

METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

MINUTE STUDY

OUR studies hitherto have been mainly concerned with the Bible as a whole, and with some of the larger portions and subjects of it. We have been endeavoring to view the landscape in its entirety and enjoy several of its wider views. But the Bible must also be studied more minutely. Not only should we consider the forest; we should also occupy ourselves with particular trees, and, to continue the simile, with branches, twigs and leaves. The minutest possible study of the Word of GOD will always prove abundantly fruitful.

It is evident that we can but barely indicate the method and give a few illustrations. The field is vast, and will more than suffice for the longest life of study.

THE STUDY OF VERSES

From the study of periods, books, sections, chapters and paragraphs, we descend to the careful consideration of particular verses.

It is very important that nothing should be overlooked.

Every phrase, every word, and the precise form and meaning of each word should have attention. The true Bible student will cultivate the habit of most careful observation. Who that has worked through one of the Commentaries of Ellicott, or Lightfoot, or Westcott can ever forget the impressions received from these masters of minute observation, or ever fail to thank GOD for the wonderful light thrown on the most familiar verses by their thorough study of every expression? A book of suggestions for theological students, laid special stress on the primary need of a grammar and a Concordance for all effectual knowledge of the Word of GOD.

It is remarkable what these alone will produce.

By way of illustration let us take a few verses.

1. Old Testament Verses:-

(a) Single verses:-

Psalm 64:4: Four stages of Christian experience - "Chosen, Approaching, Abiding, Satisfied."

Consider how each of these is illustrated in the New Testament.

Psalm 81:10: Notice here-

- (1) The Foundation of Faith. "**I am the Lord thy God.**"
- (2) The Encouragement of Faith. "**Which . . . Egypt.**"
- (3) The Possibility of Faith. "**Open thy mouth wide.**"
- (4) The Satisfaction of, Faith. "**I will fill it.**"

(b) Successive verses.

Psalm 25:6 and 7, Three "**Remembers.**"

Psalm 30, Sevenfold "**Thou hast.**"

Psalm 36:5 and 6,

Four things concerning GOD ("**Thy**"); verses 8 and 9,

Four things the believer thinks of GOD –

"**Fatness,**"

"**River,**"

"**Fountain,**"

"**Light.**"

Isaiah 6:5, 8, II, "**Then said I**" –

Confession,

Consecration,

Communion.

(c) Contrasted verses.

Psalm 23:2 and 3, the two "**leadings**" of GOD.

Psalm 24. 4 and 25:1, "**Lift up.**"

Psalm 26:1 and 11, "**Integrity.**"

Psalm 26:5 and 8, "**Hated,**" "**Loved.**"

The study of verses in this way can be prosecuted in almost every part of the Old Testament, but space forbids further examples. We now turn to

2. New Testament Verses;-

(a) Single-

Philippians 4:19: Discover the seven aspects of Grace-

- (1) the Necessity,
- (2) the Source,
- (3) the Certainty,
- (4) the Extent,
- (5) the Means,
- (6) the Depository,
- (7) the Proportion.

Matthew 25:21: Service-

- (1) Relationship,
- (2) Character,
- (3) Commendation,
- (4) Reward.

(b) Successive.-

Colossians 1:27 and 28: Our Message, our Methods, our Motive.

Romans 5:

- Two aspects of Justification (1 and 9),
- Three causes of Boasting (2, 3, 11),
- Two views of Salvation (9 and 10),
- Four "**reigns**" (14, 17, 21),
- Four "**Much more**" (9, 10, 15, 17).

(c) Contrasted verses.

Mark 13:9, 13, 20: "**For My Sake**," "**For My name's sake**," "**For the elect's sake**."

Luke 3:22 and 4:1: The Holy Spirit "**descending**" and "**filling**."

Luke 3:22 and 4:3: "**Son of God**."

Acts 13:4 and 9: "**Sent forth**" and "**filled**" - our authority and our ability in service.

These represent but the minimum of an inexhaustible method of study.

THE STUDY OF WORDS

This is one of the most delightful and profitable of studies, and enables us to see the wonderful variety, proportion and balance of the truths of GOD's Word.

One thing is needed for this - a thoroughly good Concordance. It must be "thoroughly good" if it is to be of real service. By this we specially mean accurate and complete. The Concordances usually included in "Teachers' Bibles" are only very partially serviceable because they necessarily omit so much. The genuine Concordance will include all references, and, if possible, will give the parts of the actual text in which the word occurs.

Then again, our Authorized Version is very fond of using different English words for the same Hebrew and Greek words. See John 15, where one Greek word is rendered by "**abide**," " **dwell**," " **remain**," " **continue**." It is therefore obvious that for accurate word-studies we must have proper guidance.

The best Concordances for the purpose are *Young's Analytical* and *Strong's Exhaustive*, the former having for its special purpose the work of distinguishing the Hebrew, Greek, and English words used.

The latter Concordance is absolutely complete, and should quite supersede the time-honoured Cruden. The abbreviated editions of Cruden are only useful for the more important passages. The two books now mentioned are expensive, but they are books for a lifetime and for constant use. It is worth a struggle to buy them. Students of the Greek Testament do not need to be told of Bruder's and Moulton's great works. The latter has by no means superseded the former for those who are not absolutely wedded to the Westcott and Hort Text.

A Hebrew Concordance is, of course, a much more serious matter. The "*Englishman's*" is the most generally serviceable. On the whole, we would say to any student who can afford but one: Get *Young's Analytical Concordance* in the latest edition, and make it a constant companion. It will soon become a treasured friend.

OLD TESTAMENT WORDS AND PHRASES

Consider the words "**meditate**" and "**meditation**," and classify the texts under

- (1) the Objects,
- (2) the Times,
- (3) the Methods,
- (4) the Results of Meditation.

- Look at I Chronicles 16 and Psalm 71, and put together the sevenfold "**continually**."
- Study Psalm 86 for the eightfold "**for**" in regard to the believer and GOD.
- Collect the occasions where "**blessed**" occurs in the Psalms, and see the fullness of these Old Testament "beatitudes."
- Look at Joshua 23, with its twenty-three times of "**the Lord your God**."
- Study the seven things in Ezra 7 which are said to belong to GOD ("**of God**").
- Collect the references to "**Stand still**," and notice the call to think, to see, and to hear.

NEW TESTAMENT WORDS AND PHRASES

- Find "**whatsoever ye do**" three times in Paul's Epistles.
- Consider the six occasions in John's writings (Gospel and Epistles) where we read of "**joy full**" or "**fulfilled**."
- Notice the force of "**also**" in Luke 16:1, linking the parable on to those of chap. 15 and making it an application to the disciples.
- See John 18:17 for the same word "**also**," i.e. "**thou also**" - as well as John, who was bold enough to go in and thereby confess CHRIST.
- Note the three references to "**unspeakable**;" the five or six uses of "**Thanks be to God**" or "**God be thanked**," in Paul;
- The four references in John's first Epistle to "**confidence**" or "**boldness**" (same word - see Young) referring to present and future.
- Look at the uses of "**adoption**," of "**regeneration**," of "**life**" (in John's Gospel especially).
- The "**overcomes**" of Revelation,
- The "**precious**" things of Peter's Epistles,
- The aspects of "**belief**" in John's Gospel, and such words as "**abundance**," "**riches**," "**abide**," "**know**" are further hints of the wealth of teaching connected with word studies.

They are but small samples of a plan of study that should be very frequently adopted.

As an illustration of this method on a more elaborate scale we offer the following word study on

THE CALLING OF GOD

Among the important and outstanding words of the New Testament are those found in the group associated with the idea of "**calling**." Such words are very prominent in the teaching of the Gospels and Epistles, and touch at once on some of the deepest and most practical truths connected with the Christian revelation. This thought of "**calling**" has several aspects, and there seems to be a distinct progress in the meaning of the word as we read through the New Testament. In the Gospels it appears to be limited to the mere invitation to the sinner (Matthew 22:14 and Luke 14:7), while in the Epistles it implies also that the invitation has been accepted.

I. THE SOURCE OF THE CALLING

1. The Primal Source. "**God**" (I Thessalonians 2:12; II Timothy 1:9).
2. The Mediate Source. "**Jesus Christ**" (Romans 1:6).

II. THE SUBJECTS OF THE CALLING

1. As to destined scope. Universality (I Corinthians 1:24).
2. As to spiritual condition. "**Sinners**" (Luke 5:32).
3. As to Divine estimate. "**Vessels of mercy**" (Romans 9:23 and 24).
4. As to actual fact. "**Not many wise**," etc. (I Corinthians 1:26).

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE CALLING

GOD calls us to "**inherit blessing**" - (I Peter 3:9), which includes:

1. Repentance (Luke v:32).
2. Salvation (II Thessalonians 2:13 and 14).
3. Peace (Colossians 3:15).
4. Light (I Peter 2:9).
5. Fellowship (I Corinthians 1:9).
6. Service (Romans 1:1).
7. Freedom (Galatians 5:13).
8. Holiness (I Corinthians 1:2).
9. Suffering (I Peter 2:20 and 21).
10. Eternal life (I Timothy 6:12).
11. Eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15).
12. Eternal glory (I Peter 5:10; I Thessalonians 2:12; Revelation 19:9).

IV. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CALLING

1. According to Divine purpose (Romans 8:28).
2. According to Divine grace (II Timothy 1:9).
3. Not according to human merit (II Timothy 1:9).

V. THE SPHERE OF THE CALLING

1. In the Lord (I Corinthians 7:22; Philippians 3:14).
2. In grace (Galatians 1:6).
3. In holiness (I Thessalonians 4:7).
4. In peace (I Corinthians 7:15). 5. In one body (Colossians 3:15).

VI. THE MEANS OF THE CALLING

1. Through the Gospel (II Thessalonians 2:14).
2. Through GOD's grace (Galatians 1:15).
3. Through GOD's glory (II Peter 1:3, Greek).
4. Through GOD's character (II Peter 1:3, Greek; I Corinthians 1:9).

VII. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CALLING

1. High (Philippians 3:14).
2. Holy (II Timothy 1:9).
3. Heavenly (Hebrews 3:1).
4. Humbling (I Corinthians 1:26).

VIII. THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE CALLING

1. Abide in it (I Corinthians 7:20 and 24).
2. Walk according to it (I Corinthians 7:17).
3. Walk worthy of it (Ephesians 4:1).
4. Walk worthy of the Source of it (I Thessalonians 2:12).
5. Give diligence to realize it (II Peter 1:10).

IX. THE INCENTIVES OF THE CALLING

1. Its hope (Ephesians 1:18 ["**His**"]; Ephesians 4:4 ["**your**").
2. Its prize (Philippians 3:14).

X. THE GUARANTEES OF THE CALLING

1. GOD's character - faithful (I Corinthians 1:9; I Thessalonians 5:24).
2. GOD's purpose - irrevocable (Romans 11:29).
3. GOD's grace-eternal (Romans 8:30).

Here, then, is our portion, our privilege, and our prospect.

- We look back and remember the "**darkness**" out of which we have been called (I Peter 2:9).
- We look round and "**see**" our calling (I Corinthians 1:26) as it concerns our present life.
- We look forward and pray to "**know**" the hope of His calling (Ephesians 1:18).

And in the light of all this wealth of grace we bow ourselves before GOD in contrition, adoration and consecration, and trust Him for grace to "**walk worthy**" (Ephesians 4:1) of His kingdom on earth, and to be "**accounted worthy**" (II Thessalonians 1:11) of the glory that is to be revealed.

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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