

## Study and Theology

Why is study important?

- Tonight we begin a series about the study of God's word
- Some of the motivation behind the development of this study can be explained in a quote from John Bunyan
- John Bunyan is best known for writing Pilgrim's Progress
- He was a preacher, a Puritan, and a writer who lived from 1628 to 1688
- And the only reason he or his writings are of any importance at all, is because they sometimes succeed at summing up Biblical ideas in a clear and concise manner
- I mean, he expresses something we will find ourselves in the Bible, but he provides a nice summary for us
  
- Listen carefully to this quote from Bunyan's "Treatise on the Fear of God," published in 1679
- He says "This fear of God flows from an impression, a sound impression, that the Word of God maketh on our souls; for without an impress of the Word, there is no fear of God."
- And he continues "Hence it is said that God gave to Israel good laws, statutes, and judgments, that they might learn them, and in learning them, learn to fear the Lord their God."
- And goes on "If he drinks it in much, he feareth him greatly; if he drinketh it in but little, he feareth him but little; if he drinketh it not in at all, he feareth him not at all."
  
- Men who have loved and served God through history have spoken of the importance of knowing and understanding and embracing the scriptures
- But they have not spoken of their importance any more than the scriptures speak themselves
- As they remind us from their beginning to their ending that in them we find the knowledge of God, the insight of His mind, and the explanation of His person
- It is for us, then, to discover how we may enhance our study, not simply for knowledge-gathering and education, but for increasing the depth of our relationship with Him
  
- We begin by asking the question why is study important?
- What is the theology that would compel us to become studious in scripture?
- We know that we already find Bible study important, because Bible study is how we choose to spend much of our time in this assembly
- We get together to read and to help each other understand what the Bible says and means
- Pastors spend hours and hours of their week in personal study, assembling a presentation of that study, which we gather to hear
- Why do we find this critical?
  
- In addressing this, it's difficult to overlook Jesus' words about the Bible just before He was crucified
- The scriptures were key to everything he prayed for His disciples
- To find what He says about it, we'll be turning to John 17

- Now, if you know anything about the 17th chapter of John
- You'll know that in it, Jesus prays for His disciples
- Not just the disciples standing before Him on that day, but in our day too
- He confirms our future persecution
- He tells us why it will happen
- And He reminds us how we will be strengthened and fortified through it
- We are mentioned without mistake late in the chapter
- So...what must we do to be sanctified for whatever the future holds?
- Let's begin to find out in verse 9 of John 17...

John 17:9-11

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

- Those of us who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ alone, belong to God
- And we have been given the ability to glorify God by reflecting His attributes
- At this time when Jesus would die, be buried, raise from the dead, then return to His father, He asks God to keep His disciples, giving us unity
- But clearly, based on what we know about the original 12, and about ourselves, growth and change and development and strengthening would need to take place
- That is emphasized as Jesus continues...

John 17:12-14

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

- While Jesus was with His disciples, He taught them
- He gave them God's word
- And while they were hated, being foreigners on the earth, they were also being equipped
- Because this hatred would lead to violent action against them
- He would soon depart, but His word would continue
- His teaching would ring in their ears
- They would continue in it and it would refine their character in such a way that they would be prepared
- Not only to live in the midst of persecution, but to be successful in preaching

the gospel through it

- Here's what Jesus goes on to say about that...

John 17:15-17

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

- His prayer is not that they be removed
- As citizens of God's kingdom, they would be with Him soon enough
- But His prayer is that they would be sanctified
- And that sanctification would come through God's word
  
- To be sanctified is to be "set apart from profane things and dedicated to God"
- It is to be "cleansed and consecrated for His exclusive service"
- And God has provided truth to do this work - the scriptures
  
- The Bible urges us, always, toward greater unity with Christ and a deeper connection with God
- When we are drawn closer to Christ, we are pulled farther away from the world and it influences
- Our desire is no longer to please ourselves, as the world would urge, but to please the One who created us
- Because those who know Christ have a job to do
- A mission to carry out
- A service to render
- And we are in need of equipping
- In fact, it is impossible to carry out our mission without this alteration and outfitting and information
  
- Jesus goes on...

John 17:18-21

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

- Jesus will command all who believe in Him to "go" and "preach"
- And He has lived (and will soon die) having done exactly what God commanded
- Having lived according to the truth
- And His disciples must obey and follow His example

- Because the message of redemption (which He is about to complete for the world) must be spread far and wide
- And it can only be spread by "set apart" servants
- This is why the scripture - and the study of it - becomes so important to us
- Because to grow into His likeness, we have only one tool that works in conjunction with God's Holy Spirit to change us
- And that is the Bible
- He uses its truth - within us - to transform our every thought and action
- We find ourselves going back to Old Testament passages like Psalm 19 as a reminder...

#### Psalm 19:7-11

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.  
 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.  
 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.  
 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.  
 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

- We are not keepers of Old Testament law in this new covenant
- But we are lovers of all God said and students who "rightly divide" the word of truth
- Meditating upon it, studying it, learning from its people (God's people, Israel), and finding in it examples
- It is a lamp to light life's often very dark path
- And a guidebook for a treacherous journey
- This was the case for those early disciples and it is the case for us too
- Study is important
- To further emphasize this truth, let us remind ourselves what the Bible is...

#### 2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:  
 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

- It comes directly from God
- Therefore it deserves deep consideration
- For when we deeply consider it, it provides for us a doctrinal foundation

- It will reprove us
  - It will direct us back to the right path
  - And it will give us an ongoing series of internal tools (aided by the Holy Spirit)
  - To think and act and live righteously, so that we can be completely who God intends for us to be
  - And so that we can carry out His assigned mission for us
- I'll leave you with the words Paul gave Timothy in the verses immediately preceding...

## 2 Timothy 3:14-15

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;  
 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

- Continue in God's word - that means to "abide" in it
  - Learn and keep learning
  - Surround yourself with those who would assure you
  - Because the holy scriptures can not only make us wise unto salvation, but they can enlighten us to the implications of that salvation
  - Which will mean vigorous and effective ministry
  - Ministry that will be used by God to provide eternal transformation to others
- We have at least ten questions to ask ourselves about study throughout this series (there may be more)
- I wonder if they are questions God might use to make us more diligent students
  - That might make us the kind of people who don't just read, but "abide" in the truth
- They are...
1. Tonight's question: Why is study important? (our lesson on Study and Theology)
  2. Next week's question: What can study do for me? (that is a lesson on Study and Growth)
  3. Then we'll ask: Where does study fit into my relationship with Christ? (a lesson on Study and Discipleship)
  4. Followed up by: What can I learn from study? (discussing Study and Education)
  5. Then: Who else should be involved with my study? (considering Study and Fellowship)
  6. We'll also ask: How does study help in difficulty? (learning about Study and Trial)
  7. Continuing, we examine: Can study change what I want? (that's all about Study and Affections)
  8. Then we address: Will study help with grey areas? (and take a look at Study and Convictions)
  9. Also asking: How can I use my study to reach others? (that is a lesson entitled Study and Ministry)

10. And finally: Am I disciplined enough to study? (that's when we talk about Study and Commitment)

- Along the way, I want to provide every tool I can find
  - We are privileged to have copies of the scripture in our language readily available
  - English may not be our first language, but if we speak it, we have a wealth of resources
  - They define and explain and give background on many challenging passages
  - God has used them in the world to help set people apart for Him
  - And I want to provide you with every one I know about
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- I want to do this because study is truly important
  - Jesus made this abundantly clear