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How Do You Use The Bible?

By Bryan Hodge

Centuries ago in Spain, a Prince of Grenada, for political reasons, was sentenced to life in solitary confinement. He was imprisoned in Madrid's "The Place of the Skull" prison. He was allowed one book, the Bible. He read it through, many times. After 33 years of imprisonment, he died. When his cell was cleaned, it was discovered that he had scratched notes about the Bible into his cell walls.

These notes listed many trivial finds, including: (1) the longest verse in the Bible (Esther 8:9). (2) The shortest verse in the Bible (John 11:35). (3) The number of books and chapters in the Bible (66 books, 1189 chapters). (4) Each verse in Psalm 136 ends the same; (5) Isaiah 37 and 2 Kings 19 are alike; (6) The word "girl" appeared just once in his Bible (Joel 3:3); (7) Ezra 7:21 contained all the letters of the alphabet except the letter "J"; (8) No word or name of more than six syllables can be found in the Bible (Note: This story has been often repeated. It first appeared in an article by Scot Udell in Psychology Today).

If such is all that the man learned from reading the Bible, he missed the message all together. The Bible is not about the trivial. It is a message which should change one's life.

How do you use your Bible?

"The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).

The words "the grace of God" refers to the system of grace, that is the New Testament (cf. Acts 20:32; Colossians 1:5-6). This message was proclaimed throughout humanity in Paul's day (Titus 2:11 cf. Colossians, 1:5-6; 1:23; Romans 1:8; 10:18; 16:25-26).

Colossians 1:5-6). This message was proclaimed throughout humanity in Paul's day (Titus 2:11 cf. Colossians, 1:5-6; 1:23; Romans 1:8; 10:18; 16:25-26). The offer of salvation was for all of humanity (Matthew 28:18-ff; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47 cf. 1st Timothy 2:4; 2nd Peter 3:9). However, what are we to do with the message? We are to learn:

1. What to Deny

There are things to avoid. Specifically mentioned are: (a) ungodliness. The word literally means to be "not well devout". It is speaking of a lack of devotion to God. (b) Worldly lusts. The term "lust" simply refers to desires. "Worldly lusts" refers to sinful desires. We are to flee from such lusts (2nd Timothy 2:22; 1 Timothy 6:10-11; 1st Corinthians 6:18; 10:14 cf. Colossians 3:5).

2. What to Do

There are things to do. The New Testament message is not just a list of “do not’s,” it is filled with things we are to do (cf. James 4:17; 1:22). Specifically mentioned is that we are to live: (a) **Soberly**. The word has to do with living rationally or of sound mind. We are to be thinkers, testing all things by the word of God (cf. Acts 17:11; 1st Thessalonians 5:21). Vine’s says that the word “suggests the exercise of that self-restraint that governs all passions and desires.” The word does at times carry the idea of self-control. (b) **Righteously**. That is, we are to conduct ourselves properly according to God’s word (cf. Psalms 119:172; Romans 1:17; 1st John 3:7). (c) **Godly**. The word literally means to be “well devout.” Vine’s says that “it denotes that piety which, characterized by a Godward attitude, does that which is pleasing to Him.”

3. What to Desire

There is an aspiration and anticipation that we should have. We are to live in hope (Titus 2:13; cf. Titus 1:2; 3:7), “favorable and confident expectation” (Vine’s). We are to live in anticipation of Jesus’ return (cf. 1st Thessalonians 1:9-10). Note: “In this passage the terms “God” and “Savior” both refer to Christ. There is a rule in Greek grammar, known as the Granville Sharp rule, which suggests that when a solitary definite article (rendered ‘the’ in our English text) precedes compound nouns which are joined by ‘and’ – in this case ‘God’ and ‘Savior’, the latter noun refers to the same person as the first noun” (Wayne Jackson, Notes From the Margin of My Bible, Vol. 2, p. 137). Jesus is referred to as God in this context. He will appear. Are we living with this in mind?