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9-24-13

<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

### Personal Study through the Bible-25 (1 Thessalonians 5:4-28)

I am sure that you have come to realize that these studies *through the Bible* always begin with the biblical basis for personal Bible study. Reread 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Note what the verse says right before verse 14. It is the personal understanding and growth in the truths of the Word of God that will keep you from “proceeding from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.” The frightening thing about being deceived is that the person who is being deceived is totally unaware that they are being deceived. The entire world, as a whole, lives under the deceptive power of the evil one; read 1 John 5:19. The only way to be assured that you are not living in deception is to “continue in the things” of truth. This not just learning Bible doctrine. This is living and growing in the application of its truths. When Paul command Timothy to continue in the things he has learned and knowing from whom he has learned them, he is not talking about the human instruments of learning the truths of the Word of God; read 2 Timothy 1:5. He is talking about God: Timothy is exhorted to continue in the truths of God knowing with absolute assurance that the source of these truths are from God—for *all Scripture is God-breathed!*

There is no better way of being convinced that doctrinal teaching really is from God than spending personal time in the Scriptures, personal time between you and the Lord mediated directly through His Word. The believer who only listens to doctrinal tapes and never spends personal time in the Word will end up being a disciple of some teacher more than of the Lord. Among other things, such a believer will become more dependent upon that teacher as he becomes less grounded in a personal understanding of his Bible. Pastors are here to help you understand the Word of God for yourself. We are aids—that’s all. You need to understand the Word of God for yourself before you can ever hope to really have confidence in it rather than some pastor’s teaching.

In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul tells us that Scripture is *profitable for reproof, correction, and training in righteousness*. As fallen creatures we sin, we err, and we are inherently out of shape when it comes to righteousness. When we sin, we need to be reprovved. We when err, we need to be corrected. When we are mentally out of shape, we need training in rationality. The Scriptures function as our chief reprove, our chief corrector, and our chief trainer. The Scriptures correct us when we sit down and read it, and they correct us when the pastor teaches the Word of God, that is, if he teaches the full counsel of God; read Acts 20:27 and 2 Timothy 4:1-4. The idea that the pastor-teacher is to make believers feel good about their crappy false views of truth and the spiritual life is from Satan himself. The issue is always about truth. Not you! The way pastors cater to believers today is enough to make anyone bilious. If the pastor does his job, he will get rid of those who are not *really* interested in truth as such. Those who remain will form the basis of really moving into God’s Marvelous Truth as such, which is required to really understand God and the spiritual life and move away from all of the religious games that are tantamount to *only* using God for personal problems and then patting yourself on the back for doing it.

Getting back to the fact that *all Scripture is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness*, consider the plethora of books in today's world. There are books on how to lose weight, build muscle, make money, look younger, feel better, how to win friends and influence people, and, of course, how to make yourself feel better about yourself in kosmos diabolicus. But where are the books that will train us in *righteousness*? I am not talking about god-talk books that promise health, wealth, and prosperity. I am talking about books that really *train* one in righteousness. I have always wondered about certain people in the doctrinal movement who talk about their Bible doctrine, but seem to always get around to gossiping and getting into coarse jesting—read Ephesians 5:3-4. I do not consider myself a prude, and I enjoy a good joke as much as the next guy. However, the way some doctrinal believers gossip, run down their husbands, talk about their lusts, even after years and years and years of doctrine, is certainly not evidence of what I would call being trained in righteousness.

Now I would like for you to read 2 Timothy 3:17. The first key term I would like to draw your attention to is “adequate.” The Christian who is not diligently involved in personal study of the Bible is simply going to live out his life in inadequacy. This does not mean that he has no love for the Lord and appreciation of God's grace. What it does mean is that he will always be inadequate. He could listen to doctrinal tapes for fifty years, yet still be very inadequate regarding really understanding Scripture. How could anyone attain adequacy if he remains ignorant of his Bible? Biblically illiterate Christians will always be inadequate no matter how much doctrine they possess. The second key term in the passage is “equipped.” The reason that Christians who do not know their Bibles are inadequate is because they are not equipped. To be an adequate and equipped Christian is going to require more than “taking in another tape” or “hearing another encouraging sermon” or attending another “sharing session” or enjoying another “bless me approbation-party” with friends.

You might say, “but I can't understand the Bible,” to which I would respond, “what part of 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5:11 don't you understand on a basic conceptual level?” You might say, “Yes, but I did not see it before you showed me.” That's the point. We pastors are to help believers understand their Bibles, not to replace their Bibles. Now I would like for you to read and think about the truths in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 in preparation for our next lesson. How many commands are in this section? Note how Paul always connects the spiritual and ethical life to Christian doctrine. We are to learn Bible doctrine, learn our Bibles, and then go live out the beautiful spiritual and ethical Christian life among believers and unbelievers—all for the glory of God☺

*In 'Ehyeh,*

*Pastor Don Hargrove*