Then the probability is that when we come back to the same verse several months afterward we will find something we did not see before. It may be, that an illustration of this method of analysis will be helpful. Let us take 1 Pet. 1:1, 2. (Here we have an instance in which the verse division of our Authorized version is so manifestly

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illogical and absurd that in our analysis we cannot follow it, but must take the two verses together. This will often be the case.)

1 Pet., 1:1, 2. These verses teach:

(1.) This epistle is by Peter.

(2.) This Peter who wrote this epistle was an apostle of Jesus Christ.

(3.) Peter delighted to think and speak of himself as one sent of Jesus Christ. (Comp. 2 Pet., 1:1

(NOTE—*Apostle is Greek for Latin Missionary.*)

(4.) The name, Jesus Christ (used twice in these two verses). Significance:

a. Savior.

b. Anointed One.

c. Fulfiller of the Messianic predictions of the O. T. "Christ" has especially reference to the earthly reign of Christ

(5.) This Epistle was written to the elect, especially to the elect who are sojourners of the dispersion in Pontus, *i. e.*, Paul's old field of labor.

(NOTE—*The question whether speaking of the dispersion implies that the destination of this Epistle was to Jewish Christians will have been taken up and answered in the introduction to the Epistle.*)

(6.) Believers are:

a, elect or chosen of God.

b, foreknown of God.

c, sanctified of the Spirit.

d, sprinkled by the blood of Jesus Christ.

e, sojourners or pilgrims on earth.

f, subjects of multiplied grace.

g, possessors of multiplied peace.

(7.) Election.

a. Who are the elect? Believers. Comp. vs. 5.

b. To what are they elect?

a, obedience.

b, sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.

According to what are they elect? The foreknowledge of God. Comp. Rom. 8:29, 30.

In what are they elect? Sanctification of the Spirit.

The test of election: Obedience. Comp. 2 Pet. 1:10.

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The work of the three persons of the Trinity in election

- a. The Father foreknows.
 - b. Jesus Christ cleanses from guilt by His blood.
 - c. The Spirit sanctifies.
- (8.) God is the Father of the elect.
- (9.) The humanity of Christ: seen in the mention of His blood.
- (10.) The reality of the body of Jesus Christ: seen in the mention of His blood.
- (11.) It is by His blood and not by His example that Jesus Christ delivers from sin.
- (12.) Peter's first and great wish and prayer for those to whom he wrote was that grace and peace might be multiplied.
- (13.) It is not enough to have grace and peace. One should have multiplied grace and peace.
- (14.) That men already have grace and peace is no reason to cease praying for them, but rather an incentive to prayer that they may have more grace and peace.
- (15.) Grace precedes peace. Comp. all passages where these words are found together.

This is simply an illustration of what is meant by analysing a verse. The whole book should be gone through in this way.

There are three rules to be observed in this analytical work.

1st. Do not put anything into your analysis that is not clearly in the verse. One of the greatest faults in Bible study is reading into passages what God never put into them. Some men have their pet doctrines, and see them everywhere, and even where God does not see them. No matter how true, precious or scriptural a doctrine is, do not put it into your analysis where it is not in the verse. Considerable experience with classes in this kind of study leads me to emphasize this rule. 2d. Find all that is in the verse. This rule can only be carried out relatively. Much will escape you, the verses of the Bible are such a great deep, but do not rest until you have dug, and dug, and dug, and there seems to be nothing more to find. 3d. State what you do find just as accurately and exactly as possible. Do not be content with putting into your analysis something like what is in the

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verse, but state in your analysis precisely what is in the verse.

VI.—*The sixth work in the study of the book is to classify the results obtained by the verse by verse analysis.* By your verse by verse analysis you have discovered and recorded a great number of facts. The work now is to get these facts into an orderly shape. To do this, go carefully through your analysis and note the subjects treated of in the Epistle. Write these subjects down as fast as noted. Having made a complete list of the subjects treated in the book, write these subjects on separate cards or sheets of paper, and then, going through the analysis again, copy each point in the analysis upon its appropriate sheet of paper, *e. g.*, every point regarding God the Father upon the card at the top of which this subject is written. This general classification should be followed by a more thorough and minute subdivision. Suppose that we are studying the First Epistle of Peter. Having completed our analysis of the Epistle, and gone over it carefully, we will find that the following subjects, at least, are treated in the Epistle: (1) God. (2) Jesus Christ. (3) The Holy Spirit. (4) The Believer. (5) Wives and Husbands. (6) Servants. (7) The New Birth. (8) The Word of God. (9) Old Testament Scripture. (10) The Prophets. (11) Prayer. (12) Angels. (13) The Devil. (14) Baptism. (15) The Gospel. (16) Salvation. (17) The World. (18) Gospel Preachers and Teachers. (19) Heaven. (20) Humility. (21) Love.

These will serve for general headings. But after the material found in the analysis is arranged under these headings, it will be found to subdivide itself naturally into numerous subdivisions. For example, the material under the head God can be subdivided into these subdivisions: 1. His names. (The material under this head is quite rich). 2. His Attributes. (This should be subdivided again: (1) His Holiness. (2) His Power. (3) His Foreknowledge. (4) His Faithfulness. (5) His Long-suffering. (6) His Grace. There are twenty-five or more points on God's Grace in the Epistle. (7) His Mercy. (8) His Impartiality. (9) His Severity.) 3. God's Judgments. 4. God's Will. 5. What is Acceptable to God. 6. What is Due to God. 7. God's Dwelling Place. 8. God's Dominion. 9. God's Work.

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What God does. 10. The Things of God, *e. g.*, “The mighty hand of God,” “the house of God,” “the gospel of God,” “the flock of God,” “the people of God,” “the bondservants of God,” “the Word of God,” “the Oracles of God,” etc., etc.

An illustration in full of the classified arrangement of the teaching of a book on one doctrine, will probably show better how to do this work than any abstract statement, and it will also illustrate in part how fruitful is this method of study. We will take 1 Peter again—its teaching regarding the Believer.

WHAT THE EPISTLE TEACHES ABOUT THE BELIEVER

I.—HIS PRIVILEGES.

1. His Election.

a, He is foreknown of the Father, 1:2.

b, He is elect or chosen of God, 1:1.

c, He is chosen of God, according to His foreknowledge, 1:2.

d, He is chosen unto obedience, 1:2.

e, He is chosen unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, 1:2.

f, He is chosen in sanctification of the Spirit, 1:2.

2. His Calling.

a, By whom called:

God, 1:15.

The God of all grace, 5:10.

b, To what called:

The imitation of Christ in the patient taking of suffering for well doing, 2:20, 21.

To render blessings for reviling, 3:9.

Out of darkness into God’s marvellous light, 2:9.

To God’s eternal glory, 5:10.

c, In whom called:

In Christ, 5:10.

d, The purpose of his calling:

That he may show forth the praises of Him who called, 2:9.

That he may inherit a blessing, 3:9.

3. His Regeneration.

He has been begotten again

a, of God, 1:3.

b, unto a living hope, 1:3.

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c, unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven, 1:4.

d, By the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1:3.

e, Of incorruptible seed by the word of God that liveth, etc., 1:23.

4. *His Redemption.*

He has been redeemed,

a, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, 1:18.

b, with precious blood, even the blood of Christ, 1:19.

c, from his vain manner of life, handed down from his fathers, 1:18.

d, His sins have been borne by Christ, in His own body, on the tree, 2:24.

5. *His Sanctification.*

He is sanctified by the Spirit, 1:2.

6. *His Cleansing.*

He is cleansed by the blood, 1:2.

7. *His Security.*

a, He is guarded by the power of God, 1:5.

b, He is guarded unto a salvation ready, or prepared, to be revealed in the last time, 1:5.

c, God careth for him, 5:7.

d, He can cast all his anxiety upon God, 5:7.

e, The God of all grace will perfect, stablish, strengthen him, after a brief trial of suffering, 5:10. R. V.

f, None can harm him if he is zealous of that which is good, 3:13.

g, He shall not be put to shame, 2:6.

8. *His Joy.*

a, The character of his joy.

(1) His present joy.

A great joy, 1:8. R. V.

An unspeakable joy, 1:8.

A joy full of glory, 1:8.

(NOTE—*This present joy cannot be hindered by being put to grief, because of manifold temptations, 1:6.*)

(2) His future joy: exceeding, 4:13.

b, In what he rejoices:

(1) In the salvation prepared to be revealed in the last time, 1:6.

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(2) Because of his faith in the unseen Jesus Christ, 1:8.

(3) In fellowship in Christ's sufferings, 4:13.

c, In what he shall rejoice.

(1) In the revelation of Christ's glory, 4:13.

(NOTE—*Present joy in fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, is the condition of exceeding joy at the revelation of Christ's glory, 4:13.*)

9. His Hope.

a, Its character.

(1) A living hope, 1:3.

(2) A reasonable hope, 3:15.

(3) An inward hope, "in you," 3:15.

b, In whom is his hope.

(1) In God, 1:21.

c, The foundation of his hope.

(1) The resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1:3–21.

10. His Salvation.

a, A past salvation.

(1) Has been redeemed, 1:18–19.

(2) Has been healed, 2:24.

(NOTE—*By baptism, after a true likeness, the Believer, as Noah by the flood, has passed out of the old life of nature into the new resurrection life of grace, 3:21.*)

b, A present salvation.

(1) He is now receiving the salvation of his soul, 1:9.

c, A growing salvation, through feeding on His word, 2:2, R. V.

d, A future salvation: ready or prepared to be revealed in the last time, 1:5.

11. *The Believer's Possessions.*

a, God as his Father, 1:17.

b, Christ as his

(1) Sin bearer, 2:24.

(2) Example, 2:21.

(3) Fellow sufferer, 4:13.

c, A living hope, 1:3.

d, An incorruptible, undefiled, unfading inheritance reserved in heaven, 1:4.

e, Multiplied grace and peace, 1:2.

f, Spiritual milk without guile for his food, 2:2.

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g, Gifts for service—each believer has, or may have, some gift, 4:10.

12. *What Believers Are.*

- a, An elect race, 2:9.
- b, A royal priesthood, 2:9.
- c, A holy priesthood, 2:5.
- d, A holy nation, 2:9.
- e, A people for God's own possession, 2:9, R. V.
- f, Living stones, 2:5.
- g, The House of God, 4:17.
- h, A spiritual House, 2:5.
- i, The flock of God, 5:2.
- j, Children of obedience, 1:14, R. V.
- k, Partakers of, or partners in, Christ's sufferings, 4:13.
- l, Partakers of, or partners in, the glory to be revealed, 5:1.
- m, Sojourners or strangers, 1:1.
- n, Foreigners on earth: he has no civil rights here: his Citizenship is in heaven, 2:11, com. Phil. 3:20, R. V.
- o, A sojourner on his way to another country, 2:1.
- p, A Christian: representative of Christ, 4:16.

13. *The Believer's Possibilities.*

- a, He may die unto sin, 2:24.
 - b, He may live unto righteousness, 2:24.
- (NOTE—*We must die unto sin if we are to live unto righteousness, 2:24.*)
- c, He may follow in Christ's steps, 2:21.
 - d, He may cease from sin, 4:1.
 - e, He may cease from living to the lusts of men, 4:2.
 - f, He may live unto the will of God, 4:2.
- (NOTE—*It is through suffering in the flesh that he ceases from sin and living to the lusts of men, and lives to the will of God.*)

14. *What was for the Believer.*

- a, The ministry of the Prophets was in his behalf, 1:12.
- b, The preciousness of Jesus is for him, 2:7, R. V.

15. *Unclassified.*

- a, Has the gospel preached to him in the Holy Ghost, 1:12.
- b, Grace is to be brought unto him at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1:3, com. Eph. 3:7.
- c, Has tasted that the Lord is gracious, 2:3.

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II.—THE BELIEVER'S TRIAL AND SUFFERINGS.

1. *The fact of the Believer's sufferings and trials, 1:6.*
2. *The nature of the Believer's sufferings and trials.*
 - a, He endures griefs, suffering wrongfully, 2:19.
 - b, He suffers for righteousness' sake, 3:14.
 - c, He suffers for well doing, 3:17; 2:20.
 - d, He suffers as a Christian, 4:16.
 - e, He is subjected to manifold temptations, 1:6.
 - f, He is put to grief in manifold temptations, 1:6.
 - g, He is spoken against as an evil doer, 2:12.
 - h, His good manner of life is reviled, 3:16.
 - i, He is spoken evil of because of his separated life, 4:4.
 - j, He is reproached for the name of Christ, 4, 14.
 - k, He is subjected to fiery trials, 4:12.
3. *Encouragements for believers undergoing fiery trials and suffering.*
 - a, It is better to suffer for well doing than for evil doing, 3:17.
 - b, judgment must begin at the House of God, and the present judgment of believers through trial, is not comparable to the future end of those who obey not the gospel, 4:17.
 - c, Blessed is the believer who does suffer for righteousness' sake, 3:14, comp. Matt. 5:10–12.
 - d, Blessed is the believer who is reproached for the name of Christ, 4:14.
 - e, The Spirit of Glory and the Spirit of God rests upon the believer who is reproached for the name of Christ, 4:14.
 - f, The believer's grief is for a little while, 1:6, R. V.
 - g, The believer's suffering is for a little while, 5:10, R. V.
 - h, Suffering for a little while will be followed by God's glory in Christ, which is eternal, 5:10.
 - i, The suffering endured for a little while is for the testing of faith, 1:7.
 - j, The fiery trial is for a test, 4:12.
 - k, The faith thus proved is more precious than gold, 1:7.
 - l, Faith proven by manifold temptations will be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1:7.
 - m, It is that his proved faith may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ, that the

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believer is for a little while subjected to manifold temptations, 1:7.

n, It is pleasing to God when a believer, for conscience toward God, endures grief, suffering wrongfully, 2:19, R. V.

o, It is pleasing to God when a believer takes it patiently, when he does well and suffers for it, 2:20.

p, Through suffering in the flesh we cease from sin, 4:1.

q, Those who speak evil of us shall give account to God, 4:5.

r, Sufferings are being shared by fellow believers, 5:9.

s, Christ suffered for us, 2:21.

t, Christ suffered for sins once (or once for all), the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, 3:18.

u, Christ left the believer an example that he should follow in His steps, 2:21.

v, In our fiery trials we are made partakers of, or partakers in, Christ's sufferings, 4:13.

w, When His glory is revealed we shall be glad also with exceeding joy, 4:13.

4. *How the believer should meet his trial and sufferings.*

a, The believer should not regard his fiery trial as a strange thing, 4:12.

b, The believer should expect fiery trial, 4:12.

c, When the believer suffers as a Christian let him not be ashamed, 4:16.

d, When the believer suffers as a Christian let him glorify God in this name, 4:16.

e, When the believer suffers fiery trials he should rejoice, inasmuch as he is made partaker of Christ's suffering, 4:13, R. V.

f, When the believer suffers, let him not return reviling with reviling, or suffering with threatening; but commit himself to Him that judgeth righteously, 2:23.

g, When the believer suffers, he should in well-doing commit the keeping of his soul unto God, as unto a faithful Creator, 4:19.

III.—THE BELIEVER'S DANGERS.

1. *The believer may fall into fleshly lusts that war against the soul, 2:11.*

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2. *The believer may sin, 2:20, R. V.*
 3. *The believer may fall into sins of the gravest character, 4:15. (Note in this verse the awful possibilities that lie dormant in the heart of at least a sincere professed believer.)*
 4. *The believer's prayers may be hindered, 3:7.*
 5. *The believer is in danger that his high calling and destiny tempt him to despise human laws and authority, 2:13.*
 6. *The believer is in danger that his high calling lead him to lose sight of his lowly obligations to human masters, 2:18.*
 7. *Young believers are in danger of disregarding the will and authority of older believers, 5:5.*

IV.—THE BELIEVER'S RESPONSIBILITY.

1. *Each believer has an individual responsibility, 4:10, R. V.*
2. *Each believer's responsibility is for the gift he has received, 4:10.*

V.—THE BELIEVER'S DUTIES.

1. What the believer should be.
 - a, Be holy in all manner of living.
 - (1) Because God is holy, 1:15.
 - (2) Because it is written "ye shall be holy," 1:16, R. V.
 - b, Be like Him who called him, 1:15–16.
 - c, Be sober, (or of a calm, collected, thoughtful spirit,) 1:13; 4:7; 5:8.
 - d. Be sober, or of a calm, etc., unto prayer, 4:7.
 - e. Be of a sound mind: because the end of all things is approaching, 4:7.
 - f. Be watchful, 5:8.
 - g. Be steadfast in the faith, 5:9.
 - h. Be subject to every ordinance of man.
 - (1) For the Lord's sake, 2:13.
 - (2) To the King, as supreme, 2:13.
 - (3) To governors, as sent by the King for the punishment of evil doers, and for praise to them that do well, 2:14.
 - (4) Because this is God's will, 2:15.
 - i. Be like minded, 3:8.
 - j. Be sympathetic, 3:8.

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k. Be tenderhearted, 3:8.

l. Be humble minded, 3:8.

m. Be ready.

(1) Always.

(2) To give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in him.

(3) With meekness and fear.

(4) In order to put to shame those who revile their good manner of life in Christ, 3:16.

n. Should *not* be troubled, 3:14.

2. *What the Believer should not do.*

a. The believer should not fashion himself according to the lusts of the old life of ignorance, 1:14.

b. The believer should not render evil for evil, 3:9.

c. The believer should not render reviling for reviling, 3:9.

d. The believer should not fear the world's fear, 3:14.

e. The believer should not live his remaining time in the flesh to the lusts of men, 4:2.

3. *What the Believer should do*

a. He should live as a child of obedience, 1:14.

b. Pass the time of his sojourning here in fear, 1:17.

c. Abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul, 2:11.

d. Observe God's will as the absolute law of life, 2:15.

e. Let his conscience be governed by the thought of God and not by the conduct of men, 2:19.

f. Sanctify Christ in his heart as Lord, 3:15. R. V. Comp. Is. 8:13.

g. Live his remaining time in the flesh to the will of God, 4:2.

h. Put away

(1) All malice, 2:1.

(2) All guile, 2:1.

(3) Hypocrisies, 2:1,

(4) Envy, 2:1.

(5) All evil speaking, 2:1.

i. Come unto the Lord as unto a living stone, 2:4.

j. Show forth the excellencies of him who called him out of darkness into His marvellous light, 2:9.

k. Arm himself with the mind of Christ: *i. e.* to suffer in the flesh, 4:1.

l. Cast all his care upon God because he careth for him, 5:7.

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m, Stand fast in the true grace of God, 5:12.

n, Withstand the devil, 5:9.

o, Humble himself under the mighty hand of God, 5:5.

(1) Because God resisteth the proud and giveth grace unto the humble, 5:5–6.

(2) That God may exalt him in due time, 5:6.

p, Glorify God when he suffers as a Christian, 4:16.

q, See to it that he does not suffer as a thief or as an evil doer or as a meddler in other men's matters, 4:15.

r, Rejoice in fiery trial, 4:13.

s, Toward various persons.

(1) Toward God—fear, 2:17.

(2) Toward the King—honor, 2:17.

(3) Toward Masters—be in subjection with all fear (not only to the good and gentle, but to the forward) 2:18.

(4) Toward the Brotherhood,

Love, 2:17; 1:22; 4:8.

Love from the heart, 1:22, R. V.

Love fervently—intensely, 1:22; 4:8.

Gird themselves with humility as with a slave's apron unto one another, *i. e.*,

1st. Be one another's slaves.

2nd. Wear humility as a token of their readiness to serve one another, 5:5, com. Jno. 13:4–5.

Minister the gift he has received from God among the brethren as a good steward of the manifold grace of God, 4:10.

Use hospitality one to another without murmuring, 4:9.

Salute one another with a holy kiss, 5:14.

5. Toward his revilers.

Render blessing for reviling, 3:9.

6. Toward the Gentiles.

Have his behavior seemly among the Gentiles, 2:12.

(NOTES—*1st. The reason why he should have his behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that the Gentiles might glorify God in the day of visitation, 2:12: 2nd. This seemly behavior should consist in good works which the Gentiles could behold, 2:12.*

7. Toward foolish men.

By well doing put to silence their ignorance, 2:15.

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8. Toward all men—honor, 2:17.

(NOTE—*The especial duties of believing husbands and wives, toward one another, comes under a special classification.*

t, Long for the sincere milk of the word, 2:2.

u, Gird up the loins of his mind, 1:13.

v, Grow, 2:2.

w, Set his hope perfectly on the grace to be brought unto him at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1:13, R. V.

VI.—THE BELIEVER'S CHARACTERISTICS.

1. *His faith and hope is in God, 1:21.*

2. *Believes in God through Jesus Christ, 1:21.*

3. *Calls on God as Father, 1:17.*

4. *Believes in Christ, though he has never seen Him, 1:8.*

5. *Loves Christ though he has never seen Him, 1:8.*

6. *Is returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul, 2:25.*

7. *Has purified his soul in obedience to the truth, 1:22.*

8. *Has unfeigned love for the Brethren, 1:22.*

9. *Has a good manner of life, 3:16.*

10. *Does not run with the Gentiles among whom he lives, to the same excess of riot, (lives a separated life), 4:4.*

11. *Refrains his tongue from evil. 3:10. Refrains his lips that they speak no guile, 3:10.*

12. *Turns away from evil, 3:11.*

13. *Does good, 3:11.*

14. *Seeks peace, 3:11.*

15. *Pursues peace, 3:11.*

(NOTE—*From 11 to 14 would very properly come under duties.*

VII.—THE BELIEVER'S WARFARE.

The believer has a warfare before him, 4:1.

The mind of Christ is the proper armament for this warfare, 4:1.

The warfare is with the devil, 5:8–9.

Victory is possible for the believer, 5:9.

Victory is won through steadfastness in the faith, 5:9.

VII.—*We come now to the seventh and last work. This is simply to meditate upon, and so digest, the results obtained. At first thought it might seem that when we had*

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completed our classification of results our work was finished, but this is not so. These results are for use: first, for personal enjoyment and appropriation, and afterward to give out to others. The appropriation of results is effected by meditation upon them. We are no more through with a book when we have carefully and fully classified its contents than we are through with a meal when we have it arranged in an orderly way upon the table. It is there to eat, digest and assimilate. One of the great failures in much of the Bible study of the day is just at this point. There is observation, analysis, classification, but no meditation. There is perhaps nothing so important in Bible study as meditation. (See Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2, 3.) Take your classified teachings and go slowly over them, and ponder them, point by point, until these wonderful truths live before you and sink into your soul, and live in you, and become part of your life. Do this again and again. Nothing will go further than meditation to make one great and fresh and original as a thinker and speaker. Very few people in this world think.

The method of study outlined in this chapter can be shortened to suit the time and industry of the student. For example, one can omit the Fifth work (V.), and proceed at once to go through the Book as a whole and note down its teachings on different doctrines. This will greatly shorten and lighten the work. It will also greatly detract from the richness of the results, it will not be as thorough, as accurate or as scholarly, and will not be nearly so good a mental discipline. But many people are lazy, and everybody is in a hurry. So if you will not follow out the fuller plan the shorter is suggested. But any man can be, if he will, a scholar at least in the most important line—that of Biblical study.

²

A still briefer plan of Book Study and yet very profitable, if one has no time for anything better, is to do the Second work (II.) and then go through the Epistle verse by verse looking up all the references given in "The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge." But we urge every reader to try the

²Torrey, R. A. [. o. c. 1896. *How to study the bible for greatest profit ...* (22). n.p.

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full method described in this chapter with at least one short book in the Bible.



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CHAPTER 3

TOPICAL STUDY

A second method of Bible study is the Topical Method. This consists in searching through the Bible to find out what its teaching is on various topics. It is perhaps the most fascinating method of Bible study. It yields the largest immediate results, though not the largest ultimate results. It has advantages. The only way to master any topic, is to go through the Bible, and find what it has to teach on that topic. Almost any great subject will take a remarkable hold upon the heart of a Christian man, if he will take time to go through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, and note what it has to say on that topic. He will have a more full and more correct understanding of that topic than he ever had before. It is said of Mr. Moody, that many years ago he took up the study of "Grace" in this way. Day after day he went through the Bible, studying what it had to say about "grace." As the Bible doctrine unfolded before his mind his heart began to burn, until at last, full of the subject and on fire with the subject, he ran out on to the street, and, taking hold of the first man he met, he said: "Do you know grace?" "Grace who?" was the reply. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation." Then he just poured out his soul on that subject. If any child of God will study "Grace," or "Love," or "Faith," or "Prayer," or any other great Bible doctrine, in that way, his soul too will become full of it. Jesus evidently studied the Old Testament scriptures in this way, for we read that "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself." (Luke, 24:27.) This method of study made the hearts of the two who walked with Him to burn within them. (Luke 24:32.) Paul seems to have followed his Master in this method of study and teaching. (Acts 17:2, 3.) But the method has its dangers. Its very fascination is a danger. Many are drawn by the fascination of this method of study to give up all other methods of study, and this is a great misfortune. A well-rounded, thorough-going

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knowledge of the Bible is not possible by this method of study. No one method of study will answer, if one desires to be a well-rounded and well-balanced Bible student. But the greatest danger lies in this, that every man is almost certain to have some line of topics in which he is especially interested, and if he studies his Bible topically, unless he is warned, he is more than likely to go over certain topics again and again, and be very strong in this line of truth, but other topics of equal importance he neglects, and thus becomes a one-sided man. We never know one truth correctly until we know it in its proper relations to other truths. I know of people, for example, who are interested in the great doctrine of the Lord's Second Coming, and pretty much all their Bible studies are on that line. Now this is a precious doctrine, but there are other doctrines in the Bible which a man needs to know, and it is folly to study this doctrine alone. I know others whose whole interest and study seems to center in the subject of "Divine Healing." It is related of one man that he confided to a friend that he had devoted his time for years to the study of the number "seven" in the Bible. This last is doubtless an extreme case, but it illustrates the danger in Topical Study. It is certain that we will never master the whole range of Bible truth if we pursue the Topical Method alone. A few rules concerning topical study will probably be helpful to most of the readers of this book.

I.—*Be systematic.* Do not follow your fancy in the choice of topics. Do not take up any topic that happens to suggest itself. Make a list of all the subjects that you can think of that are touched upon in the Bible. Make it as comprehensive and complete as possible. Then take these topics up one by one in logical order. The following list of subjects is given as a suggestion. Each one can add to the list for himself and subdivide the general subjects into proper sub-divisions.

LIST OF TOPICS

GOD.

God as a Spirit.

The Unity of God.

The Eternity of God.

The Omnipresence of God.

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The Personality of God.
The Omnipotence of God.
The Omniscience of God.
The Holiness of God.
The Love of God.
The Righteousness of God.
The Mercy or Loving Kindness of God.
The Faithfulness of God.
The Grace of God.

JESUS CHRIST.

The Divinity of Christ.
The Subordination of Jesus Christ to the Father.
The Human Nature of Jesus Christ.
The Character of Jesus Christ.

His Holiness.

His Love to God.

His Love to Man.

His Love for Souls.

His Compassion.

His Prayerfulness.

His Meekness and Humility.

The Death of Jesus Christ.

The Purpose of Christ's Death;

Why did Christ die?

For Whom did Christ Die?

The Results of Christ's Death.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Fact of the Resurrection.

The Results of the Resurrection.

The Importance of the Resurrection.

The Manner of the Resurrection.

The Ascension and Exaltation of Jesus Christ.

The Return or Coming Again of Jesus Christ.

The Fact of His Coming Again.

The Manner of His Coming Again.

The Purpose of His Coming Again.

The Results of His Coming Again.

The Time of His Coming Again.

The Reign of Jesus Christ.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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Personality of the Holy Spirit.

Deity of the Holy Spirit.

Distinction of the Holy Spirit from God the Father, and the Son, Jesus Christ.

The Subordination of the Holy Spirit to the Father and to the Son.

Names of the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit:

In the Universe.

In Man in General.

In the Believer.

In the Prophet and Apostle.

In Jesus Christ.

MAN.

His Original Condition.

His Fall.

The Present Standing before God and Present Condition of Man outside of the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

The Future Destiny of those who Reject the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

Justification.

The New Birth.

Adoption.

The Believer's Assurance of Salvation.

The Flesh.

Sanctification.

Cleansing.

Consecration.

Faith.

Repentance.

Prayer.

Thanksgiving.

Praise.

Worship.

Love to God.

Love to Jesus Christ.

Love to Man.

The Future Destiny of Believers.

ANGELS.

Their Nature and Position.

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Their Number.
Their Abode.
Their Character.
Their Work.
Their Destiny.
SATAN OR THE DEVIL.
His Existence.
His Nature and Position.
His Abode.
His Work.
Our Duty Regarding Him.
His Destiny.
DEMONS.
Their Existence.
Their Nature.
Their Work.
Their Destiny.

For a student who has the perseverance to carry it through, it might be recommended, to begin with the first topic on a list like this, and go right through it to the end, searching for everything the Bible has to say on these topics. This the author of this book has done, and, thereby, gained a fuller knowledge of truth along these lines, and an immeasurably more vital grasp of the truth, than he ever obtained by somewhat extended studies in systematic Theology. Many, however, will stagger at the *seeming* immensity of the undertaking. To such it is recommended to begin by selecting those topics that seem more important. But sooner or later settle down to a thorough study of what the Bible has to teach about God and Man. The "Abstract of Subjects, Doctrinal and Practical," in the back of "The Bible Text Cyclopaedia" is very suggestive.

II.—*Be thorough.* Whenever you are studying any topic, do not be content with examining some of the passages in the Bible that bear upon the subject, but find, as far as possible, *every passage in the Bible that bears on this subject.* As long as there is a single passage in the Bible on any subject that you have not considered, you have not yet gotten a thoroughly true knowledge of that subject. How can we find all the passages in the Bible that bear on any subject? 1st.

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By the use of the Concordance. Look up every passage that has the word in it. Then look up every passage that has synonymous words in it. If, for example, you are studying the subject of prayer, look up every passage that has the word “pray” and its derivatives in it, and also every passage that has such words as “cry,” “call,” “ask,” “supplication,” “intercession,” etc., in it. 2nd. By the use of a Bible text book. A text book arranges the passages of Scripture, not by the words used, but by the subjects treated, and there is many a verse, for example on prayer, that does not have the word “prayer” or any synonymous word in it. Incomparably the best Bible text book is Inglis’ “The Bible Text Cyclopaedia.” 3rd. Passages not discovered by the use of either concordance or text book will come to light as we study by books, or as we read the Bible through in course, and so our treatment of topics will be ever broadening.

III.—*Be exact.* Get the exact meaning of each passage considered. Study each passage in its connection, and find its meaning in the way suggested in the chapter on “Study of Individual Books.” Topical study is frequently carried on in a very slipshod fashion. Passages, torn from their connection, are strung or huddled together because of some superficial connection with one another, and without much regard to their real sense and teaching, and this is called “topical study.” This has brought the whole method of topical study into disrepute. But is possible to be as exact and scholarly in topical study as in any other method, and when we are the results will be instructive and gratifying, and not misleading. But the results are sure to be misleading and unsatisfactory if the work is done in a careless, inexact way.

IV.—*Classify and write down your results.* In the study of any large subject one will get together a great mass of matter. Having gotten it, it must now be gotten into shape. As you look it over carefully, you will soon see the facts that belong together. Arrange them together in a logical order. An illustrative topical study is given below. What the Bible teaches concerning the Deity of Jesus Christ.

JESUS CHRIST: HIS DEITY

1. *Divine names.*

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a. Luke, 22:70.

“The Son of God.” This name is given to Christ forty times. Besides this the synonymous expression “His son,” “My son,” are of frequent occurrence. That this name as used of Christ is a distinctly Divine name appears from Jno. 5:18.

b. Jno. 1:18.

“The only begotten Son.” This occurs five times. It is evident that the statement, that “Jesus Christ is the Son of God only in the same sense that all men are sons of God” is not true. Compare Mark 12:6. Here Jesus Himself, having spoken of all the prophets as servants of God, speaks of Himself as “one,” “a beloved Son.”

c. Rev. 1:17.

“The first and the last.” Comp. Is. 41:4; 44:6. In these latter passages it is “Jehovah,” “Jehovah of hosts,” who is “the first and the last.”

d. Rev. 22:12, 13, 16.

First, “the Alpha and Omega.”

Second, “the beginning and the ending.”

In Rev. 1:8, R. V. It is the Lord God who is the Alpha and Omega.

e. Acts 3:14.

“The Holy One.” In Hosea 11:9, and many other passages, it is God who is “the Holy One.”

f. Mal. 3:1; Luke 2:11; Acts 9:17; Jno. 20:28; Heb. 1:11.

“The Lord.” This name or title is used of Jesus several hundred times. The word translated “Lord” is used in the New Testament in speaking of men nine times, *e. g.*, Acts 16:30, Eph. 4:1, Jno. 12:21, but not at all in the way in which it used of Christ. He is spoken of as “*the* Lord” just as God is, cf. Acts 4:26 with 4:33. Note also Matt. 22:43–45, Phil. 2:21, Eph. 4:5. If any one doubts the attitude of the Apostles of Jesus toward Him as Divine, they would do well to read one after another the passages which speak of Him as Lord.

g. Acts 10:36.

“Lord of all.”

h. 1 Cor. 2:8.

“The Lord of Glory.” In Ps. 24:8–10, it is “the Lord of Hosts” who is the King of Glory.

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i. Is. 9:6.

(1) “Wonderful” (cf. Judges 13:18, R. V.)

(2) “Mighty God.”

(3) “Father of Eternity.” See R. V. marg.

j. Heb. 1:8.

“God.” In Jno. 20:28, Thomas calls Jesus “my God,” and is gently rebuked for not believing it before.

k. Matt. 1:23.

“God with us.”

l. Tit. 2:13, R. V.

“Our great God.”

m. Rom. 9:5.

“God blessed forever.”

Proposition: Sixteen names clearly implying Deity are used of Christ in the Bible, some of them over and over again, the total number of passages reaching far into the hundreds.

2. *Divine Attributes.*

a. Omnipotence.

(1) Luke 4:39. Jesus has power over disease, it is subject to His word.

(2) Luke 7:14–15; 8:54–55; Jno. 5:25. The Son of God has power over death, it is subject to His word.

(3) Matt: 8:26–27.

Jesus has power over the winds and sea, they are subject to His word.

(4) Matt. 8:16; Luke 4:35, 36, 41.

Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, has power over demons, they are subject to His word.

(5) Eph. 1:20–23.

Christ is far above *all* principality and power and might, and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. All things are in subjection (R. V.), under His feet. All the hierarchies of the angelic world are under Him.

(6) Heb. 1:3.

The Son of God upholds *all* things by the word of His power.

Proposition. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is omnipotent.

b. Omniscience.

(1) Jno. 4:16–19.

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Jesus knows men's lives, even their secret history.

(2) Mark 2:8; Luke 5:22; Jno. 2:24–25; (Acts 1:24.)

Jesus knows the secret thoughts of men. He knew all men. He knew what was in man. (cf. 2 Chron. 6:30; Jer. 17:9, 10. Here we see that God “only knoweth the hearts of the children of men.”)

(3) Jno. 6:64.

Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas would betray Him. Not only men's present thoughts but their future choices were known to Him.

(4) Jno. 1:48.

Jesus knew what men were doing at a distance.

(5) Luke 22:10, 12; Jno. 13:1; Luke 5:4–6.

Jesus knew the future regarding not only God's acts, but regarding the minute specific acts of men, and even the fishes of the sea.

NOTE—*Many, if not all, of these items of knowledge up to this point could possibly, if they stood alone, be accounted for by saying that the Omniscient God revealed these specific things to Jesus.*

(6) Jno. 21:17; 16:30; Col. 2:3. Jesus knew all things, in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Proposition. Jesus Christ is omniscient.

(NOTE—*There was, as we shall see when we study the Humanity of Christ, a voluntary veiling and abnegation of the exercise of His inherent Divine omniscience.* (Mark 11:12–14; Phil. 2:7.)

c. Omnipresence.

(1) Matt. 18:20.

Jesus Christ is present in every place where two or three are gathered together in His name.

(2) Matt. 28:20.

Jesus Christ is present with every one who goes forth into any part of the world to make disciples, etc.

(3) Jno.3:13.

The Son of man was in heaven while He was here on earth.

(NOTE—*This text is doubtful. (See R. V and the Variorum Bible.)*

(4) Jno. 14:20; 2 Cor. 13:5.

Jesus Christ is in each believer.

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(5) Eph. 1:23.

Jesus Christ filleth all in all.

Proposition. Jesus Christ is omnipresent.

d. Eternity.

Jno. 1:1; Mic. 5:2; Col. 1:17; Is. 9:6; Jno. 17:5 (Jno. 6:62; Jno. 8:58; 1 Jno. 1:1, 2); Heb. 13:8.

Proposition. The Son of God was from all eternity.

e. Immutability.

Heb. 13:8; 1:12. Jesus Christ is unchangeable. He not only always is, but always is *the same*.

f. Phil. 2:6.

Jesus Christ before His incarnation was in the *form* of God. (NOTE—“Morphe” translated “form” means “the form by which a person or thing strikes the vision; the external appearance.” (Thayer, *Grk-Eng. Lexicon of the N. T.*)

g. Col. 2:9.

In Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead in a bodily way.

Proposition. Five or more distinctively divine attributes are ascribed to Jesus Christ, and all the fulness of the Godhead is said to dwell in Him.

3. *Divine Offices.*

a. Creation.

Heb. 1:10; Jno. 1:3; Col. 1:16.

The Son of God, the eternal Word, the Lord, is creator of all created things.

b. Preservation.

Heb. 1:3. The Son of God is the preserver of all things.

c. The forgiveness of sin.

Mark 2:5–10; Luke 7:48–50.

Jesus Christ had power on earth to forgive sins.

NOTE—*He taught that sins were sins AGAINST HIMSELF. Luke 7:40–47, both Simon and the woman as sinners were debtors to Him, but in Ps. 51:4 sin is seen to be against God and God only.*)

d. Raising of the dead.

Jno. 6:39–44; 5:28–29.

It is Jesus Christ who raises the dead.

Ques. Did not Elijah and Elisha raise the dead? No; God raised the dead in answer to their prayer, but Jesus Christ

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will raise the dead by His own word. During the days of His humiliation it was by prayer that Christ raised the dead. Jno. 11:41.

e. Transformation of bodies. Phil. 3:21, R. V.

Jesus Christ shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation into the likeness of His own glorious body.

f. Judgment. 2 Tim. 4:1, R. V.

Christ Jesus shall judge the quick and the dead.

NOTE—*Jesus Himself emphasized the Divine character of this office. (Jno. 5:22–23.)*

g. The bestowal of eternal life.

Jno. 10:28; 17, 2.

Jesus Christ is the bestower of eternal life.

Proposition. Seven distinctively Divine offices are predicated of Jesus Christ.

4. Statements which in the O. T. are made distinctly of Jehovah God taken in the N. T. to refer to Jesus Christ.

a. Ps. 102:24–27, comp. Heb. 1:10–12.

b. Is. 40:3–4, comp. Matt. 3:3, Luke 1:68, 69, 76.

c. Jer. 11:20; 17, 10, comp. Rev. 21:23.

d. Is. 60:19 (Zech. 2:5) comp. Luke 2:32.

e. Is. 6:1; 3:10, comp. Jno. 12:37–41.

f. Is. 8:13–14, comp. 1 Pet. 2:7–8.

g. Is. 8:12–13, comp. 1 Pet. 3:14–15, R. V.

h. Num. 21:6–7, comp. 1 Cor. 10:9. (See R. V.)

i. Ps. 23:1; Is. 40:10–11, comp. Jno. 10:11.

j. Ez. 34:11; 12:16, comp. Luke 19:10.

k. Lord in the O. T. always refers to God except when the context clearly indicates otherwise: Lord in the N. T. always refers to Jesus Christ except where the context clearly indicates otherwise.

Proposition. Many statements which in the O. T. are made distinctly of Jehovah God are taken in the N. T. to refer to Jesus Christ, *i. e.*, in N. T. thought and doctrine Jesus Christ occupies the place that Jehovah occupies in O. T. thought and doctrine.

5. The way in which the name of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son are coupled together.

2 Cor. 13:14.

Matt. 28:19.

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1 Thess. 3:11.

1 Cor. 12:4–6.

Tit. 3:4, 5, comp. Tit. 2:13.

Rom. 1:7. Many instances of this sort (see all the Pauline Epistles).

Jas. 1:1.

Jno. 14:23, “we,” *i. e.*, God the Father and I.

2 Pet. 1:1. (Comp. R. V.)

Col. 2:2. (See R. V.)

Jno. 17:3.

Jno. 14:1, comp. Jer. 17:5–7.

Rev. 7:10.

Rev. 5:13; comp. Jno. 5:23.

Prop. The name of Jesus Christ is coupled with that of God the Father in numerous passages in a way in which it would be impossible to couple the name of any finite being with that of the Deity.

6. Divine Worship to be given to Jesus Christ.

a. Matt. 28:9; Luke 24:52; Matt. 14:33, comp. Acts 10:25–26; Rev. 22:8–9; Matt. 4:9–10.

Jesus Christ accepted without hesitation a worship which good men and angels declined with fear (horror).

Ques. Is not the verb translated worship in these passages used of reverence paid to men in high position? Yes; but not in this way by worshippers of Jehovah, as is seen by the way in which Peter and the angel drew back with horror when such worship was offered to them.

b. 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 12:8, 9; Acts 7:59. (R. V.)

Prayer is to be made to Christ.

c. Ps. 45:11; Jno. 5:23; comp. Rev. 5:8, 9, 12, 13.

It is God the Father’s will that all men pay the same divine honor to the Son as to Himself.

d. Heb. 1:6; Phil. 2:10, 11. (Comp. Is. 45:21, 23.)

The Son of God, Jesus, is to be worshiped as God by angels and men.

Proposition. Jesus Christ is a person to be worshiped by angels and men even as God the Father is worshiped.

General Proposition. By the use of numerous Divine names, by the ascription of all the distinctively divine attributes, by the predication of several divine offices, by referring

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statements which in the O. T. distinctly name Jehovah God as their subject to Jesus Christ in the N. T., by coupling the name of Jesus Christ with that of God the Father in a way in which it would be impossible to couple that of any finite being with that of the Deity, and by the clear teaching that Jesus Christ should be worshiped even as God the Father is worshiped—in all these unmistakable ways, God in His word distinctly proclaims that Jesus Christ is a Divine Being, is God.

One suggestion remains to be made in regard to topical study. Get further topics for topical study from your book studies.

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CHAPTER 4

BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

A third method of study is the Biographical. This needs no definition. It consists in taking up the various persons mentioned in Scripture and studying their life, work and character. It is really a special form of Topical Study. It can be made very interesting and instructive. It is especially useful to the minister with a view to sermon building, but is profitable for all Christians. The following suggestions will help those who are not already experienced in this line of work.

1. Collect all the passages in the Bible in which the person to be studied is mentioned. This is readily done by turning in Strong's Concordance to the person's name, and you will find every passage in which he is mentioned given.
2. Analyze the character of the person. This will require a repeated reading of the passages in which he is mentioned. This should be done with pencil in hand, that any characteristic may be noted down at once.
3. Note the elements of power and success.
4. Note the elements of weakness and failure.
5. Note the difficulties overcome.
6. Note the helps to success.
7. Note the privileges abused.
8. Note the opportunities neglected.
9. Note the opportunities improved.
10. Note the mistakes made.
11. Note the perils avoided.
12. Make a sketch of the life in hand. Make it as vivid, living and realistic as possible. Try to reproduce the subject as a real, living man. Note the place and surroundings of the different events, *e. g.*, Paul in Athens, Corinth, Philippi. Note the time relations of the different events. Very few people in reading the Acts of the Apostles, for example, take notice of the rapid passage of time, and so regard events separated by years as following one another in close sequence. In this

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connection note the age or approximate age of the subject at the time of the events recorded of him.

13. Summarize the lessons we should learn from the story of this person's life.

14. Note the person in hand in his relations to Jesus, *e. g.*, as a type of Christ (Joseph, David, Solomon and others), forerunner of Christ, believer in Christ, enemy of Christ, servant of Christ, brother of Christ (James and Jude), friend, etc., etc.

It will be well to begin with some person who does not occupy too much space in the Bible, as, *e. g.*, Enoch or Stephen. Of course many of the points mentioned above cannot be taken up with some characters.

Suggestive books in character studies are Stalker's Lives of Christ and Paul, and Stalker's "Imago Christi"; Rev. F. B. Meyer's "Elijah," and also other O. T. characters; Mr. Moody's "Bible Characters."

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CHAPTER 5 STUDY OF TYPES

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A fourth method of study is the Study of Types. We have illustrations of this in the Bible itself, as for example in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is both an interesting and instructive method of study. It shows us the most precious truths buried away in what once seemed to us a very dry and meaningless portion of the Bible. It need scarcely be said that this method of study is greatly abused and overdone in some quarters. But that is no reason why we should neglect it altogether, especially when we remember that not only Paul but Jesus were fond of this method of study. The following may serve as principles to govern us in this method of study:

1. *Be sure you have Bible warrant for your supposed type.* If one gives free rein to his fancy in this matter, he can imagine types everywhere, even in places that neither the human or divine author of the book had any intention of a typical sense. Never say this is a type unless you can point to some clear passage of Scripture where the truth said to be typified is definitely taught.
2. *Begin with the more simple and evident types, e g., the Passover (comp. Ex. 12 with 1 Cor. 5:7 etc.), the High Priest, the Tabernacle.*
3. *Be on your guard against the fanciful and overstrained.* Fancy is almost sure to run away with any man who is blessed with any imagination and quickness of typical discernment, unless he holds it in check. Our typical sensitiveness and sensibleness will become both quickened and chastened by careful and circumspect exercise.
4. *In studying any passage of possible typical suggestion, look up all the Scripture references.* The best collection of

³Torrey, R. A. [. o. c. 1896. *How to study the bible for greatest profit ...* (77). n.p.

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references is that given in “The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge.”

5. *Study carefully the meaning of the names of persons and places mentioned.* Bible names often have a very deep and far reaching suggestiveness. Thus, for example, Hebron, which means “joining together,” “union” or “fellowship,” is deeply significant when taken in connection with its history, as are all the names of the Cities of Refuge, and indeed very many Scripture names. Was it accidental that Bethlehem, the name of the place where the Bread of Life was born, means “House of bread”? C. H. M.’s notes on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are suggestive to one who has had little experience in the study of types.

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CHAPTER 6

THE STUDY OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE IN THE ORDER GIVEN IN THE BIBLE AND IN THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

A fifth method of Bible study is the old fashioned method of the study of the Bible in course, beginning at Genesis and going right on until Revelation is finished. This method of study is ridiculed a good deal in these days, but it has some advantages which no other method of study possesses. It is sometimes said, you might as well begin at the top shelf of your library and read right through, as to begin at the beginning of this library of sixty-six books and read right through. To this it is a sufficient answer, If you had a library that it was important to master as a whole, that you might understand the separate books in it, and that was as well arranged as the Bible is, then this method of going through your library would be excellent. The advantages of studying in the Bible in course are: First, It is the only method by which you will get an idea of the Book as a whole. The more we know of the Bible as a whole, the better prepared we are for the understanding of any individual portion of it. Second, It is the only method by which you are likely to cover the whole Book, and so take in the entire scope of God's revelation. It will be many a long year before any man covers the whole Bible by Book studies, or even by Topical studies. Every part of God's word is precious, and there are gems of truth hidden away in most unexpected places, *e. g.*, 1 Chron, 4:10, we hit upon these priceless gems by studying the Bible in course. Third, It is the best method to enable one to get hold of the unity of the Bible and its organic character. Fourth, It is a great corrective to one-sidedness and crankiness. The Bible is a many sided book, it is Calvinistic and Arminian, it is Trinitarian and Unitarian,

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it clearly teaches the Deity of Christ and insists on His real Humanity, it exalts faith and demands works, it urges to victory through conflict and asserts most vigorously that victory is won by faith, etc., etc. If we become too much taken up with any one line of truth in our Book or Topical studies, and we are more than likely to, the daily study of the Bible in course will soon bring us to some contrasted line of truth, and bring us back to our proper balance. Some people go insane through becoming too much occupied with a single line of truth. The thoughtful study of the whole Bible is a great corrective to this tendency. It would be well to have three methods of study in progress at the same time: first, the study of some book; second, the study of topics (perhaps topics suggested by the book studies); third, the study of the Bible in course. Every other method of study should be supplemented by studying the Bible in course. Some years ago I determined to read the A. V. through every year, the R. V. through every year, and the N. T. in Greek through every year. It has proved exceedingly profitable, and I would not willingly give it up.

A sixth method of study is closely related to the fifth method and has advantages of its own that will appear as soon as the method is described. It is *studying the various portions of the Bible in their Chronological Order*. In this way the Psalms are read in their historical settings, as are prophecies, epistles, etc. The whole Bible has been excellently arranged for Chronological study in Miss Petrie's *Clews to Holy Writ*. (American Tract Society.) The course as outlined by Miss Petrie covers three years, and there are questions given for study and examination.

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CHAPTER 7

THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE FOR PRACTICAL USEFULNESS IN DEALING WITH MEN

The seventh and last method of study is *the Study of the Bible for Practical Usefulness in Dealing with Men*.

To study the Bible in this way, make as complete a classification as possible of all the classes of men that one will meet. Write the names of the various classes at the head of separate sheets of paper or cards. Then begin the Bible and read it through slowly, and when you come to a passage that seems likely to prove useful in dealing with any class write it down upon its appropriate sheet. Go through the Bible in this way. It would be well to have a special Bible for this purpose, and have different colored inks, or different letters or symbols, to represent the different classes, and underscore the texts with the proper colored ink, or mark it with the appropriate symbol. The results of the labors of others in this line can be found in a number of books, such as Munhall's *Furnishing for Workers*, Alexander Paterson's *Bible Manual for Christian Workers*, Drury's *Hand-Book for Workers*, and the Author's *Vest Pocket Companion for Christian Workers* and his book "How to Bring Men to Christ." But the best book is the one you get up yourself. The books mentioned will give you suggestions how to do it. As a suggestion for beginning in the work we give a list of classes of men, to which you can add for yourself.

The careless and indifferent.

Those who wish to be saved but do not know how.

Those who know how to be saved but have difficulties

"I am too great a sinner."

"My heart is too hard."

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“I must become better before I become a Christian.”

“I am afraid I can’t hold out.”

“I am too weak.”

“I have tried before and failed.”

“I can not give up my evil ways.”

“I will be persecuted if I become a Christian.”

“It will hurt my business.”

“There is too much to give up.”

“The Christian life is too hard.”

“I am afraid of ridicule.”

“I will lose my friends.”

“I have no feeling.”

“I have been seeking Christ, but can not find Him.”

“I have sinned away the day of grace.”

“God won’t receive me.”

“I have committed the unpardonable sin.”

“It is too late.”

“Christians are so inconsistent.”

“God seems to me unjust and cruel.”

“There are so many things in the Bible which I can’t understand.”

“There is some one I can’t forgive.”

Those who are cherishing false hopes.

The Hope of being saved by a righteous life.

The Hope that “God is too good to damn anyone.”

The Hope of being saved by “trying to be a Christian.”

The Hope of being saved, because “I feel saved,” or “I feel I am going to heaven.”

The Hope of being saved by a profession of religion, or church membership, or a faith, that does not save from sin.

Those who lack assurance.

Backsliders.

Sceptics.

Infidels.

Those who wish to put off the decision.

Roman Catholics.

Jews.

Spiritualists.

Christian Scientists.

Secret Disciples.

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The Sorrowing.
The Persecuted.
The Discouraged.
The Despondent.
The Morbid.
Worldly Christians.
The Stingy.

The results of this work will be of incalculable value. In the first place, you will get a new view of how perfectly the Bible is adapted to every man's need. In the second place, familiar passages of the Bible will get a new meaning as you see their relation to the needs of men. The Bible will become a very living book. In the third place, in seeking food for others you will be fed yourself. And in the fourth place, you will get a vast amount of material to use in sermons, Bible-readings, prayer meeting talks and personal work. You will acquire a rare working knowledge of the Bible.

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PART II

FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS OF PROFITABLE BIBLE STUDY

CHAPTER 1

THE FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS OF THE MOST PROFITABLE BIBLE STUDY

We have considered seven profitable methods of Bible study. There is something, however, in Bible study more important than the best methods, that is, The Fundamental Conditions of Profitable Study. The one who meets these conditions will get more out of the Bible, while pursuing the poorest method, than the one who does not meet them will, while pursuing the best method. Many a one who is eagerly asking, "What method shall I pursue in my Bible study?" needs something that goes far deeper than a new and better method.

1. The first of the fundamental conditions of the most profitable Bible study is *the student must be born again*. The Bible is a spiritual book, it "combines spiritual things with spiritual words" (1 Cor. 2:13, R. V. Am. Ap.), and only a spiritual man can understand its deepest and most characteristic and most precious teachings. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged." (1 Cor. 2:14, R. V.) Spiritual discernment can be obtained in but one way, by being born again. "Except a man be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3, R. V.) No mere knowledge of the human languages in which the Bible was written, however extensive and accurate it may be, will qualify one to understand and appreciate the Bible. One must understand the divine language in which it was written

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as well, the language of the Holy Spirit. A person who understands the language of the Holy Spirit, but who does not understand a word of Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic, will get more out of the Bible, than one, who knows all about Greek and Hebrew and cognate languages, but is not born again, and, consequently, does not understand the language of the Holy Spirit. It is a well demonstrated fact that many plain men and women who are entirely innocent of any knowledge of the original tongues in which the Bible was written, have a knowledge of the real contents of the Bible, its actual teaching, in its depth and fulness and beauty, that surpasses that of many learned professors in theological faculties. One of the greatest follies of the day, is to set unregenerate men to teaching the Bible, because of their rare knowledge of the human forms of speech in which the book was written. It would be as reasonable to set a man to teach art because he had an accurate technical knowledge of paints. It requires aesthetic sense to make a man a competent teacher of art. It requires spiritual sense to make a man a competent teacher of the Bible. The man who had aesthetic discernment, but little or no technical knowledge of paint, would be a far more competent critic of works of art, than a man, who had a great technical knowledge of paint, but no aesthetic discernment; and so the man who has no technical knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, but who has spiritual discernment, is a far more competent critic of the Bible than the one who has a rare technical knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, but no spiritual discernment. It is exceedingly unfortunate that, in some quarters, more emphasis is laid upon a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, in training for the ministry, than is laid upon spiritual life and its consequent spiritual discernment. Unregenerate men should not be forbidden to study the Bible; for the Word of God is the instrument the Holy Spirit uses in the New Birth. (1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18): but it should be distinctly understood, that, while there are teachings in the Bible that the natural man can understand, and beauties which he can see, its most distinctive and characteristic teachings are beyond his grasp, and its highest beauties belong to a world in which he has no vision. The

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first fundamental condition of the most profitable Bible study, is, then, “Ye must be born again.” You cannot study the Bible to the greatest profit if you have not been born again. Its best treasures are sealed to you.

2. The second condition of the most profitable study is *a love for the Bible*. A man who eats with an appetite, will get far more good out of his meal than a man who eats from a sense of duty. It is well when a student of the Bible can say with Job, “I have treasured up the words of his mouth more than my necessary food,” (Job, 23:12 R. V.) or with Jeremiah, “Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by thy name, O, Lord God of hosts.” (Jer., 15:16, R. V.) Many come to the table God has spread in His word with no appetite for spiritual food, and go mincing here and there and grumbling about everything. Spiritual indigestion lies at the bottom of much modern criticism of the Bible. But how can one get a love for the Bible? First of all by being born again. Where there is life there is likely to be appetite. A dead man never hungers. This brings us back to the first condition. But going beyond this, the more there is of vitality the more there is of hunger. Abounding life means abounding hunger for the Word. Study of the Word stimulates love for the Word. The author can well remember the time when he had more appetite for books about the Bible than he had for the Bible itself, but with increasing study there has come increasing love for the Book. Bearing in mind who the author of the Book is, what its purpose is, what its power is, what the riches of its contents are, will go far toward stimulating a love and appetite for the Book.

3. The third condition is *a willingness to do hard work*. Solomon has given a graphic picture of the Bible student who gets the most profit out of his study, “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and lay up my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou cry after discernment, and lift up thy voice for understanding; if thou *seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures*; THEN shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the

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knowledge of God.” (Prov. 2:1–5, R. V.) Now, seeking for silver and searching for hid treasures, means hard work, and the one who wishes to get not only the silver but the gold as well out of the Bible, and find its “hid treasures,” must make up his mind to dig. It is not glancing at the word, or reading the word, but studying the word, meditating upon the word, pondering the word, that brings the richest yields. The reason why many get so little out of their Bible reading is simply because they are not willing to think. Intellectual laziness lies at the bottom of a large per cent. of fruitless Bible reading. People are constantly crying for new methods of Bible study, but what many of them wish is simply some method of Bible study by which they can get all the good out of the Bible without work. If some one could tell lazy Christians some method of Bible study whereby they could put the sleepest ten minutes of the day, just before they go to bed, into Bible study, and get the profit out of it that God intends His children shall get out of the study of His Word, that would be just what they desire. But it can’t be done. Men must be willing to work and work hard, if they wish to dig out the treasures of infinite wisdom and knowledge and blessing which He has stored up in His Word. A business friend once asked me in a hurried call to tell him “ in a word ” how to study his Bible. I replied, “Think.” The Psalmist pronounces that man “blessed” who “*meditates* in the law of the Lord, *day and night.*” (Ps. 1:2.) The Lord commanded Joshua to “*meditate therein day and night,*” and assured him that as a result of this meditation “*then* thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success.” (Josh. 1:8.) Of Mary, the mother of Jesus, we read, “Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.” (Luke 2:19, R. V.) In this way alone can one study the Bible to the greatest profit. One pound of beef well chewed and digested and assimilated, will give more strength than tons of beef merely glanced at; and one verse of scripture chewed and digested and assimilated, will give more strength than whole chapters simply skimmed. Weigh every word you read in the Bible. Look at it. Turn it over and over. The most familiar passages get a new meaning in

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this way. Spend fifteen minutes on each word in Ps. 23:1, or Phil. 4:19, and see if it is not so.

4. The fourth condition is *a will wholly surrendered to God*. Jesus said, "If any man willeth to do his will he shall know of the teaching." (Jno. 7:17, R. V.) A surrendered will gives that clearness of spiritual vision which is necessary to understand God's book. Many of the difficulties and obscurities of the Bible rise wholly from the fact that the will of the student is not surrendered to the will of the author of the book. It is remarkable how clear and simple and beautiful passages, that once puzzled us, become when we are brought to that place where we say to God, "I surrender my will unconditionally to Thine. I have no will but Thine. Teach me Thy will." A surrendered will will do more to make the Bible an open book than a university education. It is simply impossible to get the largest profit out of your Bible study until you do surrender your will to God. You must be very definite about this. There are many who say, "Oh, yes, my will, I think, is surrendered to God," and yet it is not. They have never gone alone with God and said intelligently and definitely to him, "O God, I here and now give myself up to Thee, for Thee to command me, and lead me, and shape me, and send me, and do with me, absolutely as Thou wilt." Such an act is a wonderful key to unlock the treasure house of God's Word. The Bible becomes a new book when a man does that. Doing that wrought a complete transformation in the author's theology and life and ministry.

5. The fifth condition is very closely related to the fourth. *The student of the Bible who would get the greatest profit out of his studies must be obedient to its teachings as soon as he sees them.* It was good advice James gave to early Christians, and to us, "Be ye *doers of the word*, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." There are a good many, who consider themselves Bible students, who are deceiving themselves in this way to-day. They see what the Bible teaches, but they do not do it, and they soon lose their power to see it. Truth obeyed leads to more truth. Truth disobeyed destroys the capacity for discovering truth. There must be not only a general surrender of the will, but specific

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practical obedience to each new word of God discovered. There is no place where the law, “unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath,” is more joyously certain on the one hand and more sternly inexorable on the other, than in the matter of using or refusing the truth revealed in the Bible. Use, and you get more; refuse, and you lose all. Do not study the Bible for the mere gratification of intellectual curiosity, but to find out how to live and to please God. Whatever duty you find commanded in the Bible, do it at once. Whatever good you see in any Bible character, imitate it immediately. Whatever mistake you note in the actions of Bible men and women, scrutinize your own life to see if you are making the same mistake, and if you find you are, correct it forthwith. James compares the Bible to a looking glass. (Jas. 1:23, 24). The chief good of a looking glass, is to show you if there is anything out of fix about you, and, if you find there is, you can set it right. Use the Bible in that way. Obeying the truth you already see, will solve the enigmas in the verses you do not as yet understand. Disobeying the truth you see, darkens the whole world of truth. This is the secret of much of the scepticism and error of the day. Men saw the truth, but did not do it, now it is gone. I knew a bright and promising young minister. He made rapid advancement in the truth. He took very advanced ground upon one point especially, and the storm came. One day he said to his wife, “It is very nice to believe this, but we need not speak so much about it.” They began, or he, at least, to hide their testimony. The wife died and he drifted. The Bible became to him a sealed book. Faith reeled. He publicly renounced his faith in some of the fundamental truths of the Bible. He seemed to lose his grip even on the doctrine of immortality. What was the cause of it all? Truth not lived and stood for, flees. That man is much admired and applauded by some to-day, but daylight has given place to darkness in his soul.

6. The sixth condition is *a child-like mind*. God reveals His deepest truths to babes. No age needs more than our own to lay to heart the words of Jesus, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these

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things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes.” (Matt. 11:25.) Wherein must we be babes if God is to reveal His truth unto us, and we are to understand His Word? A child is not full of its own wisdom. It recognizes its ignorance and is ready to be taught. It does not oppose its own notions and ideas to those of its teachers. It is in that spirit we should come to the Bible, if we are to get the most profit out of our study. Do not come to the Bible full of your own ideas, and seeking from it a confirmation of them. Come rather to find out what are God’s ideas as He has revealed them there. Come not to find a confirmation of your own opinion, but to be taught what God may be pleased to teach. If a man comes to the Bible just to find his notions taught there, he will find them; but if he comes, recognizing his own ignorance, just as a little child, to be taught, he will find something infinitely better than his own notions, even the mind of God. We see why it is that many persons cannot see things which are plainly taught in the Bible. The doctrine taught is not their notion, of which they are so full that there is no room left for that which the Bible actually teaches. We have an illustration of this in the apostles themselves at one stage in their training. In Mark 9:31 we read “he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.” Now, that is as plain and definite as language can make it, but it was utterly contrary to the notions of the apostles as to what was to happen to the Christ. So we read in the next verse “they understood not that saying.” Is not that wonderful? But is it any more wonderful than our own inability to comprehend plain statements in the Bible when they run counter to our preconceived notions? What trouble many Christians find with portions of the Sermon on the Mount, that would be plain enough, if we just came to Christ like a child to be taught what to believe and do, rather than coming as full grown men, who already know it all, and who must find some interpretations of Christ’s words that will fit into our mature and infallible philosophy. Many a man is so full of an unbiblical theology he has been taught, that it takes him a lifetime to get rid of it, and understand

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the clear teaching of the Bible. “Oh, what can this verse mean?” many a bewildered man cries. Why, it means what it plainly says; but what you are after is not the meaning God has manifestly put into it, but the meaning you can by some ingenious trick of exegesis twist out of it, and make it fit into your scheme. Don’t come to the Bible to find out what you can make it mean, but to find out what God intended it to mean. Men often miss the real truth of a verse by saying, “But that can be interpreted this way.” Oh, yes, so it can, but is that the way God intended it to be interpreted? We all need to pray often, if we would get the most profit out of our Bible study, “Oh, God, make me a little child. Empty me of my own notions. Teach me thine own mind. Make me ready like a little child to receive all that thou hast to say, no matter how contrary it is to what I have thought hitherto.” How the Bible opens up to one who approaches it in that way! How it closes up to the wise fool, who thinks he knows everything, and imagines he can give points to Peter and Paul, and even to Jesus Christ and to God Himself! Some one has well said the best method of Bible study is “the baby method.” I was once talking with a ministerial friend about what seemed to be the clear teaching of a certain passage. “Yes,” he replied, “but that doesn’t agree with my philosophy.” Alas! But this man was sincere, yet he did not have the child-like spirit, which is an essential condition of the most profitable Bible study. But there are many who approach the Bible in the same way. It is a great point gained in Bible study when we are brought to realize that an infinite God knows more than we, that indeed our highest wisdom is less than the knowledge of the most ignorant babe compared with His, and when we come to Him as babes, just to be taught by Him, and not to argue with Him. But we so easily and so constantly forget this, that every time we open our Bibles we would do well to get down humbly before God and say, “Father, I am but a child, teach me.”

This leads to the seventh condition.

7. The seventh condition of studying the Bible to the greatest profit is, that we *study it as the word of God*. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Church of the Thessalonians,

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thanked God without ceasing that when they received the word of God they “accepted it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God.” (1 Thess. 2:13, R. V.) Well might he thank God for that, and well may we thank God when we get to the place where we receive the word of God *as the word of God*. Not that the one who does not believe the Bible is the word of God should be discouraged from studying it. Indeed, one of the best things that one who does not believe that the Bible is the word of God can do, if he is honest, is to study it. The author of this book once doubted utterly that the Bible was the word of God, and the firm confidence that he has to-day that the Bible is the Word of God, has come more from the study of the book itself than from anything else. Those who doubt it are more usually those who study about the book, than those who dig into the actual teachings of the book itself. But while the best book of Christian evidences is the Bible, and while the most utter sceptic should be encouraged to study it, we will not get the largest measure of profit out of that study until we reach the point where we become convinced that the Bible is God’s Word, and when we study it as such. There is a great difference between believing theoretically that the Bible is God’s Word and studying it as God’s Word. Thousands would tell you that they believed the Bible is God’s Word, who do not study it as God’s Word. Studying the Bible as the Word of God involves four things. (1) First, it involves the unquestioning acceptance of its teachings when definitely ascertained, even when they may appear unreasonable or impossible. Reason demands that we submit our judgment and reasonings to the statements of infinite wisdom. There is nothing more irrational than rationalism, which makes the finite wisdom the test of infinite wisdom, and submits the teachings of God’s omniscience to the approval of man’s judgment. It is the sublimest and absurdest conceit that says, “This cannot be true, though God says it, for it does not approve itself to *my* reason.” “Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” (Rom. 9:20.) Real human wisdom, when it finds infinite wisdom, bows before it and says, “Speak what thou wilt and I will believe.” When we have once become

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convinced that the Bible is God's Word, its teachings must be the end of all controversy and discussion. A "thus saith the Lord" will settle every question. Yet there are many who profess to believe that the Bible is the Word of God, and if you show them what the Bible clearly teaches on some disputed point, they will shake their heads and say, "Yes, but I *think* so and so," or "Doctor —, or Prof. this, or our church don't teach that way." There is little profit in that sort of Bible study. (2) Studying the Bible as the word of God involves, in the second place, absolute reliance upon all its promises in all their length and breadth. The man who studies the Bible as the word of God, will not discount any one of its promises one iota. The one who studies the Bible as the word of God will say, "God who cannot lie has promised," and will not try to make God a liar by trying to make one of his promises mean less than it says. The one who studies the Bible as the word of God, will be on the lookout for promises, and as soon as he finds one he will seek to ascertain just what it means, and, as soon as he discovers, he will step right out upon that promise, and risk everything upon its full import. That is one of the secrets of profitable Bible study. Be hunting for promises and appropriate them as fast as you find them—this is done by meeting the conditions and risking all upon them. That is the way to make your own all the fulness of blessing God has for you. This is the key to all the treasures of God's grace. Happy is the man who has so learned to study the Bible as God's word, that he is ready to claim for himself every new promise as it appears, and to risk everything upon it. (3) Studying the Bible as the Word of God involves, in the third place, obedience—prompt, exact obedience, without asking any questions—to its every precept. Obedience may seem hard, it may seem impossible, but God has bidden it and I have nothing to do but to obey, and leave the results with God. If you would get the very most profit out of your Bible study resolve that from this time you will claim every clear promise and obey every plain command, and that as to the promises and commands whose import is not yet clear you will try to get their meaning made clear. (4) Studying the Bible as the word of

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God involves, in the fourth place, studying it as in God's presence. When you read a verse of scripture hear the voice of the living God speaking directly to you in these written words. There is new power and attractiveness in the Bible when you have learned to hear a living, present person, God, our Father, Himself talking directly to you in these words. One of the most fascinating and inspiring statements in the Bible is "Enoch walked with God." (Gen. 5:24.) We can have God's glorious companionship any moment we please, by simply opening His Word and letting the living and ever present God speak to us through it. With what holy awe and strange and unutterable joy one studies the Bible if he studies it in this way! It is heaven come down to earth.

8. The eighth and last condition of the most profitable Bible study is *Prayerfulness*. The Psalmist prayed "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." (Ps. 119:18.) Every one who desires to get the greatest profit out of his Bible study, needs to offer that or a similar prayer every time he undertakes the study of the word. Few keys open so many caskets that contain hidden treasure as prayer. Few clews unravel so many difficulties. Few microscopes will disclose so many beauties hidden from the eye of the ordinary observer. What new light often shines from an old familiar text as you bend over it in prayer! I believe in studying the Bible a good deal on your knees. When one reads an entire book through upon his knees—and this is easily done—that book has a new meaning and becomes a new book. One ought never to open the Bible to read it without at least lifting the heart to God in silent prayer that He will interpret it, illumine its pages by the light of His Spirit. It is a rare privilege to study any book under the immediate guidance and instruction of its author, and this is the privilege of us all in studying the Bible. When one comes to a passage that is difficult to understand or difficult to interpret, instead of giving it up, or rushing to some learned friend, or to some commentary, he should lay that passage before God, and ask Him to explain it to him, pleading God's promise, "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of GOD, that giveth to all men liberally, and abraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask

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in faith, nothing doubting.” (Jas. 1:5, 6, R. V.) It is simply wonderful how the seemingly most difficult passages become plain by this treatment. Harry Morehouse, one of the most remarkable Bible scholars among unlearned men, used to say, that whenever he came to a passage in the Bible which he could not understand, he would search through the Bible for some other passage that threw light upon it, and lay it before God in prayer, and that he had never found a passage that did not yield to this treatment. The author of this book has had a quite similar experience. Some years ago I was making with a friend a tour afoot of the Franconian Switzerland, and visiting some of the more famous zoolithic caves. One day the country letter-carrier stopped us, and asked if we would not like to see a cave of rare beauty and interest, away from the beaten tracks of travel. Of course, we said, yes. He led us through the woods and underbrush to the mouth of the cave, and we entered. All was dark and uncanny. He expatiated greatly on the beauty of the cave, telling us of altars and fantastic formations, but we could see absolutely nothing. Now and then he uttered a note to warn us to have a care, as near our feet lay a gulf the bottom of which had never been discovered. We began to have a fear that we might be the first discoverers of the bottom. There was nothing pleasant about the whole affair. But as soon as a magnesian taper was lighted, all became different. There were the stalagmites rising from the floor to meet the stalactites as they came down from the ceiling. There was the great altar of nature, that peasant fancy ascribed to the skill of ancient worshipers, there were the beautiful and fantastic formations on every hand, and all glistening in fairy-like beauty in the brilliant light. So I have often thought it was with many a passage of Scripture. Others tell you of its beauty, but you cannot see it. It looks dark and intricate and forbidding and dangerous, but when God’s own light is kindled there by prayer, how different all becomes in an instant. You see a beauty that language cannot express, and that those alone can appreciate who have stood there in the same light. He who would understand and love his Bible must be much in prayer. Prayer will do more than a college

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education to make the Bible an open and a glorious book. Perhaps the best lesson I learned in a German university, where I had the privilege of receiving the instruction of one of the most noted and most gifted Bible teachers of any age, was that which came through the statement of the famulus of this professor, that Professor Delitzsch worked out much of his teaching upon his knees.

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CHAPTER 2

FINAL SUGGESTIONS

There are some suggestions that remain to be given before we close this book.

1 *Study the Bible daily.* Regularity counts for more in Bible study than most people fancy. The spasmodic student, who at certain seasons gives a great deal of time to the study of the Word, and at other seasons quite neglects it, even for days at a time, does not achieve the results that he does who plods on regularly day by day. The Bereans were wise as well as “noble” in that they “searched the scriptures daily.” (Acts, 17:11; see also R. V.) A man who is well known among the Christian college students of America, once remarked at a student convention, that he had been at many conventions and had received great blessings from them, but the greatest blessing he had ever received was from a convention where there were only four persons gathered together. The blessing had come to him in this way. These four had covenanted together to spend a certain portion of every day in Bible study. Since that day much of his time had been spent on the cars or in hotels and at conventions, but he had tried to keep that covenant, and the greatest blessing that had come to him in his Christian life had come through this *daily* study of the Word. No one who has not tried it realizes how much can be accomplished by setting apart a fixed portion of each day, (it may not be more than fifteen or thirty minutes, but it surely should be an hour) for Bible study, and keeping it sacredly for that purpose under all circumstances. Many will say I cannot spare the time. It will be time saved. Lord Cairnes, one of the busiest as well as most eminent men of his day, before his death testified, that the first two hours of every day were given to the study of the Bible and prayer, and he attributed the great achievements of his life to that fact. It will not do to study the Bible only when we feel like it. It will not do to study the Bible only when we have

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leisure. We must have fixed principles and habits in this matter, if we are to study the Bible to the greatest profit. Nothing that we do will be more important than our Bible study, and it cannot give way to other less important things. What regularity in eating is to physical life, regularity in Bible study is to spiritual life. Fix upon some time, even if it is no more than fifteen minutes to start with, and hold to it until you are ready to set a longer period.

2. *Select for your Bible study the best portion of the day that you can give to it.* Do not put your Bible study off until nearly bed-time, when the mind is drowsy. It is well to take a parting verse for the day when one retires for the night, but this is not the time for study. No study demands all that there is in a man as Bible study does. Do not take the time immediately after a heavy meal. The mind is more or less torpid after a heavy meal, and it is unwise to put it on the stretch then. It is almost the unanimous opinion of those who have given this subject careful attention, that the early hours of the day are the best for Bible study, if they can be secured free from interruption. It is well, wherever possible, to lock yourself in and lock the world out, when you are about to give yourself up to the study of the Bible.

3. *In all your Bible study look for Christ in the passage under examination.* We read of Jesus that "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning HIMSELF." (Luke 24:27.) Jesus Christ is the subject of the whole Bible and the subject pervades the book. Some of the seemingly driest portions of the Bible became instinct with a new life when we learn to see Christ in them. I remember in my early reading of the Bible what a stupid book Leviticus seemed, but it all became different when I learned to see Jesus in the various offerings and sacrifices, in the high-priest and his garments, in the tabernacle and its furniture, indeed everywhere. Look for Christ in every verse you study, and even the genealogies and catalogues of the names of towns will begin to have beauty and power.

4. *Memorize Scripture.* The Psalmist said, "Thy word have I laid up in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Ps. 119:11, R. V.) There is nothing better to keep one from

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sinning than this. By the word of God laid up in His heart Jesus overcame the tempter. (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10.) But the word of God laid up in the heart is good for other purposes than victory over sin. It is good to meet and expose error; it is good to enable one “to speak a word in season to him that is weary,” (Is. 1:4.) It is good for manifold uses, even “that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:17, R. V.) Memorize scripture by chapter and verse. It is quite as easy as merely memorizing the words, and it is immeasurably more useful for practical purposes. Memorize the scripture in systematic form. Do not have a chaotic heap of texts in the mind, but pigeon-hole under appropriate titles the scripture you store in memory. Then you can bring it out when you need it, without racking your brains. There are many men who can stand up without a moment’s warning, and talk coherently and cogently and scripturally, on any vital theme; because they have a vast fund of wisdom in the form of scripture texts stored away in their mind in systematic form.

5. Finally, *utilize spare moments in the study of the Bible*. In most men’s lives there is a vast amount of wasted time. Time spent in traveling on the street cars and railroads; time spent in waiting for persons with whom they have engagements; time spent in waiting for meals, etc., etc. Most of this can be utilized in Bible study, if one carries with him a pocket Bible or pocket Testament. Or one can utilize it in meditation upon texts stored away in memory. Many of the author’s sermons and addresses are worked out in that way. It is said that Henry Ward Beecher read one of the larger histories of England through while waiting day after day for his meals to be brought on to the table. How many books of the Bible could be studied in the same time? A friend once told me that the man who had, in some respects, the most extraordinary knowledge of the Bible of any man he knew, was a junk dealer in a Canadian city. This man had a Bible open on his shelves and in intervals of business he was pondering the Book of God. The book became very black by handling in such surroundings, but I have little doubt his soul became correspondingly white.

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There is no economy that pays as does economy of time, but there is no way of economizing time so thriftily as putting the moments that are going to waste into the study of or meditation upon the word of God.

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⁴Torrey, R. A. [. o. c. 1896. *How to study the bible for greatest profit ...* (82). n.p.

⁵Torrey, R. A. [. o. c. 1896. *How to study the bible for greatest profit ...* (55). n.p.



The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study

HOW PROPERLY TO STUDY AND INTERPRET THE BIBLE

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INTRODUCTION

There is a great and constantly growing interest in the study of the English Bible in these days. But very much of the so-called study of the English Bible is unintelligent and not fitted to produce the most satisfactory results. The author of this book already has a book entitled "How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit," but that book is intended for those who have much time to put into thorough Bible study.

The present book is intended, first of all, to impress men with the Importance and Value of Bible Study; secondly, to show busy men and women how to get the most out of their Bible Study; thirdly, to set forth the fundamental principles of correct Biblical Interpretation.

The book really consists of four sermons delivered to the members of my own church and congregation in Los Angeles. There were not a few children in the congregation, but they were all interested, long as the sermons were, and seemed to grasp the main points of the sermons. So I am confident the book will be helpful even to those who have but little education. Some in the congregation who are themselves in educational work, both secular and religious, have expressed their appreciation of the help received from the sermons.

If one desires to go into the subject more thoroughly it is suggested that he secure the author's book already mentioned, "How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit." This book will probably be followed soon by one upon the most fruitful methods of thorough Bible Study.

R. A. TORREY.

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CHAPTER 1

THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF BIBLE STUDY

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. *But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.* And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”—[Psalm 1:1–3](#).

Our subject this morning is “*The Importance and Value of Bible Study*.” You will find the text in Psalm 1:1–3—*“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”*

There has, perhaps, never been an age that set such great store by study as that in which we now live. The unfortunate thing about it is that so much of the study in our day, both by children and adults, is devoted to books and subjects in which there is little or no profit. A large portion of every year in our schools and colleges is practically wasted. Time is squandered upon the purely speculative, the uncertain, the unprofitable, the unessential, the unproductive, the irrelevant and the transitory. Many practical business men think that the sooner the boy or girl who is just out of school or college forgets half of what they imagine they have learned, the better. The most profitable of all study is wisely ordered Bible study. Its value is incalculable. It is beyond all comparison more profitable than any other study. It is the one superlatively profitable study.

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Possibly some of you may be disposed to question that statement; so I will give you two reasons why Bible study is the one superlatively profitable study, why Bible study towers far above all other studies in importance and value.

I. Because of What the Bible is

First of all, *Bible study towers far above all other studies in importance and value because of what the Bible itself is.*

1. In the first place, *the Bible is the peerless masterpiece of clear, pure, chaste, forceful, beautiful, exalted English.*

Nothing can match it in purity, smoothness, clearness, force, and sublimity of expression. That admits of no question. All intelligent, well-read and candid infidels acknowledge that. Prof. Phelps, at the head of the English Department at Yale, contended some years ago that candidates for admission to American Universities should have their qualification for admission, as far as their knowledge of English was concerned, tested by one book alone, the Bible. And Harvard University has announced in the past few weeks that hereafter every student before graduation must pass an examination in the English Bible. Because of Harvard's well-known theological position and also from the fact that they seem to emphasize the Revised Version, it is evident that they have in view principally the fact that the Bible is the great *English* master-piece. Last Tuesday I received from G. P. Putnam's Sons of New York and London, a book for examination—a dictionary of 6,000 choice and effective phrases. In this book (just published), time and again, page after page, every phrase was taken from the Bible, without variation or addition. Here and there were scattered phrases taken from Shakespeare, but on subject after subject whole pages of telling phrases were consecutively taken from the Bible. Why? Because this book of phrases was prepared by a master hand at English diction and he knew where to find the most illuminating and most telling phrases. Every man and woman should saturate themselves with the very words of the Bible if for no other reason than to clarify, tone up and invigorate their English diction. When Henry Stanley, the great newspaper writer, made his second tour of exploration into the heart of Africa, he took only one book with him, the Bible. In its study he

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beguiled and improved many lonely hours, and when he emerged, after having been shut up with one book for so many years, it was noticed that Henry Stanley had acquired by absorption an entirely new English style, a far more forceful style, Bible English. It is said that a newspaper report of a paragraph from one of Mr. Moody's sermons was handed to Max Müller, the great philologist, and he was asked what he thought of it. He asked, "Who wrote that?" And the reply was made, "D. L. Moody." "I do not wonder then at his power," Max Müller exclaimed. "That is one of the finest pieces of clear, strong, pure Anglo-Saxon I have ever read." But where had Mr. Moody learned this vigorous English? From the only book he thoroughly knew and daily devoured, the Bible.

2. In the second place, *the Bible is the book that presents to us the most profound, the most coherent, the most consistent, the most comprehensive, the most complete, the most perfectly balanced, the most certain, the loftiest and the most enduring system of philosophy ever discovered.* I say "discovered" instead of "devised" advisedly; for man could never have devised the philosophy found in this book; man simply discovered the philosophy which God had revealed in the Book. Time and again through the centuries men grown wise in their own conceit, and having only a ludicrously fragmentary knowledge of the Book upon which they ventured to sit in judgment, have assayed to ridicule the Bible's philosophy regarding God and man and redemption and duty and eternity. But always in the ultimate outcome the philosophy of the would-be critics has dissolved and disappeared, but the philosophy of the Bible has withstood unscathed the storms of centuries. Philosophies, empires, schools of thought have passed away, but the words of this Book have not passed away. (Matt. 24:35.) The philosophy of this Book has proven imperishable, and as good for 1921 A. D. as for 95 A. D. In view of this undeniable fact is it not evident that this is the most important and invaluable of all books to study? Do not waste your time studying the soap bubbles of man's iridescent speculation that may be beautiful but soon burst and leave nothing but a nasty, dank, greasy feeling behind,

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but study the Eternal Rock of this Book that is rich with real gold.

3. In the third place, *the Bible is the book that offers to us the purest, loftiest, most complete and absolutely dependable system of ethics ever known.* Systems of moral philosophy have appeared throughout the centuries and chiliads, from Zeno to Herbert Spencer, only to disappear, but all really honest seekers after thorough-going and complete righteousness, bow to the imperishable durability of the ethics of the Bible. And even those who clamor hysterically for us to give up the Virgin Birth of our Lord, the resurrection of His very body from the dead and all the miracles, the Deity of our Lord, His atoning, substitutionary death, and others of the most distinctive of the doctrinal teachings of the Book, nevertheless themselves cry "Let us keep *the ethics* of the Bible. They are not only unsurpassed but absolutely unequaled." The most important thing to know is, how to live; not how to live physically, but how to live morally. If that is so then the most important book for all of us to know is the book that tells us that as no other book tells us.

4. In the fourth place, *the Bible is the one and only book that has never been outgrown or superseded.* I had occasion last summer, in breaking up our home in Montrose, Pa., to go over some of the books I studied, yes, dug into with many hard hours of intellectual toil, at preparatory school and at Yale. There was not one of them of any present value to my children or grandchildren. They had all been outgrown or superseded; other books have taken their place. But this Book has not been superseded. No University professor on earth can suggest some other book to take the place of this Book. Some venture to say "We need a new Bible," but where is it? Why do not they bring it out? When an especially callow and, therefore daring member of this crew does attempt a new Bible it is only "a shorter Bible"; that is, the old Bible with parts left out that made him uneasy in his sin, or his self-righteousness and self-sufficiency. No! No! NO! Any one who has a modicum of real, healthy common sense knows that you cannot outgrow or supersede the Bible. And we can safely leave

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those who want to get out “a new Bible” to sit and twiddle their thumbs along with the other lunatics who are working on a “perpetual motion” machine. This all being true, and eighteen centuries of unvarying history of human thought demonstrate that it is true, can there possibly be any other study so important and so permanently profitable as the study of *this, the one and only Imperishable Book?*

5. Once more, *the Bible is the Word of God*. That needs no demonstration. Some of the things I have already said this morning prove it, if you will only think them through. And I have proven it again and again from this platform. Other books tell us what men suppose; the Bible tells us what God knows. Other books tell us what other men, almost as foolish as ourselves, speculate; this Book tells us what an infinitely wise God, Who made us and all things, and consequently knows all things, *has inerrantly revealed*. If you had two books on the subject, one by the one master thinker on that subject, the other by a third-rate tutor in a fourth-rate college, which would you study most? And will you study most the Book of God, the Book of the infinitely wise, omniscient God, or the book of some little 6x9 human brain—that is larger than any human brain as compared with the infinite capacity of the mind of the great Jehovah, the Eternal I AM.

II. Because of What the Bible Does

Bible study towers above all other studies in importance and value not only because of what the Bible itself is, but also because of what the Bible does.

On this I cannot dwell as I would like. The full exposition of this line of thought would afford more than enough material for a whole sermon by itself. Let me select a few of the more vital points.

1. First of all, *the Bible properly studied makes men wise unto salvation*. The great master apostle, Paul, writing to a zealous young bishop, his convert and most trusted coadjutor, says in 2 Tim. 3:13–15: “But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known

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the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” This is tremendous endorsement of the superlative importance of Bible study, and every word of it is true. This Book does make men wise with the wisdom that is golden, the wisdom that brings eternal salvation. No other book in all literature does it with the certainty and celerity and completeness with which this Book does it. No one can study this Book aright, no matter how ignorant he may otherwise be, without becoming possessed of that priceless wisdom that means eternal life. Eternal life is found in knowing God and His Son, Jesus Christ (John 17:3). And no other book has the power to make us acquainted with God and with His Son, Jesus Christ, that this Book has. I have known great philosophers and great men of science and great literary luminaries, who did not know God, just because they had not studied and, therefore, did not know their Bibles. They knew rocks and flowers and the entrails of frogs, and the planets and the comets and the stars, and men’s books, but they did not know the one Book and, therefore, they did not know the God who made the rocks and the flowers and the stars; and, therefore, they were lost, eternally lost, for all their knowledge of other things. On the other hand, I have known uncultured people, almost illiterate people, washerwomen and such like, for example, who had studied and, therefore, did know the bible, and, therefore, they knew more of the wisdom that really counts, the wisdom that spells salvation, in five minutes, than these learned professors knew in their whole lifetime. Oh, study the Book that brings eternal life, make it in your own experience “the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21 R. V.).

2. In the second place, *the Bible so makes known Jesus Christ as to lead any one who studies it as he ought, to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and so to obtain eternal life in His name.* That is what John himself says in John 20:31 R. V. His words are: “*These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name.*” Is there anything else in all the world so valuable as *eternal life*? Is

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there any other study for one moment comparable in importance and value to the study that brings us eternal life? In former years I had hay fever severely. Every September for three weeks or more I could not lie down to sleep, or even stay in the house at night. I would go off by myself every night where I would not disturb any one else, and all the night through would almost rupture blood vessels by spasms of coughing. I saw advertised a book on hay fever, so I bought it and studied it with great care, and obtained great relief. Was not that profitable study? But what is getting deliverance from some such wretched complaint as hay fever, to getting eternal life, and the proper study of this Book brings eternal life. No man can study even one book in the Bible, the Gospel of John, in the way he ought to study it, without believing before he gets through "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by "believing," obtaining "eternal life in His name." I have proven that time and time again upon all classes of men, from bartenders to a College Dean in one prominent British University and a very distinguished professor in another.

3. In the third place, *the Bible imparts God's own nature to the men, women and children who study it as they should, and thus completely transforms their inmost and their outward life.* Peter puts it this way: "through these (i. e., through the exceeding great and precious promises of the Book), ye may become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4, R. V.). Is not that great, to become a partaker of God's own nature? Well, it is through the proper study of this Book, by the truth of this Book carried home to our hearts by the Holy Spirit *as we study* it, that we become partakers of God's own nature. Centuries of experience prove the truth of this wonderful assertion of Peter. Countless men and women of the most depraved nature have obtained an entirely new nature, God's own nature implanted in them, by the proper study of this Book. I have been told that if you study Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy's "Science and Health" sedulously enough it will cure you of appendicitis. Well, study this Book as you ought and it will cure you of Devilitis. I have found it so in my own experience. If any man ever had the devils, I had them.

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Neither Mrs. Eddy nor Christian Science cured me, but this Book did. Try it for yourself.

4. In the fourth place, *this Book when properly studied, makes the one who studies it "grow like the palm tree" in all the graces and glories of Christian character.* "Desire the sincere *milk of the Word,*" says Peter, "that ye may grow thereby." (1 Pet. 2:2.) Various neighbors of mine in South Pasadena have built homes since I located there and have set out various kinds of palm trees. It is simply amazing how they have grown. Ah, but that is nothing to the way men, women and children grow spiritually and morally when they feed as they ought on "the Bread of Heaven" and "the milk" of Eden and "the finest of the wheat" in the Garden of God and "the honey out of the (Eternal) Rock," found in this Book. Oh, sometimes I almost grow weary when people come sighing about me from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Gulf of Mexico to the border of Canada and beyond, blubbering over their poor progress in the Christian life, and wondering why they do not make more headway. And when I ask, "Do you meditate in God's Word day and night? Do you really dig into the Bible every day?" "Oh, no, not every day," they reply, "I am very busy. I am a very hard working man," or "I am a very active business man with many other men under me," or "I am a very busy mother, and I cannot find time to get down to solid Bible study *every day.*" "Do you read the newspaper every day?" "Y-e-s, morning and evening." And no time to get alone each day and listen to God? Thou fool!

5. In the fifth place, *the Bible properly studied, makes the heart pure and keeps the life white.* "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" the Psalmist asks, and then replies, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word." (Ps. 119:9.) There is a power in this Book, when it is properly studied, to make and keep the life clean that no other book possesses. And there is also in this Book, when properly studied, a power that no other book possesses, to make and keep the heart pure. The Psalmist says again two verses farther down, in Psalm 119:11, "Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Oh, how many stained lives I have seen bleached white by the power of

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the sunrays of this Book. How many hearts I have known that were “full of all uncleanness” to be made pure and clean by filling them with the truth found in this Book.

6. In the sixth place, *the Bible, properly studied, brings peace, wonderful peace, to the troubled heart.* The Psalmist says in Ps. 85:8, R. V., “I will hear what *God Jehovah will speak; for He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints.*” The one who learns to sit and listen to God as He speaks to him in this Book will hear Him speaking words that will fill the heart with peace, no matter how storms may rage without and no matter how war howls and bellows. Listening to God’s Word, David sang in the midst of the wildest conflicts, “Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Jehovah is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid! When evil-doers came upon me to eat up my flesh, even mine adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell. *Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, even then will I be confident.*” (Ps. 27:1–3, R. V.) And our Lord Jesus, in the most awful night the disciples ever passed through, just before the wild storm-clouds broke, said to them, in speaking of the peace-giving power of His words, “But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and *bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful.*” (John 14:26, 27, R. V.) Oh, here is the practical secret of perfect peace, listening to the Saviour’s words as found in this Book. He is always saying to the wind-driven heart, as He said to the wind-tossed sea of old, “Peace, be still.” And if we listen, there is always “a great calm.” (Matt. 8:23–26.).

7. In the seventh place, *the Bible, properly studied, brings joy as well as peace.* Jeremiah discovered that many, many centuries ago. In the midst of crushing sorrow, in the midst of the disintegration and shame and agony of the nation he passionately loved and for which he would gladly have died, in the midst of conditions as dark and foreboding as ever confronted any man on earth, he sang, “Thy words

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were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart.” (Jer. 15:16, R. V.) Is there any joy purer than that which comes from properly directed study? But there is no other study that brings joy for a moment comparable to the joy that comes from proper Bible study. Many forms of study bring great joy to a healthy mind. The joys that come from earnest study of various kinds, philosophical, scientific, historical, literary and linguistic have been among my chief joys for many years, nearly my whole life through, from early boyhood. But there has come into my heart a joy from Bible study, through digging into the gold mines of this wonderful and inexhaustible Book, with which the joys that have come from all other forms of study are not worthy to be compared for one moment. There are no other joys like this. *“Blessed”* indeed *“is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”*

I might go on and on, telling the great things that the right kind of Bible study will do. There is no end to the subject; so we may as well stop here.

Is it not as clear as day that the study of a Book that is what this Book most assuredly is, and a Book that does what this Book most assuredly does, is infinitely the most important and valuable study in the world? The luster of all other study grows dim compared with this. Will you then begin to study the Bible as you ought? Begin today. Please note that I have been careful to say over and over again *“the Bible properly studied,”* that is, the Bible studied in the way and by the methods in and by which it should be studied; the Bible studied in a way appropriate to the unique and divine character of the Book. There is Bible study, or at least what is called *“Bible study,”* that is not so profitable as this. Indeed, there is what is called *“Bible study”* that is not profitable at all, and even *“Bible study”* so-called that is positively injurious. I would rather have a son or daughter

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of mine study almost anything else than have them study the Bible as they dream they study it at the Chicago University, or in the American Institute of Sacred Literature, and in many other places in these days.

I will speak next Sunday morning on "How Properly to Study the Bible," how to study it for light and not for darkness, how to study it for life and not for death, how to study it for blessing and not for cursing, how to study it so it will lift us up to heaven and not sink us down to hell.

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CHAPTER 2

HOW PROPERLY TO STUDY THE BIBLE

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”—Acts 17:11.

My subject this morning is, *How Properly to Study the Bible*. I have eleven texts in which God Himself tells us very plainly and very fully how to study His Book.

Acts 17:11: *“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”* Isa 8:20, R. V.: *“To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them.”* Ps. 1:1–3: *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”* Ps. 119:11, R. V.: *“Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.”* 1 Thess. 2:13: *“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”* John 7:17, R. V.: *“If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself.”* James 1:22: *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”* 1 Cor. 2:14: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know*

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them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Ps. 119:18, R. V.: *“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”* Matt. 11:25: *“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”* Luke 24:27, R. V.: *“And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”*

We saw last Sunday morning something of the importance and value of properly conducted Bible study. We saw that properly conducted Bible study was the one superlatively important study for young and old. We saw that Bible study towered above all other studies in importance and value. But we also saw that not all Bible study had this great importance. We saw that there was in our day much that was called “Bible study” that was not profitable at all; that indeed there was much that was called Bible study that was positively injurious. So our subject to-day is, How to *Properly* Study the Bible. I use the word “properly” in its exact sense, of appropriately or fittingly. A proper study of the Bible is a study of the Bible that fits the book you are studying. A study of other books that would be perfectly proper for them would not be proper at all for the Bible; for the Bible is what no other book in the world is, the Bible is God’s Book and other books are men’s books. As Paul said in writing to the believers in Thessalonica, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye receive *the word of God* which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, *but as it is in truth, the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” The *proper* study of the Bible will be the most highly profitable study of the Bible. The improper study of the Bible will be unprofitable study of the Bible. The great reason why the kind of study of the Bible that is done at the Chicago University and in the American Institute of Sacred Literature, and in many such places and institutions, is so unprofitable, why it is oftentimes so positively pernicious and injurious, is because it is so utterly improper, so utterly unbecoming the Book upon which it is bestowed. No really intelligent man

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would study a fairy tale in the same way he would study an accurate and entirely reliable history. And at Chicago University they study the histories of the Bible, which are the most exact and accurate and reliable histories ever written, as if they were fairy tales, or “folk lore.” No really intelligent or rational man or woman would study an omniscient God’s Word as they would study ever-erring man’s word. And the Bible is God’s Word and they study it at Chicago University as if it were the word of men who did not know quite as much as the very self-sufficient teachers at Chicago University know. And that is a very improper, yes, a very asinine, way to study the Book that is so clearly demonstrated by eighteen centuries of investigation and uniform experience to be the very Word of God.

How shall we study the Bible so as to study it properly and, therefore, study it for the highest profit? God Himself tells us and tells us in the Bible itself.

I. Study the Bible, the Bible Itself

1. In the first place, *Study the Bible, the Bible Itself*. The importance of that comes out in a very striking way in Acts 17:11: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the scriptures* daily, whether those things were so.” Notice please that it says they “searched *the scriptures* daily, whether those things were so.” They did not search the “Talmud” nor the “Targums,” the commentaries on the scriptures, they went right to *the scriptures* themselves. They left the muddy streams of man’s interpretations of the scriptures and went to the pure, crystal spring, the scriptures themselves. That is the proper way to study the Bible: as it is God’s Word, and as it alone is God’s Word, we must each one of us go right to the Book itself for ourselves. It is as true to-day as it was when Jesus was here on earth, that men “make the Word of God of none effect through their tradition” (Mark 7:13), and the cardinal principle of Protestant spiritual liberty as distinguished from Roman Catholic bondage to a hierarchy, yes, the cardinal principle of New Testament Christianity, is for each child of God to go right to the pure fountain of God’s Word for himself. Jesus Christ says, “Call no man your father

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upon earth: for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven,” and call no man master, “for one is your Master, even the Christ” (Matt. 23:9, 10, R. V.); that is to say, recognize no absolute spiritual authority; stand in independent relations to God. I refuse in my study of the Book of God to bow to the absolute authority of any pope or bishop or priest, or of any theological professor. I refuse to bow to the Roman Catholic Pope Benedict or to the Protestant Pope, Shailer Mathews, or Pope Case, or Pope anybody else, and you on your part refuse to bow to Pope Torrey or to Pope anybody else. Get right to the Book itself, “to the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them.” Do not study commentaries, lesson helps or other books about the Bible: study the Bible itself. Do not study *about* the Bible, study *the Bible*. The Bible is the Word of God, and only the Bible is the Word of God. A young man who had just graduated from one of our great Eastern Universities came to Mr. Moody to consult with him as to his life work. He was a young man belonging to a very wealthy family. Mr. Moody said to him “Do not go into business. You have more money now than you know what to do with. Why do you not give your life to teaching the English Bible?” The young man replied “I do not know anything about the English Bible.” “Why,” Mr. Moody exclaimed, “I thought you had just graduated at ——— University, and that they had a high-priced professor employed there for the one purpose of teaching the English Bible.” “Yes,” he said, “that is true, and I have taken his classes. But, Mr. Moody, would you like to know how he teaches the English Bible? We have been studying for six months to find out who wrote the Pentateuch, and we know less about it than when we started.” That was not Bible study at all, it was study about the Bible. And a good deal of the so-called “study of the English Bible” to-day in universities and theological seminaries is of that character.

Every child of God should dig into the Bible itself entirely independently of all commentaries or all lesson helps. I love to go alone with God and His Book and see what He has to say to me, without any man’s intervention. The trouble with

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most of us is that we live on spoon victuals. You come here Sunday after Sunday and I ladle out to you what I have found in the Book. Go to the Book itself. I have sometimes watched a robin feed its young, and spit into their gaping mouths what it had dug up and chewed. I do not like it. It is doubtless necessary for young robins and chippy birds, but we ought to get beyond that and go right to the Book itself for ourselves.

II. Study the Bible, Really Study It

In the second place, *Study the Bible, Really Study It*. That too comes out in Acts 17:11, they “*searched* the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Note carefully the word “*searched*,” or as it is translated in the Revised Version, “*examining* the scriptures.” The Greek word translated “*searched*” in the Authorized Version and “*examining*” in the Revised Version, is a very strong word. It means “to search after by looking through, to investigate, to examine, to inquire into, to scrutinize, to sift.” It means the closest and most minute study. The Bible being God’s Book is full of meaning in its minutest word; and is worthy of not merely the cursory, superficial reading, the careless skimming that most people give to it. That is all most of the other books, men’s books, deserve; any closer study than that is a waste of time. But the Bible, being God’s Book, God’s own Perfect Word, God’s inexhaustible storehouse of truth, in which are hidden the infinite treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God, is worthy of the closest and minutest study. And it abundantly rewards such study, and that is one of the countless proofs that the Bible really is God’s Word. The more closely and microscopically you study this Book, the more you see and the more wonderful the blessing you get. The Bible should be studied with the closest and most concentrated attention. Here is where more people miss the fullest blessing in their study of the Bible than anywhere else. They are looking at the Bible with their bodily eyes, but their minds are off in a dozen other places. When you study the Bible, resolutely shut everything else out, shut to the door of your mind to everything else and shut yourself up with God alone. It may take time to cultivate this habit of concentrated attention, but any

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Christian can accomplish it. If you find your mind wandering, go back and fasten your eyes and your mind on that verse again, and chew every word. Remember what Jeremiah said, “Thy words were found and *I did eat them*; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart” (Jer. 15:16, R. V.) A very prominent and very busy business man said to me one night, “Tell me in a single word, how to study my Bible.” I replied, “It is a pretty big contract, to tell a man in a single word how to study the Bible, but if I must put it into one word, this is the word, ‘thoughtfully’—study the Bible thoughtfully, give your whole attention to the Bible as you study it.” It is well to read a chapter of the Bible and then close the book and see how much you can remember. Do the same with single verses. This is one of the greatest secrets of profitable study of any kind, *concentrated attention*; but it is preëminently the secret of profitable Bible study. The one great object of the analytical study, verse by verse, and word by word, of some books in the Bible, that I compel the students in the Bible Institute to do, is to train them to the habit of concentrated attention when they study the Bible. But you do not need to be a student in the Bible Institute to do it; any of you can learn to do it. Not only can every one of you learn to do it, but you must learn to do it.

III. Study the Bible Daily

In the third place, *Study the Bible Daily*. That also comes out in Acts 17:11, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures *daily*, whether those things were so.” The daily study of the Bible is the only proper or fully profitable way to study the Bible. We saw in our introduction that proper Bible study was the study that was appropriate or fitting to the Book we were studying, the kind of study of which that Book was worthy. As the Bible is God’s Book, the only kind of study that is fitting to it, is every-day study. Do you not desire to know every day what God has to say that day? If you do not, you are a fool. Every Christian who does not study, really *study*, the Bible *every day* is a fool. Not only that, any Christian who neglects the study of the Bible one single day insults

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God. And you should put much time every day, no matter how busy you are, into Bible study. Certainly fifteen minutes a day is too little time to put into listening to what God has to say to you. My students think one hour a day is little enough time to spend with me and who am I? Who is God? One of the greatest follies of which the average Christian is guilty, is spending so little time each day alone with God. Mr. Moody used to say, "In our prayers we talk to God, in our Bible study God talks to us, and we had better let God do most of the talking." We certainly ought to spend more time every day listening to what God has to say to us in His Word than we require Him to spend in listening to what we have to say to Him in our prayers. Most of us spend too little time in prayer and almost every one of us spends *far too little* time in Bible study. Stop and register a resolution right now that from this time on you will spend more time every day of your life in listening to God as He speaks in His Word, more time in real Bible study.

IV. Study the Bible to Find Out What It Actually Teaches

In the fourth place, *Study the Bible to Find Out What it Actually Teaches*. That too comes out in Acts 17:11, "they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, *whether these things were so.*" It comes out in these words, "*whether these things were so.*" They "examined the scriptures" *to find out what they actually taught*; not to find out something to corroborate their own previous opinions but to find out exactly what God had to say. Do not study the Bible to find out what you can make it mean, but to find out what God evidently intended to teach. One of the most prolific sources of misunderstanding and evil in Bible study is found right here. Men go to the Book not to find out what God has to say and what He really means to teach, but to find something that will corroborate their own view, or something that they can somehow twist into agreement with their own pre-conceived opinions. Take, for example, what the Bible teaches about the Second Coming of Christ. A host of books and pamphlets have appeared on this subject in the last few years, but not a few of these do not exhibit the remotest desire to find out what the Bible really has to say upon the subject and to accept

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that as final. They are simply a labored and ingenious attempt either to discredit what Christ Jesus and the apostles do say, or else to distort it and make it mean what any fair-minded man or woman in their inmost heart knows it was never intended to mean. Take, for example, Shailer Mathews' tract, "Will Christ Come Again?" From start to finish it is simply a subtle attempt to discredit the teaching of Jesus Christ and the apostles on this subject. Or take either of the two most lauded books on the Second Coming written from the Post-Millennial viewpoint. While they are not so outrageously and blasphemously irreverent in their allusions to the words of our Lord Jesus and the apostles as Shailer Mathews' pamphlet is, they certainly are not an honest, frank, simple-minded attempt to find out exactly what God has to say on the subject. It would be a glaring outrage to study any man's book in that way: it is an atrocious insult to God to study His Book in that way. *Study the Bible with an absolutely single-eyed purpose to discover exactly what God intended to teach.*

V. Meditate Long and Profoundly on What You Find Taught in the Bible

In the fifth place, *Meditate Long and Profoundly on What You Find Taught in the Bible*. This is what we are taught in our third text, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law *doth he meditate* day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." As the Eternal and all-wise God is the Speaker in the Bible everything taught in the Bible is worthy of our most profound and most prolonged consideration. We should ponder it, we should weigh it, we should thoroughly masticate and digest it, we should "*meditate upon*" it as we read it and hear it, and afterwards as we go about our daily work we should "*meditate upon it day and night.*" Meditation is one of the most fruitful processes of the human mind. But how fruitful and profitable meditation may be depends entirely upon what we meditate upon.

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There is no profit in meditation that is mere mind-wandering and day-dreaming. The most fruitful and profitable of all meditation is meditation upon God's revealed truth, God's revealed Word. It is by meditation upon the truth that truth fructifies, just as eggs hatch by being sat upon. "Blessed," infinitely "blessed," is the man that meditateth upon the Word of God day and night." One of the best ways to conserve golden moments that might otherwise be squandered (for example, as we walk the streets or fields or ride on the trolley car) is to meditate upon the Word you have been studying. Turn God's Word over and over and over again in your mind as you study it. Look at all the facets of each diamond of truth. Let the Word soak in, let it saturate your life, your thoughts, your feelings, your will. Bible-soaked thoughts are God-like thoughts. Bible-soaked affections are God-like affections. A Bible-soaked will is a God-like will. That is a large part of what is meant in John 15:7, R. V. "If ye abide in me, *and my words abide in you*, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "Meditate" on the Word of God "day and night."

VI. Store the Bible Up in Your Memory

In the sixth place, growing out of what we have just said, *Store the Bible Up in Your Memory*. Without such storing up in memory the most profitable meditation upon it is impossible. The great profit of storing up the Bible in your memory is set forth in Psalm 119:11, R. V. "Thy word have *I laid up in my heart*, that I might not sin against thee." That is the proper thing to do with God's Word, lay it up in your heart. What is so worthy of being treasured in our minds as the golden words of God? Whoever has God's Word stored away in his mind has treasure vaults filled with pure gold. Our Lord Jesus, as part of His farewell message to His disciples in the wonderful fourteenth chapter of John (R. V.) says in v. 21, "He that hath my commandments, *and keepeth them*, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." Do you not long to be one of those whom the Father and the Son peculiarly "love?" Do you not long to have the Lord Jesus "*manifest*" Himself to you? Well, these words tell you how to secure these

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priceless privileges, “He that hath my commandments, *and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.*” To keep Christ’s words means more than simply to obey them; it means to treasure them, to hold on to them, to store them up in your mind and heart, or to use David’s phrase, “lay them up in your heart.” Then in John 14:23, Jesus says, “If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and *we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*” Is not that great, having the Father and the Son making their home with us? Well, it is through the treasured up Word that this is brought about. Just two suggestions about how to memorize scripture! *First, memorize it systematically.* Do not have a jumble of disjointed texts in your mind, but classified and associated texts. Association is the great secret of a retentive memory. Group your memorized passages together, classify them in a logical and orderly way. Second, commit the verses to memory by chapter and verse.

VII. Study the Whole Bible

In the seventh place, *Study the Whole Bible.* That comes out in a very striking way in Luke 24:27, R. V., “And beginning *from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*” We see that Jesus studied not merely parts or fragments of the Bible, but the whole Bible as far as He had it, “beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them *in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*” The whole Bible is the Word of God; therefore every part of the Bible should be studied. We not only need to know the mind of God, but *the whole mind of God.* One of the commonest causes of comparatively unprofitable Bible study is that only parts of the Bible are studied. Some only study pet books. Some study only the New Testament; some study only the Psalms; some never study Genesis; some never study prophecy, they never study Revelation and they never study Daniel. Others study nothing but Daniel or Revelation. Some study only pet subjects; some never study anything but Divine healing, and some never study Divine healing at all. Some never study the Second

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Coming of Christ and others never study anything but the Second Coming of Christ. You never rightly understand any one of the sixty-six books of the Bible until you study it in its relation to the other sixty-five. You never rightly understand any subject in the Bible until you understand it in its relation to other subjects in the Bible.

VIII. Study the Bible as the Word of God

In the eighth place, *Study the Bible as the Word of God*. This we are taught to do by God Himself in 1 Thess. 2:13, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." We have already seen that the proper way to study any book is to study it as just what it is. Well, then it is clear as day that, as the Bible is the Word of God, the proper way to study it and the only proper way to study it, the only way to get the largest profit out of the study of it, is to study it *as the Word of God*. Many distinguished university professors say we should study the Bible just as we study any other book, and they fancy that they have said something wondrously wise when they have said it. But while it is partly true, it is very largely false; indeed, it is very largely abject nonsense. We should study the Bible as we study any other book to this extent, that we apply to it the same laws for the discovery of the meaning of words and phrases and the same laws of grammatical construction that we apply to any other book; but there the principle ceases. We should study it as we study no other book, for it is what no other book is; it is God's Word and all other books are men's words, and we should study it as what it is, and we should study other books as what they are. So we should study the Bible and the Bible alone, as God's Word, and we should study every other book as men's word for that is exactly what they are. What is involved in studying the Bible as God's Word? Five things:

1. First, that *we believe absolutely its every statement*. We may not see how it can be true, but we should believe it just because God says it. Abraham could not see how he, when he was "about 100 years old" and Sarah nearly as old, and

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childless, could become “a father of many nations”; but God said so and Abraham believed it, and “God counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6). If we have really good sense we will behave just like Abraham. God says something in this Book; Prof. So and So says it is not so, and the Rev. Dr. Bighead, D.D., Ph.D., LL.D., Litt.D., F.R.G.S., A. S. S., says it cannot be so; but as God says so, you and I, if we have real good sense, will believe it in spite of all the A.S.S.E.S. in the world.

2. In the second place, *that we bank unhesitatingly and without a trace of doubt or anxiety lest it fail us on its every promise in all its height and depth and length and breadth.*

I am only a frail and feeble man, but I expect every man to accept and rest absolutely upon every promise of mine. And God, who cannot lie (Tit. 1:2), not only expects that of you and me, He demands it, and you are a fool if you do not do it. A good many of the promises of this Book seem altogether too big to believe, but God made them and there is nothing too big for God, and not a promise in this Book ever went down yet, if you put both your feet upon it. I have found that out by 36 years of experience. This Book tells me that I am an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ; it promises me that I am to inherit all God is and all God has. It looks ridiculous to me, but I believe it. God says it and, therefore, I believe it. I would be a fool if I did not.

3. In the third place, *studying the Bible as the Word of God involves your obeying implicitly and exactly its every commandment that is addressed to you.* There are commandments in this Book that are not addressed to you: the Bible explicitly says that they are addressed to Jews and you are not a Jew. But there are many commandments that are addressed to you; obey every one of them to the last jot and tittle. It will seem hard sometimes but it will pay.

4. In the fourth place, *studying the Bible as the Word of God involves, studying it as God's message to you,* studying it not as God's Word in the abstract, but God's Word in the concrete, God's Word to you. Forget everybody else for the time being and think of God as saying this thing to you. Oh, it is fine to have a talk with God and to have Him do the talking. He has so much more to say that is worth listening

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to than you or I have to say to him. I know a man out in China who has the rare gift of keeping his mouth shut in seven different languages. He is quite a young man but he has acquired a great reputation for sagacity because he so seldom says anything. He listens. But the place of places to keep still is when you are studying the Bible; keep still and listen and let God do the talking.

5. In the fifth place, *studying the Bible as the Word of God involves studying the Book as in the presence of God. See God standing right there saying these things which are written.* Have you never thought, when you have read how God came down and talked with Abraham face to face, that you wished He could come down and talk that way with you? Well, we have a privilege far beyond that of Abraham. It was only in a few very rare instances that God came down and met Abraham and talked with him, but God is ready to come down and meet us and talk with us face to face every time we open our Bibles. Oh, it is great to have God call you into His presence and say, "I have something I want to whisper right into your ear alone and into your heart," and then open your Bible and see God standing there and hear Him saying that which is written there in the Book before your eyes. Studying the Bible that way makes the Bible a new and living Book. It is great to study the Bible on your knees. It has been one of the rarest privileges of my life to read every chapter in the Bible and every verse in the Bible on my knees. And it is your privilege to do the same.

IX. Study the Bible with a Will Wholly Surrendered to God
In the ninth place, *Study the Bible With a Will Wholly Surrendered to God.* That is one of the greatest secrets of proper and profitable Bible study. There is nothing that clears up *the mind* to see and understand what God says and what God means like *a will wholly surrendered* to God. Our Lord Jesus Himself teaches us that. He says in John 7:17, R. V., "If any man *willeth to do his will, he shall know* of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself." The mind of the man whose will is not surrendered to God is a fogbank; the mind of the man whose will is surrendered to God is clear shining as a perfect California day. Oh, I have known men to whom the Bible was a sealed

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book, a useless book, a silly, stupid book, but by the unreserved surrender of their wills to God the Bible became an open book. The surrender of the will to God will do more to make the Bible an open book than a university education at home and abroad in Greek and Hebrew and cognate languages. I have known great Greek scholars and great Hebrew scholars who were as blind as a bat to the real meaning of God's Word, simply because their wills were not surrendered to God; and I have known men and women who knew none of "the original languages" in which the Bible was written, neither the original Greek, nor the original Hebrew, only "the original English," who were open-eyed to all that was best and dearest in this Book because their wills were utterly surrendered to God. We had a young woman in the Bible Institute in Chicago years ago who seemed to have no fitness to be a student at a Bible Institute. She was entirely out of harmony with the place and densely ignorant of the things of God. One day she went (as all the women students were required to go now and then) down to one of the destitute parts of the City, calling from house to house upon the poor. She became utterly disgusted with the surroundings and quit her work and went down to the Lake Shore Drive and walked along in front of the magnificent mansions there and said to herself, "Now, this is what I like, and this is what I am going to have. I am thoroughly sick of Milton Ave. and Townsend St. This for me." In that rebellious state of mind she returned to the Institute and the bell soon rang for supper. She went down and took her seat at the table, still rebelling at the thought of a life of sacrifice amid unpleasant surroundings. But suddenly, there at the supper-table, she surrendered her will to God, sprang from the table, rushed over to one of the other girls, threw her arms around her and said, "I am a volunteer for Africa." A wonderful transformation and a wonderful opening of her mind to the things of God occurred instantly. I was away when it all happened, but when I came back my secretary told me about it; for it was the talk of the school. A little later in the day as I passed out of the gate on La Salle Avenue I met her just coming in. She looked up radiantly into my face and said, "Oh, Mr. Torrey,

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have you heard the news?" I said, "Yes, Jack, Miss Waite has told me." Then she fairly danced in holy glee on the sidewalk as she poured out her glad heart, and then she said, "Oh, Mr. Torrey, the most wonderful thing about it is that the Bible is a new Book. I thought the Bible was the most stupid book in the world. I would rather have read an old almanac than the Bible. You did compel me by your lectures at Northfield to believe in the Deity of Christ, but the Bible I could not endure. But oh, since I surrendered my will, what a wonderful Book the Bible is; God is making marvelous revelations to me from it every day." Oh, men and women, if you want a Bible that is wonderful, a Bible whose every page glows with glory, study it with a will absolutely surrendered to God.

X. Study the Bible to Learn How to Live Your Daily Life, and Live Your Daily Life that Way

In the tenth place, *Study the Bible to Learn How to Live Your Daily Life, and Live Your Daily Life That Way*. God commands us to do this in James 1:22. He says, "Be ye *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Very many study the Bible, yes, dig into it, spend hours with it, just to gratify their curiosity on the great subjects of which the Bible treats, or to qualify themselves to be expert theological disputants. No, no, no, study the Bible to find out how to live so as to please God, and live that way. Studying the Bible with an eager desire to learn how to please God, and living that way, goes a long way toward making the Bible an open book. People often ask, what is the best translation of the original scriptures, the Authorized Version, or the Revised Version, or Weymouth's, or whose translation? Listen, infinitely the best translation of the Bible is the translation into daily living.

XI. Study the Bible Under the Holy Spirit's Personal Direction

In the eleventh place, *Study the Bible Under the Holy Spirit's Personal Direction*. God tells us in 1 Cor. 2:14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually* discerned." Do not study the Bible as the Christian Scientist studies it, through Mrs. Eddy's spectacles, under bondage to "Science and Health."

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Mrs. Eddy's spectacles are badly smoked glasses. Do not study the Bible as Pastor Russell's dupes study it, through that silly man's spectacles, trying to see the Bible with "Millennial Dawn" standing between you and the Book of God itself. Do not study it as the Mormon studies it, looking at the Bible through the densely opaque medium of the ridiculous and immoral Book of Mormon, apparently gotten up originally as a joke by a back-sliding Presbyterian preacher, Solomon Spaulding. "Call no man master" (Matt. 23:10). Do not study it through any man's spectacles; study it through the telescope and microscope of the Holy Spirit. Study it under the personal direction of the Holy Spirit. The way to obtain His personal direction in your study of the Bible we are told in Ps. 119:18, R. V.: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." It is by asking for it. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to *them that ask Him*" (Luke 11:13). We are also told in Luke 24:45, R. V., "Then opened *He* their mind, that they might understand the scriptures."

XII. Study the Bible with a Child-Like Mind

In the twelfth place, *Study the Bible with a Child-like Mind*. That is the only proper way to study the Bible, for the Bible is a *revelation* intended by God to be understood by all honest-minded, humble-minded, teachable people. Many very scholarly men study the Bible as if it were a puzzle book; instead of taking the meaning that lies on the surface, they dig down for some occult meaning, some meaning other than what the words seem to imply. The Roman Catholic Church says that simple-minded Christians must not dare to study the Bible for themselves independently—they must go to the priest to interpret it for them; and the Chicago University says that ordinary, "unscholarly" regenerate men, women and children cannot get the Bible's real meaning for themselves, they must have some great scholar, soaked in the German infidelity of Wellhausen and Graf and their host of satellites and followers, to interpret it for them. *But Jesus said*, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast *hid* these things *from*

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the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” (Matt. 11:25.) Oh, these ingenious and fantastic interpretations of cunning “scholars,” men who are so subtle that they are positively silly! They would be laughable if they were not outrageous. Some men’s erudition is very close to perdition. The little girl was right when she said, “If God didn’t mean what He said, why didn’t He say what He meant?” He does say what He means, exactly what He means.

XIII. Study the Bible Systematically

Once more, *Study the Bible Systematically*. It is very clear from Luke 24:27, R. V. that Jesus so studied it, for we read: “And *beginning from Moses and from all the prophets*, he interpreted to them in all the *scriptures* the things concerning himself.” Have some good system of Bible study and follow it. System counts in everything, but it counts more in study than it counts in anything else: and it counts more in Bible study than in any other form of study. I have not time here to go into the details of systems or methods of Bible study.

Let me add just one word, *improve spare moments for Bible study*. Carry a Bible with you wherever you go, or at least a New Testament, and wherever you have a spare moment, put it into Bible study. *But do not rest content with the use of spare moments in Bible study; have a regular set time every day that is kept sacredly for getting alone with God in the study of His Word.*

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CHAPTER 3

HOW TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE SO AS TO FIND ITS TRUE MEANING

“For we are not as the many, *corrupting the Word of God*: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.”—2 Cor. 2:17, R.V.

“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not: (2) but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, *nor handling the Word of god deceitfully*; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every mans conscience in the sight of God. (3) And even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: (4) in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them.”—2 Cor. 4:1–4, R.V.

“Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *handling aright the word of truth*.”—2 Tim. 2:15, R.V.

“*The Devil ... saith unto him, ... it is written*.”—Matt. 4:5–7.

My subject this morning is, *How to Interpret the Bible so as to Find its True Meaning*. I have four texts. The first is 2 Cor. 2:17, R. V.: “*For we are not as the many, corrupting the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ*.” The word translated “*corrupting*” in this verse is the participle of a verb derived from a noun meaning “a tavern keeper, or a wine merchant, a petty retailer, a huckster, a peddler,” and the thought is that as tavern keepers and wine merchants and peddlers frequently adulterate their wines or fruits, or other wares, so many alleged teachers of the Word of God adulterate the Word of God. That is certainly true of not a few preachers and “Bible teachers” and “theological professors” in

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America, and elsewhere in these days. Paul says he was not in that contemptible disreputable business; and we ought to be careful that we are not when we teach or when we study God's word.

Our second text is 2 Cor. 4:1–4: “Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not: but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, *nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish (are perishing): in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them.*” The word translated “*handling deceitfully*” in these verses means to “corrupt” as metals are debased or wine adulterated, and the thought is that of debasing the pure gold of God's Word, or adulterating the pure wine of God's Word, by mingling with it false ideas. That too is a common practice to-day. Paul says that he has “renounced the hidden things of shame” and that he is “not walking in (theological) craftiness (cunning or subtlety)”—it is evident that he had not had the advantage of an education in some of our American institutions—and that he was not debasing the pure gold of “the Word of God” or adulterating the pure wine of the “Word of God” by mixing in his own preconceived notions. Here too *we also* greatly need to be on our guard when we study or teach the “Word of God.”

Our third text is 2 Tim. 2:15: “*Give diligence to present thyself approved* unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.” The Authorized Version, as you know, reads, “Study to show *thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” The Greek word Paul actually used means, “cutting straight,” and that would be a better way to translate it here than the way in which it is rendered in either the Authorized Version or the Revised Version. Then the verse would read “Give diligence to present *thyself approved* unto God, a workman that

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needeth not to be ashamed, *cutting straight* the word of truth." I tell you there is a lot of crooked cutting nowadays when men come to the study and interpretation of the Word of God, especially when they find something they do not wish to believe. Some years ago, a friend of mine passed by a carpenter and joiner's shop in a Southern city. Over the door was this sign, "All sorts of twisting and turning done here." That would be a fine sign to put over the door of some of our theological seminaries, and many of our pulpits and Bible classes, and many a room where Christians are studying the Word of God alone; and each one of *us* needs to be very much on our guard that this may not be an appropriate sign to be put over the door of the room where we study our Bible alone. Remember, as you study the Bible that it is God's Word and be sure to "cut it straight." My fourth text is Matt. 4:5-7, "The devil ... saith unto Him, ... it is written." You see from this passage that the devil can quote scripture and interpret or misinterpret scripture, and argue from what "is written" in the Book of God. If you think he has quit the business, read "Pastor" Russell's "Millennial Dawn," or Mrs. Eddy's "Science and Health," or some of the productions of the "American Institute of Sacred Literature" or the Chicago University, or some of the Sunday School helps sent out by some of our denominational Boards. But I would not advise you to spend much time on this evidently devil-inspired trash.

It is not enough to study the Bible, nor even to spend several hours in Bible study daily. We must seek diligently to "*cut it straight*." We must find out how to interpret the Bible so as to find its true meaning, so as to discover just what God meant to teach by each verse we study: and then interpret it that way in every instance. Of many passages of scripture there are several possible meanings; one man says it means one thing and another man says it means another thing. Now God intends only one of these meanings. We should seek to find out not what men say it means, even good men, but what God intended it to teach. Is there any way in which ordinary men like you and me can tell to a certainty which interpretation of several possible interpretations of a passage is the right interpretation, the exact meaning God

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intended to convey? There is. *There are certain Laws of Interpretation that will enable you to know in at least almost every instance just what is the true interpretation of every verse in the Bible, what is the true sense of the passage, just what God wishes to teach.* I shall endeavor to state these laws so you can all understand them and then apply them for yourselves.

I. Get Absolutely Right with God Yourself by the Absolute Surrender of Your Will to God

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The first great law of correct Bible interpretation, which will be recognized as a law of God by any fair-minded person who gives it a few minutes' consideration, is *Get Absolutely Right with God Yourself by the Absolute Surrender of Your Will to Him.* The only man who is at all competent to interpret the will of God is the man who is in harmony with God, and the only man who is in harmony with God is the man whose will is fully surrendered to God. If you are not right with God yourself, you certainly are not competent to say what God means by any passage in His Word. Our Lord Jesus Himself says this in John 7:17, R. V., "If any man *willeth to do his will, he shall know* of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." Nothing else so clears up our minds to understand the Word of God as the surrender of our wills to God. The will is the eye of the soul. Our Lord says that also. He says in Matt. 6:22, 23, R. V., "The lamp of the body is the eye: *if therefore thine eye be single*, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." And it is clear from the next verse that by a "single eye" He means a will fully surrendered to God. His words are, "*No man can serve two masters*: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other." If your will is surrendered to God and to Him alone, your "eye" is "single," and your "whole body full of light." But if your will is not fully surrendered to God and

⁶Torrey, R. A. 1921. *The importance and value of proper Bible study how properly to study and interpret the Bible* (3). George H. Doran Company: New York

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Him alone, your “eye” is “evil” and your whole person is “full of darkness.” Nothing else gives us such a clear eye to discern, as we read God’s Word, just what God means, as an entirely surrendered will. A surrendered will will do more to qualify any one to be a competent and dependable interpreter of the Word of God than the fullest possible university course in Greek and Hebrew and the cognate languages. As I said last Sunday, I have known great Greek scholars and great Hebrew scholars and men deeply versed in the cognate languages who were blind as a bat to the real meaning of the scriptures because they lacked that clearness of spiritual vision that comes only from a surrendered will. And on the other hand I have known very ordinary and quite uneducated men and women, men and women with no pretensions whatever to scholarship, who had a wonderful understanding of the meaning of God’s Word because their wills were surrendered to God. We get this same principle of Bible interpretation from Psalm 25:14: “The secret (or, the friendship) of Jehovah is *with them that fear Him*; and he will show *them* His covenant.” The same thought is found in Prov. 3:32, “The froward is an abomination to Jehovah: but *his secret* is with *the righteous*.” A closely similar thought is found in our Lord’s last words to His disciples on the night before His crucifixion, in John 15:15, R. V.: “No longer do I call *you* servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called *you* friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known *unto you*.”

The first great principle of Biblical interpretation is then, that the *one who would interpret the Bible must himself be in harmony with the Author of the Book by the surrender of his will to God*. Every theological professor whose will is not fully surrendered to God, should be turned out of the chair he occupies in any Seminary or University. When Mr. Alexander and I were holding meetings in a university city in England, Mr. Alexander was invited out to dinner by one of the most prominent officers in one of the theological schools connected with the university. This man, who was a fine man in many ways, took exception to some of our teachings. He accompanied Mr. Alexander after dinner out

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to his carriage, and as they stood by the carriage and had a few earnest parting words Mr. Alexander put the question straight to him, "Have you ever made a full surrender of your will to God?" This prominent theological university teacher very frankly and gently said to Mr. Alexander, "No, Mr. Alexander, I have not." That accounted for his misunderstanding of the Word of God and, the same thing accounts for the misunderstanding of the Word of God on the part of a great many students of the Word to-day. See to it that you are not blinded in a similar way to the real meaning of God's Word. Unless you fulfill this first great law of correct Bible Interpretation it will not help you to fulfill the other laws. You will get nowhere in your study of the Word.

II. Be Determined to Find Out Just What God Intended to Teach and Not What You Wish Him to Teach

The second principle of correct Bible interpretation is, *Be Determined to Find Out Just What God Intended to Teach and Not What You Wish Him to Teach*. One great reason why many do not find out the true meaning of God's words is because they do not really wish to find out the true meaning of God's words, but they wish to find some way in which they can force God's words into harmony with their own notions. Many men and women see in the Bible just what they wish to see in the Bible. This is the cause of the blinding of the eyes of many. Some one asked me the other day, "Why cannot the Jews see that their own Old Testament Scriptures predicted a suffering Messiah, who should make atonement for sin by His death and that Jesus is that Messiah? It is so plain." The answer is simple, because they do not wish to. And I asked the person who asked me this question another question, "Why do not Christians to-day see that there are other predictions in the Old Testament just as plain and far more of them, that the Messiah is coming as an all conquering King to rule the nations with a rod of iron, that Jesus, the true Messiah, is coming again?" The answer to that is just as simple—because they do not wish to.

There was a time many years ago when I was so certain that all men would ultimately be saved and the devil too, and was so determined to establish that doctrine, that I

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interpreted everything I found in the Bible on the subject of future punishment in the light, or rather in the darkness, of that determination of mine, to make the Bible square with my own view, which I reasoned out philosophically and was ready to defend against all comers. But when I reached the point where I desired not only to make the Bible square with my philosophical arguments for universal salvation, but to find out just what God really taught, I easily found just what God did teach; and my universal salvation arguments evaporated into thin air. We must all of us be on our guard at this point, that in absolute honesty we have but one wish and that is *to find out just what God means by the verse we are studying* and that only, no matter how much it may conflict with our previous ideas.

III. Get the Most Accurate Text

The third principle of correct Bible interpretation is, *Get the Most Accurate Text to Interpret*. It is the original manuscripts of the Bible that are the very Word of God. Now we do not have the original Mss. of the Bible. We have many Mss. but not one of them is the original. There are many variations in the Mss. which we possess. But by a comparison of the very many Mss. we have of the various parts of the Bible—and we have far, far more Mss. of the books of the Bible than of any other ancient book—we can come very close to the original texts as they came from the hands of Paul and John and Matthew and the rest of the writers of the books of the Old and New Testaments. Indeed we have now what is to all practical intents and purposes what is the original text as it came from the hand of the original writers of the various books of the Bible. It is wonderful when one thinks of it, when we remember how old these books are and how often they were copied and how very many Mss. we have and the advances in scholarship, especially in textual criticism, that have been made in the time between when the Authorized Version was published 310 years ago in 1611 and when the Revised Version was published only a few years ago, in 1881 (The N. T.), that there are so few differences of real importance between the Authorized Version and the Revised Version. *There is not one single doctrine of any vital importance affected in the least by the*

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variations between the two versions, not one. That is amazing and shows the wonderful providential care with which God guarded His own written word. But there are slight differences and, of course, we wish the exact mind of God and, as that is found in the original Mss., we therefore desire and should seek the purest text, the most exact text, the text which is closest to the original Mss. There can be no honest question that, taken all in all, the Revised Version presents a text more nearly exactly the same as that of the original Mss. than the Authorized Version. So, though for many reasons the Authorized Version is the better for the general reading of the average Christian, nevertheless, every one who wishes to find the exact words of God should have and should study the Revised Version. There is one glaring misrendering in the Revised Version. It is found in 2 Tim. 3:16. The Revised Version reads, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness," putting the "is" after the "inspired of God" instead of before it as in the Authorized Version. There is absolutely no warrant for this change. It is utterly indefensible. It should read "Every scripture is inspired of God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." But the fault in that case is not in the Greek text upon which the Revised Version is built, but upon the translation of the text. There is no question about the Greek text even in this case. Many uncertainties about the meaning of various passages in the Bible would be easily settled if we would just look at the more correct text as given in the Revised Version. Take as an illustration, 1 Thess. 5:22. The Authorized Version renders this "abstain from all appearance of evil;" the R. V. renders it "abstain from every form of evil." While the *Greek* text King James translators and the revisers used is the same, there is no room for doubt that the English text in the Revised Version gives the true sense of the Greek text better than the Authorized Version. We are not so much to "abstain from the *appearance* of evil" but from what is actually evil, and from what is actually evil in every form *in which it appears*, "every form of evil."

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IV. Find Out the Most Exact and Literal Meaning of the Text

The fourth principle of correct Bible interpretation is, *Find Out the Most Exact and Literal Meaning of the Text*. It is one of the most firmly established principles of law in England and in America that “a law stands as it is written,” i.e., that a law means exactly what it says and is to be interpreted and enforced *just as it reads*. This is just as good a principle for interpreting the Bible as for interpreting law. If Shailer Mathews and the rest of the higher critics and “new theology” men were practicing law and should try in any court of justice to interpret laws as they interpret the Bible, they would be laughed out of court. It is no wonder that the one who has done more to prick the iridescent soap bubbles of the higher critics and new theology men than almost any one else was a brilliant lawyer, knighted by King Edward for his eminent legal talents, my late intimate and beloved friend, Sir Robert Anderson. The primary meaning of any passage of Scripture, just as the meaning of any law on our statute books, is the literal meaning, unless it is perfectly plain from the context or from other scripture or from the manifestly figurative character of the passage that something else than the literal sense is intended.

Those who do not wish in any particular case to accept what God actually says, including some who really are scholars, who ought to know better, often take refuge from the plain meaning of a text by saying, “Oh, but you know ‘the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life,’” by which they mean the literal sense of a passage, the interpretation that takes God as meaning just what He says, kills, but a “spiritual” interpretation, i. e., an interpretation that makes God mean something He does not say, gives life. If any one will look up Paul’s words, “the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life” (2 Cor. 3:6, R. V.) in their context, he will see that Paul never dreamed of such an interpretation or application of his words as these men give to them. It is clear as day from the context that what Paul meant was that the mere written letter, “written with ink” (v. 3) or engravers “in tables of stone” killed, but the Word of God written “with the Spirit of the living God” on our hearts (“in tables that are hearts of flesh”) gives life. These men who thus misuse 2 Cor. 3:6

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call those who hold fast to the actual literal meaning of the words “deadly literalists.” But if that kind of literalism is “deadly,” then Paul himself, the very one who wrote these words, was one of the most “deadly literalists” the world has ever known; for Paul constantly insisted upon the literal meaning of words and would build an argument upon the tense, number or case of a word used. A very distinguished Hebrew scholar, a professor in a leading American theological seminary, once tried to work this interpretation of 2 Cor. 3:6 on me. In a friendly discussion I had driven him into a corner by quoting a plain statement of God’s Word. He could not escape, but tried to by the subterfuge of saying, “But you know ‘the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life.’” I replied, “Now Professor, do you really think that is what Paul means by those words?” And he frankly said, “No, I know it is not.”

Another very easy and very common way of reading out of the Bible what God has put into it, is for men to say when they are driven into a corner by some plain passage that they do not wish to believe, “Oh, that is figurative,” by which they mean it does not mean what it says, but you can take it to mean whatever you like. That is a very common way nowadays with the post-millennialists of reading out of the Bible what God so plainly says in it about the personal, visible, bodily, imminent coming again of our Lord Jesus. It is outrageous trickery, unworthy of any one who has sense enough to subordinate his own crude and fallible opinions to the plain teaching and infinite wisdom of God’s Word. When statements are plainly figurative, of course, interpret them as figures, but even then remember that figures stand for facts, and that God’s figures never overstate the facts, and never misinterpret the facts, and that *an honest man’s figures never mean just the opposite of what they seem to teach.*

The most plain and obvious meaning of any passage in the Bible is always to be preferred to a subtle and ingenious one; for the Bible was written for plain, honest-minded, humble-minded, common folk and not for a few sublimated mystics. Did not Jesus Himself say, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou *didst*

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hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight?" (Matt. 11:25, 26, R. V.). Well, do not forget it. A man who really was a great scholar once said at a Bible Conference, "I think the best method of Bible study is *the baby method*," by which he meant just what Jesus Christ means here, that God reveals His truth to the humble, teachable mind, to the one who comes to Him as a babe. Remember how Jesus said again, "Except ye be converted and *become as little children*, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3.)

V. Note the Exact Force of Each Word Used

The fifth principle of correct Bible interpretation is, *Note the Exact Force of Each Word Used*. Remember that the Bible is God's Word and that God always says exactly what He means, no more, no less. Remember that the Bible is verbally inspired; i. e., that the Holy Spirit, the unerring Spirit of God led the Bible writers in the choice of every word they wrote, led them to write the word that exactly expressed what was in the mind of God, or, as Paul puts it, "Which things also we speak, *not in words which man's wisdom teacheth*, but *which the Spirit teacheth*; combining spiritual things with *spiritual words*." (1 Cor. 2:13, R. V.). *Note every word and the exact force of every word*. Take, for example, Rev. 2:10: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." Now this is constantly interpreted as meaning that we are saved by being faithful unto death, but it does not say so. It says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and *I will give thee the crown of life*." It tells us, not the way to be saved, but the way to obtain the crown. Take Luke 6:30, R. V., "Give to every one that asketh thee." This is constantly interpreted as if it meant "Give to every one that asketh thee, *just what he asks*," but it does not say so; it says, "Give to every one that asketh," but does not specify what to give to him. And it means exactly and literally what it says. It is far better to give some men advice than it is to give them money. The whole context shows we are to take God as our example in our giving and in all else that we do, and while God gives to every one that asks, He certainly does not always give even to His own children, the very thing we

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have asked. Take Eph. 4:30, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed *unto the day of redemption.*" This is constantly interpreted as meaning that we are not to "grieve away the Holy Spirit." But it does not say so. So far from teaching us that we can grieve away the Holy Spirit, it tells us in the last part of the verse that we cannot, "in whom ye were sealed *unto the day of redemption.*" But while we cannot grieve Him away, if we are children of God, we can grieve Him, and alas, we do.

VI. Interpret the Words Used in Any Verse According to Bible Usage

The sixth great principle of correct Bible interpretation is, *Interpret the Words Used in Any Verse According to the Bible Usage of those words.* Some people when they find any word in the Bible, run off for Webster's Dictionary or the Standard Dictionary to find out just what the word means. No, go to the Bible. Take your concordance and look up every passage in which the word in question is used and you will have God's definition of its meaning. For example, take the word "death." In Rom. 6:23 we read, "For the wages of sin is *death*; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." What does "death" mean here? Many run off to a dictionary and decide it means "cessation of existence," but take your Bible and concordance and go through the Bible and you will find it means nothing of the kind in the Bible. God Himself defines the "death" which is the ultimate result of sin in Rev. 21:8: "But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in *the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*" A man came into my office in Minneapolis. This text was hanging among others upon the wall and he read, "*The wages of sin is death,*" and then turned to me and said, "Do you believe that?" I knew the man was an annihilationist and said, "Yes, sir, I believe it, but do you know what 'death' means?" and then I took my Bible and showed him that his understanding of the word "death" was not the Bible meaning and I think I convinced him of his error. Take the word "sanctify," a word of very frequent occurrence in the

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Bible. Many define the word for themselves and take it to mean, "to make absolutely holy in character," and build up a whole system of theology, and an utterly false system of theology, on their wrong definition. If they would take their Bibles and concordances and look up every one of the very many passages in the Bible where this word is used, they would find that the primary meaning of "to sanctify" is "to set apart for God," and so they would find that the Bible teaching on this exceedingly precious and important subject of sanctification is entirely different from what they suppose. Just so with the word "justify" and a multitude of other words. When you are in doubt as to the exact meaning of any word in the Bible, take your concordance and look up every verse in the Bible where this word is used and you will see just what the word means.

VII. Interpret the Words of Each Author in the Bible with a Regard to the Particular Usage of that Author

The seventh principle of correct Bible interpretation is closely connected with the sixth. It is, *Interpret the Words of Each Author in the Bible with a Regard to the Particular Usage of That Author*. While God is the real Author of every book in the Bible, He used the individual personality of each man He employed to write the various books which make up His own Word. So we should find how the particular writer that we are studying uses any word. For example, James does not use the words "faith" and "believe" in the exact sense Paul uses them, nor in the exact sense in which John uses them. When James talks about "believing" he means a mere intellectual conviction of the truth, and so he says, "the demons also believe, and shudder" (James 2:19, R. V.). Paul speaks of "believing" as a conviction that governs a man's whole inner life, his intellect, his emotions, and his will; so he says in Rom. 10:9, 10, R. V.: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and *shalt believe in thy heart* that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." And he said to the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:31, R. V., "*Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.*" John, too, when he speaks of "believing" means a

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conviction to which a man utterly, unreservedly and gladly surrenders himself. So he says in John 20:31, R. V., "These are written, that ye may *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." And he says in 1 John 5:1: "*Whosoever believeth* that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God;" and four verses farther down, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that *believeth* that Jesus is the Son of God."

VIII. Interpret Individual Verses with a Regard to the Context

The eighth principle of correct Bible interpretation is, *Interpret Individual Verses with a Regard to the Context.*

Many a verse might mean two or three or more different things if it stood alone, without any setting; but in the connection in which it is found in the Bible, taking note of what goes before and what comes after, it cannot mean but one of these three or four different things. So we must notice carefully what comes before the verse we are studying and what comes after it, if we are to find out the exact meaning of the verse before us. For example, take Acts 2:39, R. V., "For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him." Now what is "the promise" to which reference is made in this passage? Some say it is the promise of salvation; others say it is the promise to the individual of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Which is right? If the verse stood alone either one might be right. But when we look at it in its context, only one is seen to be the true sense. Read the verse that goes immediately before, "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and *ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" Then he goes on immediately to say, "For unto you is *the promise*"—what promise? The promise, of course, of which he has just spoken, "the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit." Take John 14:18, R. V.: "I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you." To what coming does this refer, to the Second Coming of Christ, or to His coming in the Holy Spirit to dwell in their hearts? It might mean either, *if it stood alone.* But if you will read the two verses that immediately precede and the five verses immediately

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following, you will see it refers to His coming in the Holy Spirit to dwell in their hearts. He says in the verses that immediately precede, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you." Then He says, "I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you." This becomes even clearer in the verses that follow where He speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit in which He will manifest Himself to them and will come and make His abode with them.

IX. Interpret Individual Passage in the Light of Parallel or Related Passages

The ninth principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *Interpret Individual Passages in the Light of Parallel or Related Passages*. The meaning of many passages in the Gospels whose meaning seems doubtful would be settled at once if one would only read the parallel passages in another Gospel. Take for example, Luke 14:26, 27, R. V.: "If any man cometh unto me, *and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*" Now that looks hard. It has puzzled more people than almost any other passage in the Bible. But turn to the parallel passage, Matt. 10:37, 38, and it is all cleared up. "He that loveth father or mother *more than me* is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me." So it is evident that our Lord Jesus used the word "hate" in Luke 14:26, 27 in a sense in which it is used a number of times in the Bible, as a comparatively less love. Our love for God should be so immeasurably superior to our love to even the dearest of our earthly relatives that in comparison with our love to God our attitude toward them should be like *aversion, or turning away from* them. Take John 14:3, R. V., "I will come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

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Now our Lord might refer to His coming again to receive us at death, or He might refer to His Second Coming. To which does He refer? Another passage clearly and unmistakably answers the question, 1 Thess. 4:16, 17, R. V.: “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” There are four points in each statement; they exactly cover one another and make it clear that Paul’s words are an inspired commentary on our Lord’s words. Jesus says, “I will come again;” Paul says, “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” Jesus says, “And *will receive you unto myself*;” Paul says, “We ... shall *be caught up* in the clouds *to meet the Lord* in the air.” Jesus says, “*That where I am, there ye may be also*;” Paul says, “*So shall we ever be with the Lord*.” Jesus says in introducing this promise, “*Let not your heart be troubled*;” Paul says in closing, “*Wherefore comfort one another with these words*.” Take Matt. 13:33, R. V.: “The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.” Now some say this means that the Kingdom of God, the truth of God and the Gospel of God, are going to gradually grow and spread until they pervade the whole world. Others say that the leaven represents the corrupt doctrine, that the woman, an apostate church, mixes in the children’s bread and which multiplies like the yeast germs until the whole life and doctrine of the church is leavened. Which is right? Turn to 1 Cor. 5:6–8, R. V., and you get God’s answer to this important question: “Know ye not that *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*? Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our passover also hath been sacrificed: wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” This is an inspired commentary on our

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Lord's words and makes it as clear as day that the "leaven" refers to corruption, error and sin.

The Bible itself is the very best commentary on the Bible. There is not a doubtful or difficult passage in the Bible anywhere that some other passage does not clear up and explain, if we seek long enough for it. The best book to help you in finding these other passages that clear up uncertainties and solve difficulties is the "Treasury of Scripture Knowledge." Of several possible explanations of a passage, choose the one in harmony with the general teaching or trend of the Bible. If any one received a letter from me that had a statement in it that was capable of two interpretations, one of which was in harmony with the general trend of my letter and my other writings, and one of which was utterly at variance with the general trend of my letter and with my other writings, he would not hesitate for one moment to give that interpretation that was in harmony with the general teaching and trend of my letter and of my other writings, and just so we ought to act in interpreting the Bible. This does not mean that we are to distort and twist a passage out of its obvious meaning so there may be no apparent contradiction between it and some other clear passage in the Bible. One of the most vicious principles of Bible interpretation is that we must reconcile every passage with the teaching of every other passage. As the Bible is the revelation of an infinite mind that presents all sides of the truth, it is inevitable that there should be in it two lines of truth which it is perfectly easy to reconcile in a mind of infinite wisdom, but which we in our limitations of thought and onesidedness of thought, cannot reconcile at all. So, for example, we are not to try to explain away the clear teaching of the Word of God as to the sovereignty of God on the one hand, nor the clear teaching of the Word of God as to the freedom of the human will on the other hand. But if there are several very easily possible interpretations of a passage and one fits in more harmoniously with the general teaching and trend of the Bible than the other, that is the one to be accepted.

X. Interpret Obscure Passages in the Light of Passages that are Perfectly Plain

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The tenth principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *Interpret Obscure Passages in the Light of Passages that are Perfectly Plain*. Many do just the opposite thing. There will be a number of passages, the meaning of which is as plain as day. There will be another passage which is more or less obscure, and they will ignore all these perfectly plain passages and try to explain them away in the uncertain light of the obscure passage. Just the other procedure would be the rational one. Take, for example, 1 Cor. 9:27, R. V.: "I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (rather, be disapproved). Now this might seem to imply a fear on Paul's part that even after his faithful work he might be lost (taking the exact force of the words and looking up their Biblical usage, we find that the verse even when taken alone cannot possibly teach this), but there are numerous passages in the Bible which make it plain as day that Paul entertained no fear whatever of such a character. He says in 2 Tim. 1:12, R. V.: "For which cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for *I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day.*" And he says in 2 Tim. 4:18, R. V., "*The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory for ever and ever.*" And our Lord Jesus Christ distinctly said in John 10:28, R. V., "I give unto them eternal life; and *they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.*" And in 1 John 2:19, R. V., John says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for *if they had been of us, they would have continued with us:* but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us," thus distinctly teaching that when one is really born again he will not fall away.

XI. Interpret Any Passage in the Bible as Those Who Were Addressed Would Have Understood It

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⁷Torrey, R. A. 1921. *The importance and value of proper Bible study how properly to study and interpret the Bible* (59). George H. Doran Company: New York

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The eleventh principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *Interpret Any Passage in the Bible as Those Who Were Addressed Would Have Understood It.* Words that were addressed to any people were intended to be understood *by them.* There may be exceptions to this principle, but they are rare. An illustration of an exception is found in John 2:19, R. V., where he says, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John tells us Jesus was speaking of the temple of His body, but the Jews would not have so understood it. In this case our Lord Jesus was not speaking for the present moment but for the days that were to come. This John explains in the 22nd verse where he says, “*When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that He spake this; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*”

In interpreting the Bible we need to have a knowledge of the times and places and customs where the words were spoken. For example, our Lord said to Peter in Matt. 16:19, R. V., “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Now this was perfectly understood by those to whom he said it, because they knew the customs of the day. When one graduated from one of the Rabbinical classes, he was given by the Rabbi a “key” to indicate that he was now ready to open the secrets of the kingdom; and so our Lord promised to Peter “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” to indicate that Peter would be able to open the truth of the kingdom of heaven to men. We see Peter using the keys with the Jews on the day of Pentecost and with the Gentiles in the household of Cornelius. There was another well-known usage of the day that explains the remainder of the verse. The words “bind and loose” were used constantly of the Rabbis as referring to “forbidding and permitting.” For example, Shammai, a very strict Rabbi, was said to “bind,” or “forbid” what Hillel, a more generous and liberal Rabbi, was said to “loose,” or “permit.”

XII. Interpret What Belongs to the Christian, as Belonging to the Christian; What Belongs to the Jew, as Belonging to the

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Jew, and What Belongs to the Gentiles, as Belonging to the Gentiles

The twelfth principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *Interpret What Belongs to the Christian, as Belonging to the Christian, What Belongs to the Jew, as Belonging to the Jew, and What Belongs to the Gentiles, as Belonging to the Gentiles.* One of the commonest causes of misinterpretation of the Bible is the taking what is said, or what applies, to one class of people and applying it to another class. Take, for example, Rom. 8:35, R. V., "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Now this is distinctly said, as the context clearly shows, of the believer, of the one who is "foreordained," "called," "justified." Many take it as teaching that nothing can separate *anybody* "from the love of Christ." It teaches nothing of the kind.

XIII. Interpret Each Writer with a View to the Opinions the Writer Opposed

The thirteenth principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *Interpret Each Writer with a View to the Opinions the Writer Opposed.* That is to say, in interpreting Paul, when he is opposing the Judaizing tendencies in certain circles of his day, we should bear that in mind in interpreting his epistles; for example, in interpreting the Epistle to the Romans and the Epistle to the Galatians. When we are interpreting James, we should bear in mind that he was opposing the antinomians of his day, those who taught that if a man believed correctly about Christ, he was under no moral obligations, he could live as he pleased and yet be a saved man. In interpreting John in his First Epistle, we should bear in mind that he was opposing the gnostics of his day who were degrading Christianity by combining it with a fantastic philosophy, very like to the philosophy of "Christian Science," and in some forms of Gnosticism the philosophy of "Theosophy."

XIV. Interpret Poetry as Poetry and Interpret Prose as Prose
The fourteenth principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *Interpret Poetry as Poetry, and Interpret Prose as Prose.* For example, in interpreting the 18th Psalm, we should bear in

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mind that it is largely highly poetical, a remarkably vivid, poetic description of a thunderstorm in which God put forth His power in defense of His servant. The highly poetical character of the Psalm should be kept in mind in interpreting the Psalm; for example, the 8th verse, "There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it." Now this is not to be taken literally as representing God as a Being out of whose nose literally there poured forth smoke and fire out of His mouth. It is a wonderfully vivid and highly poetical description of a thunderstorm. Some people have no poetic sense and do everything in a matter-of-fact way. The story is told of a man of this hopelessly prosaic type of mind who read the well-known verse, "There are books in brooks, sermons in stones and good in everything," and he at once made this criticism "that is not what the writer meant to say. What he meant to say was that there are sermons in books, stones in brooks and good in everything." Poetry should be interpreted as poetry. That is not to say it does not mean what it says, but it says it in a figurative way and sometimes in a vividly pictorial way, that represents an idea by a picture.

But while we interpret poetry as poetry, we should interpret prose as prose. It is just as grave a breach of every sensible law of interpretation to interpret prose as poetry as it is to interpret poetry as prose. This is one of the outstanding faults of many of the so-called "modern" interpreters of the Bible. They find a statement in the Bible that is evidently prose, but it contains a truth they do not wish to accept and they at once say, "this is figurative." They criticize those "stupid" people who interpret poetry as prose but do not realize they are open to just as grave criticism for interpreting prose as poetry.

XV. The Holy Spirit is the Best Interpreter of the Bible

The fifteenth principle of correct Biblical interpretation is, *The Holy Spirit Is the Best Interpreter of the Bible*. The best interpreter of any book is the author of the book, and the Holy Spirit is beyond any honest question the Author of the Bible: "no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved (more literally, being 'borne

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along,' or 'carried along') by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:21, R. V.) This being true, of course it admits of no question that the Holy Spirit is the best interpreter of the Bible, and the man who in his study of the Word seeks and obtains the illumination of the Holy Spirit is a far more dependable interpreter of the Word than the greatest scholar on earth who is not illumined by the Holy Spirit. As we pointed out last Sunday, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and *he* cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged." (1 Cor. 2:14, R. V.) Therefore, no matter how well founded one's claims to scholarship may be, if he is not a Spirit-taught man his interpretations of the Word of God are absolutely valueless. The humblest and most uneducated Christian here who is taught by the Spirit of God would be a far more competent and reliable interpreter of the scripture than the greatest university professor, or theological professor, on earth who was not in right relations to God and, therefore, was not taught by the Spirit of God. Our Lord Jesus said to His disciples on the night before His crucifixion, "Howbeit when *He*, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13, R. V.). Now while this promise was made primarily to the apostles and is a guarantee of their inspiration and their absolute dependability as teachers, it also belongs in a lesser way to the individual believer. John, the beloved disciple, himself applies it to the believer. He says in 1 John 2:27, R. V.: "And as for you, the anointing *which ye received* (i. e., the Holy Spirit) of Him (i. e., from Christ) abideth in you, and *ye need not that any one teach you*; but as *His anointing teacheth you concerning all things*." So in your study of the Bible, in your eager desire to discover its true meaning, your determination to find out the exact mind of God, as He has revealed it in His Word, ABOVE ALL ELSE SEEK THE, GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. The way to get His guidance is to ask for it. Our Lord Jesus Himself said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit *to them that ask Him*." (Luke 11:13, R. V.) How often you have thought as you have heard some Bible

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teacher who has been especially helpful to you, “Oh, if I could only go to that man every day and have him for my teacher, I would make some progress in the knowledge of the things of God.” But every time you open your Bible alone by yourself, you can have a far more competent and skillful teacher than any human Bible teacher this world ever saw. You may have the Author of the Book to interpret it to you, and the greatest of all secrets of true interpretation of the Word of God is to have the Spirit of God for your interpreter of the Word. And if you are in right relations to God, trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ as the sole ground of your acceptance before God, looking to the Risen Christ to give you daily victory over sin, absolutely surrendered in your will and your affections and in your thoughts to the will and mind of God, and then ask the Holy Spirit each time you open the Word, to come and interpret it to you, and really mean it, and are whole-heartedly willing to accept and act upon what the Holy Spirit will show you, you may have the Holy Spirit as your Interpreter every time you open THE BOOK.

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CHAPTER 4

THE SEVEN GREAT PROMISES OF GOD FOR THE BIBLE STUDENT AND SOUL-WINNER

I have turned over the matter in my mind for some weeks as to what subject I should speak upon this morning to the Graduating Class. I thought it was pretty well settled in my mind that I should speak on 2 Tim. 4:5, "Make full proof of thy ministry." But not many days ago I was so stirred by reading a book entitled "Modern Religious Liberalism" that I was strongly disposed to speak on "What to Do with the Bible," and had the sermon outlined in my mind. But when I went to God in definite prayer about it last Monday afternoon, He gave me the subject "The Seven Great Promises of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner." For two years you have been diligently studying the Bible under the direction and encouragement of some of the best known students and teachers of the Bible in the world, and you have been studying it, not merely that you might get as complete an intellectual mastery of it as possible, but that you might find equipment for the most glorious work in the world, that of Soul-winning. But you certainly are not foolish enough to think that your studies are now at an end. Only a hopeless fool could fancy for a moment that two years of study anywhere, or under any teachers that ever lived, could exhaust this Book in which are hidden the infinite and inexhaustible treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Your Bible studies are just begun. Bible study is to be your life-long employment, and you are going out to wear yourselves out in the great work for which you have been preparing—soul-winning. You are not all to be foreign missionaries, or ministers of the Gospel at home, but you are to be soul-winners all your days; some in the foreign field; some in large churches, some in small churches, and

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some in obscure and neglected unchurched fields at home; and some of you in that most hallowed of all fields of soul-winning, upon which the Bible lays so much emphasis, the Christian home. But all of you, by the good hand of God upon you, are to be soul-winners. So I can think of no more appropriate subject for this most joyous, and at the same time most solemn, occasion than that which I have announced, The Seven Great Promises of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner.

I. The First Great Promise

The first Great Promise is from Psalm 1:1-3: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Please look at that promise steadily and with open eyes and clear eyes until you take in its wonderful meaning, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and *whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*" God here promises to the Bible student and the would-be Soul-winner, that if he meets one of the fundamental conditions of profitable Bible study, thorough-going separation from the world, not walking in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standing in the way of sinners, nor sitting in the seat of the scornful, and then meditates in God's own Law, the revealed will of God, as found in this Book, which is demonstrably "the Word of God" (Mark 7:13; 1 Thess. 2:13), meditates in it day and night, then he shall be a fruitful tree, a constantly, perpetually fruitful tree, a wellwatered tree, watered by the streams of life that flow from the throne of God through the channels of this wonderful Book, and that "WHATSOEVER HE DOETH SHALL PROSPER." What an amazing promise! What a

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stupendous promise! And what an all sufficient promise for the Bible student who is about to enter upon his life work. Young men and women, you certainly long for a good share of prosperity, but, oh! to think of it, that there is a way to make sure of it, that *everything* you may do in these coming days and years Shall prosper. If any one in your position can face a promise like that and not have to put forth some effort to keep from shouting I can hardly understand it. Be Sure You Meet the Conditions of the Fulfillment of the Promise.

1. *The first condition is separation from the world in all your conduct*, not walking “in the counsel” (or, advice) of those who are not fully surrendered to God, not standing in the way that sinners go, nor sitting down “in the seat of the scornful,” or “scoffers,” as the Revised Version translates, and this includes all “Higher Critics” and “New Theology” men and other infidels, whose chief stock in trade is making light of what God Himself says and of the most fundamental and precious doctrines of our faith. If you find yourself located in some “*seat*” of learning where, as at the Chicago University, they *make light* of the precious truths of God (that is the exact force of the Hebrew word translated “scornful” in the Authorized Version and “scoffers” in the Revised Version), get up out of that “seat” right off, do not “*sit* in the seat of scoffers.”

2. And *the second condition is, that you meditate in God’s Word day and night*, that is, that you deeply, profoundly, continuously ponder the revelation God has made in this Book; that you not merely study the Bible for a quarter of an hour or a half hour or even an hour every day, but that you store up in your mind and heart what you there find and ponder it day and night. Young men and women, never forget that. There will be a great pressure of work upon you in the coming days, and many books and papers and magazines and reviews will clamor for your attention, but stoutly and steadfastly refuse to let either the demands of service or of other literature than the Bible crowd out the precious Word of God, meditation day and night upon which, and upon which alone, spells *prosperity* in everything you undertake.

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Why is it that so many missionaries and ministers and other Christian workers are so little prospered? The answer is found right here, because they give so little time to actually meditating upon the Word of God; because they let work or other lines of study crowd out the Word of God, or else they ponder it without that clearness of vision that comes from clear-cut separation from the world and from all “modernists” and other scoffers.

II. The Second Great Promise

The second Great Promise of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner is Daniel 12:3: “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” This is a great promise for Bible students as well as for Soul-winners, for it is only the Bible student who is really “wise.” It is the “entrance of God’s words” that “giveth light;” that “giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psalm 119:130). No one can be truly wise, wise with real wisdom, the wisdom that counts for eternity, as well as time, unless he is a Bible student. So God tells us in this striking promise that *the Bible student* shall “shine as the brightness of the firmament” and *the Soul-winner* “as the stars forever and ever.” Every red-blooded man and every woman who is worth while longs to shine. If you did not wish to shine for your own sake, you ought to have a great ambition to shine for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake. He Himself bids us shine. He says in Matt. 5:14, 16, “Ye are the light of the world. ... *Let your light so shine* before men, *that they may see* your good works, and *glorify your Father which is in heaven.*” Well, this promise tells us how to shine, how to gloriously shine, how to shine, not for the few brief days of this fleeting life that now is, but “forever and ever.” Be a Bible student, a Real Bible Student, and be a Soul-winner; for “they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.” Oh, that large but foolish company of men and women, including not a few ministers and theological teachers and writers, who wish to shine down here, to have a cheap reputation for “advanced scholarship,” forgetting that the history of the world and the church is forever

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demonstrating that the “advanced scholarship” of to-day is the ridiculous nonsense of to-morrow. Young men and women, listen, it is not worth while to shine down here, to get all sorts of degrees and titles attached to your name because you are untrue to God and His inspired Word. Look back and see how the shores of past time are strewn with the whitened wrecks of men who shone in an apostate church. No, do not care a fig to shine as a great “pulpit orator,” or “pulpit humorist,” or pulpit mountebank, or a pulpit comforter by holding out false hopes to those who desire to live careless and worldly and pleasure-seeking lives; it does not pay to shine down here, even as a “golden-tongued pulpit orator.” It does pay to shine up yonder, to “shine as the stars forever and ever.” *And there is only one way to shine up yonder, by being a Real Bible Student and a Soul-winner.*

III. The Third Great Promise

The third Great Promise of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner you will find in Psalm 126:6: “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again, with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Here is another promise that stirs the alert and intelligent soul to its very depths. What intelligent harvester does not long to come home laden down with mighty sheaves of golden grain? But what other harvest is so desirable as the harvest of precious souls? This, too, is a promise, as we shall see shortly, for both the Bible Student and Soul-winner, a Soul-winner just because he is a Bible student. It tells us how to come, when our brief but laborious harvest time is over, bringing our golden sheaves with us. Listen, “He that *goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him.*” Just three conditions of a bountiful harvest: “goeth forth,” “weepeth,” “bearing precious seed.” Let me change the order.

1. First, “*Bearing precious seed.*” What the “precious seed” is that must be borne if we are to reap an abundant harvest of the right sort, our Lord Jesus Himself tells us in Luke 8:11, The seed is *the Word of God.*” That is the only seed that is worth sowing, or that will bring a harvest of souls. Men are

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born again, Peter tells us, “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God*, which liveth and abideth forever.” (1 Pet. 1:23.) To sow the Word, we must know the Word; so you can see how this is a promise for the Bible student as well as for the Soul-winner. The Revised Version reads in place of “precious seed,” “seed *for sowing*,” and the Hebrew words mean just that or “a sowing of seed;” and the only seed that is fit for “sowing” in the prepared soil of the human heart is GOD’S WORD. Here, too, we see why it is so many preachers and missionaries and personal workers gather such scant harvests; they are sowing something beside the Word of God. Go listen to many sermons and note how little there is of the unmixed seed of the Word of God in them, so much bull’s-eye daisies and chess and Canada thistles of man’s notions and vagaries and speculations and conceits mixed in, until their churches look like some alleged “wheat fields” that we see, full of daisies, mustard, “the devil’s paint-brush,” Canada thistles and bull thistles and nettles. Oh, young men and women, always bear the “precious seed” of God’s Word and only that. If some one tells you it won’t draw like poetry and moonshine and “advanced thought” and movies, think of Moody and Spurgeon and some of the things your own eyes have seen these past months in this very building and elsewhere.

2. Then note the words, “*goeth forth*.” “*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*” It is not enough to have the seed, *go sow it*. Sow it far and wide, throughout America, not forgetting the neglected fields, through China, through Japan, through Africa, through India, everywhere. It is not the seed the farmer has in his granary that brings a harvest, but the seed he sows in his field; and *it is not the truth you know, but the truth you sow that will bear a harvest*. Remember it is “seed *for sowing*” (R. V.), and the truth you have learned from the study of God’s Word here and the truth you shall learn in your future study of the Word is “seed *for sowing*.” Never forget that. Many a man who knows little gathers a far more abundant

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harvest than many who know much, for what little he knows he assiduously sows.

3. And once more in regard to this promise: *Note the words, "and weepeth."* It is not enough to know the Word of God and it is not enough to sow the Word of God: if you would have a bounteous harvest, if you would come "bringing your sheaves with" you, you must as you sow the seed, water it with your tears. Not only does the Word of God teach, but experience also abundantly proves that it is the Word of God that is given with a heart full of love for sinners, a love that shows itself in tears of sympathy for the sinner's sorrows and tears of pain over the sinner's sin and stubbornness, that bears fruit in souls saved. Here is where many missionaries in the foreign field fail and many preachers at home fail; they have no deep heartfelt love that leads to tears for those to whom they preach and with whom they work. One of the mightiest Soul-winners among the outcast that this country ever saw was Col. George Clark, the founder of the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. Col. Clark worked faithfully at his business six days of the week that he might preach the Gospel without pay seven nights in the week. Every night they would gather in the Pacific Garden Mission, four or five hundred men, mostly of the down-and-out class. They would hang upon every word Col. Clark spoke, though he was not an interesting speaker, indeed a very ordinary and commonplace speaker. I never heard him give an original thought in all my life, and yet those outcasts would sit all the evening and hang upon his words. Some of the most brilliant speakers in America would go there, but could not hold that crowd, but Col. Clark always could. I studied these strange phenomena and finally found the explanation of them. They knew that Col. Clark loved them, that he would give his last penny for them, that he would wear his life out for them, as he actually did. Col. Clark was a man much given to tears as he spoke. He was a large, powerful man, weighing perhaps 250 pounds, and tears from such a man seemed out of place, and after a while he became ashamed of his many tears and held them back. But he found that with the drying up of his tears he lost his power; and he went to God and cried,

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“Oh, God, give me back my tears,” and God gave him back his tears and gave him back his power. Young men and women, cultivate a real, heartfelt love for those among whom you work. Ask the Holy Spirit to make real to you their lost condition and to make vivid to you their coming doom if they are not saved. IT IS NOT THE ONE WHO KNOWS THE MOST BUT THE ONE WHO LOVES THE MOST WHO WINS THE MOST. I think I would make a good missionary to the Chinese, for I love the Chinese; I confess I love them more than I do any other people. But look to God to give you a tear-bringing love *for any people* among whom you work.

IV. The Fourth Great Promise

The fourth Great Promise of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner you will find in James 1:5, R. V.: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” This, too, is a great promise for the Bible student and Soul-winner. To be a successful student of the Word one needs “*wisdom*” and to be a successful Soul-winner, one needs great “*wisdom*” and tact. This promise tells how to get this wisdom, *ask for it*. “If any of you lack wisdom, *let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*” What to do is put in one word, “*ask;*” *definite, believing prayer*. The next two verses say, “But let him ask *in faith*, nothing doubting; for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For *let not that man think that he shall receive anything* of the Lord.” Our promise tells us very clearly of Whom to ask. It is put in two words, “OF GOD.” Be very clear about that. There is much asking that is not really “of God.” Men pray, but they do not really get into the presence of God, and “*ask of Him.*” Be sure you do every time you pray.

And note carefully of what God to ask, the “God, Who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not.” There is only one God who does that, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. There is much that is called praying in these days that is not unto Him. Prof. Theodore Gerald Soares, Professor of Homiletics and Religious Education and Head of the Department of Practical Theology at the University of

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Chicago, says, "The mental state of peace, exultation and resolution which issue upon the exercise of prayer are *due to the release of conscious tension.*" That certainly is not praying to the "God, Who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not," even if the writer is a theological professor. President G. Stanley Hall, of Clark University, Worcester, Mass., says that prayer is "communion with the deeper racial self within us." That certainly is not asking of the "God, Who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Prof. George Burman Foster, who was for a while professor in the theological department of Chicago University, and then Professor of Philosophy of Religion in another department in the University up to the time of his death, said, "the only prayer which we have a moral right to pray is precisely the prayer which after all we ourselves must answer." That certainly is not asking of the "God, *Who giveth* to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Prof. Edward Scribner Ames, Associate Professor of Chicago University, and Pastor of Hyde Park Church of Disciples of Christ, in his book, "The New Orthodoxy," says, "For the modern man standing erect in his *pride of power*, the old ceremony full of passivity and surrender is *a symbol of a dying age.*" That certainly is not asking of the "God, Who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Prof. Gerald Birney Smith, at the present time "*Professor of Christian Theology*" at the Chicago University, says, "*the worship of God* in a democracy will consist in *reverence for those human values which democracy makes supreme.*" That certainly is not asking of the "God, Who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not." I would as soon think of sending a son of mine to a smallpox hospital as a health resort as to send him to a theological Seminary or University where such blasphemous folly as that is taught, as a preparation for an efficient ministry or for missionary work. Are our Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians gone mad that they send their children to institutions where such wicked, blasphemous and practically atheistic things are taught? But REAL PRAYER TO A REAL GOD, the only true God, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, brings wondrous wisdom in the study of the Word of God and in Soul-winning. No other

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shovel digs so deep into the gold mine of God's Word and throws out such nuggets of pure gold as prayer, *real prayer to a real God*. No other rain-maker will so operate upon the clouds of God's abundant grace that always overhang us and bring down such mighty outpourings of the Holy Spirit manifesting themselves in a multitude of souls won as *real prayer to a real God*. *Never forget that*. NEVER, NEVER, NEVER FORGET THAT.

V. The Fifth Great Promise

This naturally and inevitably brings us to *the Fifth Great Promise of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner*. You will find it in Acts 1:8: "*Ye shall receive power, AFTER THE HOLY GHOST is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*" The great need of missionary, minister and personal worker, and father and mother, when they study God's Word and when they go out to win souls, is power, power to penetrate the sacred cloisters of God's Word where such abundant treasures of truth are stored and power to present to others the truth discovered in such a way as to convict of sin and reveal Jesus Christ and to bring men to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and thus be born again. This verse reveals the great secret of that power: "*Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*" We need power, a power not from this earth, not from human culture, not the power learned in schools of oratory, nor the power that comes from the tricks of the world, baptized with Christian names, as in the "Interchurch World Movement," not the power to draw crowds learned from Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford or Charlie Chaplin, and crystallized in the introduction of the movies into the Sunday evening service, turning the sacred house of God into a third-class Sunday theatrical performance. No! No!! No!!! "POWER FROM ON HIGH" (Luke 24:49). This promise tells us how to get it. It tells us how any graduate of the Bible Institute, or any child of God, can get it. Listen again, "*Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be*

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witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth;” THE DEFINITE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, of which Peter said on the day of Pentecost, immediately after he himself had been “baptized with the Holy Spirit,” “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him.”

VI. The Sixth Great Promise

This then leads us directly to *the Sixth Great Promise of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner. You will find it in Luke 11:13: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.”* The fifth promise tells us, that “power *from on High*,” power right from God, God’s own power, will be upon us after the Holy Spirit comes upon us, and the sixth promise tells us how to make sure of the Holy Spirit coming upon you, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit *to them that ask Him.*” The way is very simple, just “ask,” “ask HIM,” that is, God, the only true God, the “Heavenly Father,” not the God that “is imminent in humanity” of which these wise New Theologists prate, but “the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” “Who is in Heaven,” the Real God, *the God who actually is*, and not the God of man’s mad imaginings. Prof. Walter Rauschenbusch, now dead (died in 1918), formerly Professor of Church History in Rochester Theological Seminary, a Baptist institution, said, “the old conception that God ... is distinct from our human life” must give way to “the religious belief that He is immanent in humanity.” Do not ask for the Holy Spirit of such a God as that, ask of the Real God, your “Father in heaven.” Prof. Royce, late of Harvard University, says, “the divine is *no more separate and aloof*. It is within and organic with the human.” The same thought is elsewhere put in these words, “God is considered as the soul of the world, the spirit animating nature, the universal force which takes the myriad forms of heat, light, gravitation, electricity and the like.” Do not ask any such God as that to give you the Holy Spirit. You might

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as well pray to a Hindoo or Chinese idol or an Alaskan totem. Prof. Gerald Birney Smith, Professor of Christian Theology at the present time in Chicago University, speaks of God as “the spiritual *forces* of the world in which we live, the unseen *forces* of the universe.” Do not ask that God for the Holy Spirit. Prof. Royce defines God as the immanent “spirit of the community.” Do not ask that God for the Holy Spirit. No, do not pray to the God of any *of this sort of* theological Seminary and University professors who, “professing themselves to be wise,” have become fools.” (Rom. 1:22.) PRAY TO THE REAL God the God Whom the Lord Jesus revealed in His words and in His Person, our “Heavenly Father,” the God Who really is and really answers prayer, and if you really are His child, He will answer and He will baptize you and fill you with His Holy Spirit, and you will have power, and no man will be “able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which (you) speak.” (Acts 6:10.)

VII. The Seventh Great Promise

Now we come to *the seventh and last Great Promise of God for the Bible Student and Soul-winner, and in some respects it is the best of all. It is the direct outcome of the sixth promise and closely related to the fifth and fourth promises. You will find it in Matt. 28:19, 20, R. V.: “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”* Oh, what a promise! The promise of the personal presence of our Lord Jesus Himself with us all the time, “until the consummation of the age,” when He will come visibly and bodily to take us to be with Himself forever. He is now our unseen Lord (1 Pet. 1:8) up yonder in the glory, interceding for us (Heb. 7:25), taking up our case, and advocating it and carrying it through. But *He is also, even now, OUR PRESENT LORD.* It is the work of the Holy Spirit, when He comes to us, to form within us an *indwelling Christ.* The Lord Jesus Himself said to His disciples the night before He left them, in John 14:15–23, R. V.: “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and *he shall give you another*

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Comforter, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you desolate: *I come unto you*: Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and *will manifest myself unto him*. Judas (not Iscariot) saith unto him, Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and *we will come unto him*, and *make our abode with him*." Yes, He is really with us, not visibly as in that glad coming day He will be, but nonetheless, really and consciously with us. Young men and women, as you leave these halls and these friendships with the Faculty and your fellow-students that have become so precious to you, you will have many lonely hours and lonely days and lonely weeks. I think the loneliest day I ever saw up to that time was the day I graduated at Yale and left the city on a late boat for New York. Most of my class took earlier trains. It seemed as if I would almost die of loneliness. Forty-six years have passed, but the memory of the misery of that night lingers with me yet. And you will have lonely days. And when you get into the heart of China and into the heart of Africa and into Indian jungles, you will see lonely days. But you need not see lonely days, you need not see a lonely hour, or a lonely minute. By day and by night, you may have the dearest and best and most satisfying of all companions, our glorious Lord Jesus Himself. Listen again to this crowning promise of all: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you: and *lo, I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the age*." Ah, this coming summer when some night I am up alone on the Yangtze or

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elsewhere, out in some lonely mountain or desert plain, I might be lonely, but I won't, Jesus will be there and He will be with you too if you meet the conditions.

Note these conditions well, "*Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations*, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: *and lo, I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the age.*" If you go out into all the world making disciples, going as far as your line may extend, be it eighteen miles or eighteen thousand miles, He will go with you. But if you do not listen sharply for His call, and go as far as He bids you go, He will not go with you. If we go His way, He will go ours; but if we do not go His way, He will not go ours. If God says Africa, and your foolish heart says Southern California, He will not go with you: and amid the dearest friends, on earth, you will be supremely lonely. But if you say with Isaiah of old when the Lord Jesus calls, and He is calling now, "Here am I; send me" (Isa. 6:8) He will send and He will go along. You may be alone beneath the silent stars on some African table-land, but you will not be alone. He, our glorious Lord will walk by your side. And He is enough. And you will walk with Him forever; for He hath said, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; *and where I am, there shall also my servant be*: if any man serve me, him will the Father honor." (John 12:26.)

Young men and women of the Graduating Class:

You have been here at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles two years. You have worked hard. You have done well. You have made satisfactory progress in your study of the Word of God, in your Christian character and in your work for Christ. You have won the confidence and respect and love of every member of the Faculty, and I think we can rest confident that we have won your love, as well as your confidence. You are about to leave us, we are sorry to have you go, we shall greatly miss you. When I come back next November and look out over the seats in the lecture room, my first impulse will be to look for the faces that I know so well and to listen for the voices that I have learned to distinguish from one another, and I shall miss you and

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every member of the Faculty will miss you. But we are glad you are going. There was never in all this world's history such a crying demand for men and women who know God, who know Jesus Christ, who know the Holy Spirit, who know their Bibles and how to use them in winning souls for Christ, as in the day in which you and I live. We shall follow you with our prayers. We expect you to do credit, both by your holy living and your effective service, to the Institute that sends you forth, but what is infinitely more important, to our God and Father and to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. God bless you.

THE END

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⁸Torrey, R. A. 1921. *The importance and value of proper Bible study how properly to study and interpret the Bible* (82). George H. Doran Company: New York