

Study and Theology

Why is study important?

- Tonight we begin a series about the study of God's word
- The beginning of our discussion is explained in a quote you may remember from this morning's message
- It is one I was compelled to go back and research, because it is so relevant to our next ten weeks of lessons
- Listen carefully
- It is from John Bunyan in his "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 requirement of knowing and understanding and embracing the scriptures
- But they have not spoken of that requirement 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 why is study important?
- What is the theology that would compel us to become studious in scripture?

- We know that find study important, because it is how we choose to spend the bulk of our time in this assembly
- We gather to read and to help each other understand what it says and means
- 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
- I know we've addressed it before in this gathering, but we'll need to go back 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
- 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

- I want to emphasize again, this is not just for the disciples of His day
- It is for us as well
- We are mentioned without mistake later in the chapter
- What must we do to be sanctified for whatever the future holds?
- Let's begin to find out in verse 9...

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 (those of His day, and us), giving us unity

- But clearly, based on what we know about the original 12, and ourselves
- Growth and change and development and strengthening would need to take place
- That is emphasized as Jesus goes on...

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 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 it, but to teach it

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

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 its 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
- It says...

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 for us
- Study is important

- Let's 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
- Direct us back to the right path
- And gives 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 our 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
- 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
- People who don't just read, but "abide" in the truth
- They are...

- What can study do for me? As we approach a lesson called Study and Growth
- Where does study fit into my relationship with Christ? In our lesson on Study and Discipleship
- What can I learn from study? That week's message is called Study and Education
- Who else should be involved with my study? That's Study and Fellowship
- How does study help in difficulty? On Study and Trial
- Can study change what I want? Examining Study and Affections
- Will study help with grey areas? Looking at Study and Convictions
- How can I use my study to reach others? A lesson entitled Study and Ministry
- And 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 your first language, but if you speak it, you 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 will provide you with every one I know

- Because study is truly important
- Jesus made this abundantly clear