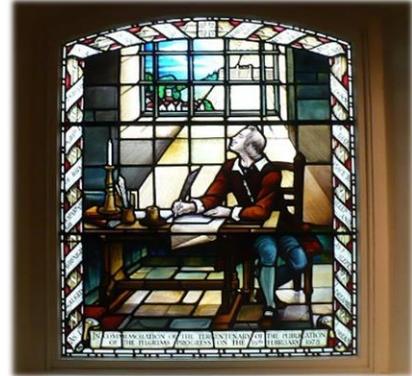


June 5, 2020

Good morning, Everybody.

Isn't it wonderful to know the LORD? And to possess His Word? And to experience the Spirit of God's strengthening of your human spirit with the insights and understanding that comes when you read it rightly?



My devotional reading this morning was from Leviticus and Isaiah. Even though I've read the passages scores of times and also preached Isaiah thoroughly, my mind was flooded with fresh thoughts.

One of the explanations for ever-expanding spiritual insights that many (though sadly, not all) Christians experience over the course of their lives is that they've grown in their grasp of the *entirety* of the Scripture. Where once they were limited to only what they were able to grasp verse by verse, they've come to be able to link verses and their contexts with the larger, overarching messages of the Bible. While I was still in undergraduate school, I became interested in a way of reading scripture that was developed to a high degree by the British Bible expositor, G. Campbell Morgan. It's fundamentals became my own convictions about the way to read scripture most profitably. One of them has to do with what we might call, *deep* Bible study.

Deep Bible study isn't so much vertical as it is horizontal. That is, it isn't so much a matter of boring down into the vocabulary and grammar of single verses and passages, line after line (vertically down through the individual passage). Deep Bible study is much more a matter of grasping the broad, overarching trajectories of themes and messages that link many passages together from the beginning to the end of the Bible.

Morgan would quote the ideal from some lines of personal longing about knowing the Bible in that way by the English author, George Herbert.

*Oh! That I knew how all thy lights combine,
And the configuration of thy glory,
Seeing not only how each verse doth shine,
But all the constellations of the story.*

When we're young in our Christian experience, we read passages looking for individual *stars*. We're struck by the light that gleams suddenly from a powerfully put sentence or a comforting promise. There's truly great blessing in those experiences. But the blessings multiply exponentially as the years go by and *constellations* become apparent and appreciated. Now we're seldom satisfied with being *star struck*. We hunger for the big picture. We're always reading with wide peripheral vision; the "eyes" of our mind constantly darting left and right across the whole horizontal development of a book or section of the Bible. We want to see the breathtaking *constellations of the story*. And all the lights go on when someone introduces us to one of them.

A simple illustration would be the illumination that we felt the first time a pastor preached a Christmas message from Matthew 2 and showed us that Herod the Great's attempt to murder Mary and Joseph's tiny newborn wasn't merely the maniacal jealousy of a paranoid king, but the outburst of an ancient, diabolical enmity (Genesis 3:15) that transcended anything of flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12) and had been stalking Israel murderously throughout her entire history (Revelation 12:4). *Oh!* we exclaimed with delight, *so that's what's going on!* For the first time, we were *seeing not only how each verse doth shine*, but a constellation of God's story.

Seeing a constellation of God's story transforms the single *stars* of dietary laws (Leviticus 11), childbirth purifications (Leviticus 12), and leprosy outbreaks (Leviticus 13-14) into dazzling patterns of delightful light. When we're young in the Faith we twist our brains this way and that trying to find some scientific reason for why Old Testament people couldn't eat pork or shuck oysters. Or we react negatively against the distinctions between the purification demands after giving birth to either a male or a female. We don't fear to say right out loud that Leviticus bores us, especially the leprosy chapters.

But as we grow in the Lord and see more and more constellations, we're warmly content with everything that we read. We feel that we would not want to change a single word of it. No one has to admonish us to accept any part of it. We truly esteem all of it concerning every subject to be right. Nothing offends us. Everything blesses us. It's like the King's daughter, *all glorious within* (Psalm 45:13).

Praying for You Today,

Pastor Minnick