

THE CHURCH IN BOSTON PERFECTING TRAINING

GROWING IN LIFE

Session Four

Bible Reading (1)

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21

I. The Bible being the Word of God:

- A. The Bible contains life—John 5:39; 6:63; Jer. 15:16; Matt. 4:4.
- B. The Bible contains Light—2 Pet. 1:19; Psalms 119:105, 130.

II. The attitude in reading the Bible:

- A. When we read the Bible, we should have an attitude of contacting God Himself.
- B. We should also have an attitude of coming to receive the life supply.
- C. We should also have an attitude of coming to receive enlightenment and not to study the truth.

III. The ways to read the Bible:

- A. First, we should read the books of the Bible sequentially.
 - 1. We should read the Old Testament and the New Testament simultaneously.
 - 2. Every Christian should allocate two different times to daily read the Bible; one time should be in the morning, and the other can also be in the morning or in the afternoon or evening.
- B. Second, we should not read too much each time; at the most, one chapter should be read at a time.
 - 1. This is not a fixed rule; each person should consider his own situation.
 - 2. The most important thing is to be persistent and avoid impulsive reading.
- C. Third, we should learn to remember the main points when reading the Bible.
- D. Fourth, in reading the Bible, we should receive inspiration and turn it into prayer.
 - 1. We should simply pray briefly and then resume our reading, continuing to read and pray.
 - 2. We should read for a while, then pray when there is inspiration.
- E. Fifth, we should learn to underline.
- F. Sixth, we should also learn to memorize the precious verses in the Bible.
- G. Seventh, we should not seek a thorough understanding when reading the Bible.
- H. Eighth, if time permits, we should also muse on the Word.

IV. The time for reading the Bible:

- A. The best time to read the Bible is in the morning—Psalms 119:147-148.
- B. If possible, we should spend at least twenty minutes to read the Bible, and it is better to spend even more time.
- C. We should also set aside extra time, apart from our daily reading schedule, to study the Bible.

Ministry Excerpts:

READING THE BIBLE

After a Christian is saved, the very first thing he needs to do is read the Bible. Perhaps some brothers and sisters have been reading the Bible in a solid way, but others may not have read the Bible through even once. Therefore, we will speak concerning reading the Bible according to various principles, not from a superficial angle but from a very high perspective.

I believe that many people would answer without hesitation that the Bible is the word of God. However, not too many people have a deep understanding concerning what this means. Even those who have been saved for years may not have a thorough understanding concerning the Bible as the word of God. If we do not have such an understanding of the Bible within us, then we will not be deeply impressed by the Bible.

THE WORD OF GOD BEING GOD HIMSELF

The word of a speaker represents his person. For example, when someone receives a letter from his father and reads it, he does not have the feeling that it is merely a letter from his father, something that is separate from his father; rather, he has the sense that reading his father's letter is the same as seeing his father in person and that he is right in front of his father. This may be likened to reading a letter from the person that we love. When we read it, we sense that it is not just the words of our loved one, but it is as if we are meeting our loved one in person. Hence, words represent the speaker himself, and the word of God represents God Himself. Every time we read the Bible, we should have the sense that we are coming not only to the word of God but to God Himself. If we do this, we will be able to read the Bible in a proper way, and the truth we read in the Bible will shine in our inner being. If we take the Bible merely as a kind of teaching, the Bible will not be very profitable to us. Yet every time we read the Bible, if we sense that we are coming to God, this will help us to touch God Himself.

Some people may ask, "Do you have any scriptural basis for saying that the word of God is God Himself?" Yes, we do. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 14 mentions also that "the Word became flesh." Then 6:63b says, "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." If we link these three verses together, they will read: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh...The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." From these verses we see that the Word of God is God Himself, God expressed, because when the hidden God became flesh, He came as the Word. God is expressed as the Word.

For example, if someone came to visit me at home and I refused to come out of my room, he would not be able to see me. However, if I came out but still remained silent, even though he could see me, he would still not be able to touch my person. It is not until I open my mouth to speak that my person really comes out. Once I begin to speak, I am "incarnated," and people are able to touch me.

We may use another illustration. Suppose I am really dissatisfied with Brother Tai. This is my inner feeling. Then one day Brother Liu comes to look for me. If I refuse to open the door, he will not be able to see me. Yet when I come out, if he asks me about my impression of Brother Tai and I remain silent, he will never know what my impression of Brother Tai is until the day that I tell him, "I am really disgusted with Brother Tai." Once I speak this way, my words will represent my very person. Thus, the Word of God not only represents God Himself but the God who is expressed, not the God who hides Himself.

If in our daily life we met one of our friends but he would not open his mouth to speak to us, this would be troubling. If a couple had a good talk one night and the next morning the wife suddenly became silent, this also would be very troubling. The husband would have no way to know what happened within her until he gets her to speak. Once he does, the more she would speak, the more her being and what was happening within her would come out.

The Bible is the word of God, and the word of God is God Himself. The Gospel of John does not say that "God became flesh" but that "the Word became flesh." The entire being of Jesus the Nazarene was the Word of God. If someone were to ask, "Who is the Lord Jesus?" we would tell him that the Lord Jesus is the incarnated God. However, the Bible says that the Word became flesh. The Word who was incarnated is the Lord Jesus; the Lord Jesus, as a whole, is the Word of God. He is the One who speaks forth God. Hence, He said, "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."

It is not adequate to say that the Lord's words are of spirit and of life, because actually the Lord's words are spirit and are life. The entire being of Jesus the Nazarene was the Word of God, the Spirit, and life. God put Himself into His Word, and one day this Word became flesh. This One was Jesus the Nazarene. In this Jesus the Nazarene there was nothing except the Word of God. The Word of God is God Himself coming forth. The words that came out of Him are spirit and are life. John 1 tells us that the Word was God Himself. Then chapter 6 tells us that His words are spirit and are life. Since the Bible is the word of God, what does the Bible represent? The Bible represents God Himself. The Lord's words are spirit and are life. Thus, when we read the Bible, we must realize that to know the Bible is to know the Word of God and that the Word of God is God Himself. God Himself, who is Spirit and the source of life, is represented by the Bible. Therefore, the words of the Bible are spirit and are life.

OUR ATTITUDE IN READING THE BIBLE

Having the Right Feeling—That We Are Coming before God

After we have such a realization concerning reading the Bible, we have to pay attention to our attitude. I am afraid that some brothers and sisters still do not have a thorough understanding concerning what our attitude should be in reading the Bible. A brother once told me of an experiment that he conducted. He placed both a chemistry book and a Bible on his desk. He then spent an hour reading the chemistry book and a second hour reading the Bible. In the end he discovered that according to his inner sense, there was a world of difference between these two books. After I heard this, I felt that even such a realization was not adequate. If we could ask the

Chinese educator and philosopher, Hu Shih, about his feeling regarding studying a book on human history versus studying the Bible, he would say that he did not have any particular feeling. He would say that the two books are similar and are both written with Chinese characters. The book on human history has the word heaven, and the Bible also has the word heaven. The history book contains the word earth, and the Bible also contains such a word. The history book speaks of human history, and the Bible speaks of human history as well. He would conclude that these two books are both literary books. This would most likely be the feeling of Hu Shih, and it represents the feeling of non-Christians.

Suppose that today a child of God had a secular book in one hand and the Bible in the other. What would be his sense after having read these two books? In a normal condition, when God's children come to the Word of God, they should have the feeling that they have touched God Himself. When we study chemistry, we touch chemistry; when we study human history, we touch human history. However, when we read the Bible, we should touch God. Hence, I hope that all of us who pursue God would learn this lesson: every time we read the Bible, we should touch God Himself.

For example, this morning someone came to me and told me many things. When he was finished, I had not only heard his words, but I also had touched his person. When a person speaks to us, we not only hear his words but also touch his person. There are many among us who have been saved for years and have read the Bible. However, when we read the Bible, do we touch only the words of the Bible, or do we touch the speaking God? This may be likened to what happens when a person tells us something. Do we have a sense only of his words or of the person who is speaking the words as well? Usually, we not only touch the person's words, but we also touch the one who speaks the words. Although we definitely hear his speaking, the one who is speaking is also expressed in his speaking. When his words come forth, his person also comes forth. His word may not give us a very deep impression, but his person should. In the same way, when we read the Bible, we should have the sense that we are touching our lovely Savior. Therefore, every time we read the Bible, we have to exercise to meet God and to touch God.

Take myself as an example. Every time I read the Bible, as long as I contact the word of God, I sense that I have contacted God once again. For instance, even though I may be listening to a certain brother's voice as he is speaking into a microphone, I can still get some impression of that brother and sense his particular flavor. Every time we come to the Bible, we should also sense God's "flavor." We should sense that we have come before God. Those who sense that they have touched God when they come to the Bible seldom come to the Bible as if it were a school textbook, thinking that studying the Bible is similar to studying chemistry or mathematics. It is not so. We must see that as the word of God, the Bible is God Himself coming forth. When we touch the word of God, we touch God.