

Paul's prayers are interesting. When he prays for the church at large he seems to have one burden--that knowledge might increase. The prayer for the church at Ephesus was "that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe" (Eph. 1:18-19). For the Philip-pians he prayed for the increase of their love, but love that was bounded by knowledge and discernment (Phil. 1:9). Concerning the Colossians his burden was that they might be fruitful, but this de-pended on their being "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" and their "increasing in the know-ledge of God" (Col. 1:9-10). In each case knowledge was the need.

How can we learn about the hope of our calling? Where can we be instructed how to love intelligently? How can we be tutored in the knowledge of God's will? The answer to all these questions is in God's Word. Bible study is the answer to these prayers.

There are many needs in the church of Christ today, but the basic need is still that of increasing knowledge of the truth of God as revealed in His written Word. Instructed Christians will experience power (Eph. 1:19), will love the brethren (Phil. 1:9), and will live fruitful lives (Col. 1:10). Could it be that we have sought these desirable ends without using the means to those ends? And those means all boil down to one--knowing the contents of the Bible.

Now there are many ways to study the Bible, but one of the most efficient and beneficial is to study it with the help of others. Indeed, Paul reminds us that gifted people, including pastors and

teachers are given to the church in order that Christians might be built up in the knowledge of the truth (Eph. 4:11-14). To overlook the benefit to be gained from sitting under gifted teachers of God's Word is to miss one of the most useful methods of Bible study. If God intended that you should learn everything by yourself then there would have been no need for the gift of teaching. But since He has given teachers to the church then it behooves us to make use of them.

This can be done in several ways.

First, pay careful attention to your Bible preaching pastor. Take notes on his sermons, and when you get home talk about it in the family group so that what God has given him may be implanted in your mind.

Second, read Christian books that teach sound doctrine. It is well and good to read devotional books, but they should not be the sole item on your diet. You should also read doctrinal books and commentaries on books of the Bible. In this way you can profit from the work of other godly men.

Third, if there is in your city a Bible school enroll in some of their classes, particularly the evening classes. You will be able to find time if you consider it important enough to learn the Word.

Fourth, if you cannot attend a Bible school personally then enroll in a correspondence course from some reputable Bible school. In this way you can profit from the knowledge of those who write these courses, and you will progress systematically in the truth. Procrastination and laziness are faults of most of us, but the regular prodding of lessons coming to your home will help overcome

these problems.

These are some of the ways that you can enter into the labor of others in helping yourself meet the need of your own life to know the Bible better.

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