

The Importance of God's Word

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Articles

	Page
Editorial: God's Precious Book	1
The Book of God	3
Daily Bible Reading	4
How to Read the Bible	6
Habakkuk's Perplexity, pt 2	7
Caleb, a Man of God	8
What do You Think?	10

Editorial:

God's Precious Book

Joel Portman

We live in a period of time when the value of the Holy Scriptures is and has been minimized and relegated to the realm of "Bible thumpers" and "Religious Fanatics". It is only to be accepted as inevitable that an age that is dominated by the "god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4) would be characterized thus. Its value and importance to Western civilization and intrinsically moral lives (if used properly and applied personally) cannot be overestimated. Those who intelligently understand the history of our nation and that of all Western civilization understand that behind the laws and institutions that have supported an orderly society stand the truths and principles of God's Word.

Psalms 19 describes two means by which God has chosen (apart from direct revelations, theophanies, and the incarnation of His Son) to manifest Himself to men. The first is universal, since God has created and formed the universe with the glory of the starry skies and the intricacy of the earth's wonders to display His glory. We, if our eyes are clear, see the omniscience and omnipotence of the Divine Creator in all the beauties of that which lies beyond the reach of most of mankind. And it is only proper that all should bow with worship as its perfections and beauties are discerned.

The latter part of that psalm describes the beauty and perfection of the "law of the Lord." The psalmist

writes about its perfection, its purity, and its powerful impact on the soul that believes it. It serves to protect from moral and spiritual pitfalls. It acts to feed the soul, to cleanse our walk, and to direct our steps. Its value cannot be overestimated, and the "god" who seeks to control and manipulate mankind contrary to God's will fights viciously to combat its beneficial influences.

This has been his aim and the character of his activities ever since he introduced doubt into the mind of Eve in Gen. 3. "Yea has God said" has been his mantra ever since, and it always will be. And men, due to their fallen, rebellious nature, gladly drink deeply of that well of agnosticism and ignorance, thinking that now, at last, they have been freed from any restraint and can do whatever they desire (Gen. 11:6).

It is no wonder that this same "god" has been actively working to erase God from His creation through the empty imaginings of unbelieving men. The theory of evolution may appeal to those who desire to dethrone the Creator from His universe, but even to this day, it has not been proven, and the more scientists search for its origin and discover more details, the more it becomes evident that the existence of an intelligent Creator is essential to the interrelationships of every part. Reading books that deal with intelligent design, even though possibly written without allowing the facts of Scripture, stir one's heart to bow in wonder and worship before the throne of the infinitely intelligent Maker of it all. Sadly, though, enough doubt has been introduced to cause the majority of people to wander in uncertainty and fail to recognize the omnipotent hand of God.

If this "god" has attacked the glory of creation, he has also directed his insistent opposition to the truth of Scripture. This has always been the case, even in the distant past and from the beginning, but his efforts have only increased and been sustained unremittingly over the centuries. From early Greek philosophies that the NT writers combated in their epistles to the "higher criticism" of the Bible that dissected it as if it were only some ancient writing that could be treated in such a casual manner to the present attitude of disdain for its importance in daily lives, his attack has been relentless. However, his hammer that has beat against the anvil of Scripture has never effectively erased its importance or

caused it to cease existing.

Since this is the case, a genuine believer in Christ should never be dismayed by the scoffing of others, neither should we cease to preach its truths to the lost and teach its precepts to the saved. References abound to remind us that after heaven and earth pass away, God's Word will stand (Mt. 24:35). The opinions of man will rise and fall, will change with the seasons, and will eventually be supplanted by other beliefs, but the Word of God is unchanging and will endure forever. We can rest on it, we can build on it, and we can rejoice in it as we embrace it and make it the man of our counsel (Ps. 19:21). If we do this, we will be enabled to stand against the fiery darts of the wicked (one) (Eph. 6:16). Faith must have a solid foundation on which to rest, and only God's unchanging truth will provide it.

How should we Handle God's Word?

This edition of "Truths for our Day" is intended to try to

collect some writings of older men to encourage the desire in our hearts to use the Bible for the purpose for which it was written and to do so properly.

The first and foremost response should be a desire to read and meditate on God's Word daily. The "god of this age" has geared society so that its complexity, its demands, and its pressures all combine to try to rob all men, believers as well as unbelievers, of the time and energy to employ in reading and studying God's Word. Many believers spend more time reading secular books, fashion magazines, trade journals, on-line materials, or other materials than they do this book. Even reading commentaries or daily readings that good men have written distracts, detracts, and subtracts from the time that should be spent in going to the fount, the Word of God.

Reading should be with thought, care, and attention to what is written, and it should, it MUST, be followed by meditation on its truth. Sadly, most believers are like the man in James 1:23-25, who read the Bible like they might look at themselves in the mirror. Just a quick glance, and then they are on their way and have forgotten what they have read. If that's all that is possible, at least therein lies the potential that something might lodge in one's mind. But how much is lost! Meditation is a lost art, but it is a fact that all those whose lives have truly counted for God showed a spiritual depth that resulted from looking deeply into the Word and have spent time meditating (thinking) on it.

I supposed I knew my Bible, reading piecemeal, hit or miss;
Now a bit of John or Matthew, now a snatch of Genesis.
Certain chapters of Isaiah, certain Psalms (the 23rd)
Twelfth of Romans, first of Proverbs--yes I thought I knew the
Word;

But I found that thorough reading was a different thing to do,
And the way was unfamiliar, when I read the Bible through.

You who like to play at Bible, dip and dabble, here and there;
Just before you kneel, weary, and yawn through a hurried prayer;
You who treat the crown of writing as you treat no other book--
Just a paragraph disjointed, just a crude, impatient look.
Try a worthier procedure, try a broad and steady view;
You will kneel in very rapture, when you read the Bible through.

Amos Wells

Paul's last words to Timothy exhort him to "hold fast the pattern of sound (healthy) words (2 Tim. 1:13), to "study the word" (2:15), to "continue in the word (3:14-15), and to "preach the word" (4:2). Those four admonitions apply to us today and we would benefit greatly if we give heed to them.

Reading is important, but the time spent in thought while reading and afterward is when the Holy Spirit acts to impress its truths on our souls. Only in this way can a believer add armament to his defense, increase the foundation on which to build, and add arrows to his quiver to use against the enemy.

"Truths for our Day"

A monthly publication that is freely available on the Internet and is intended to help believers who appreciate the timeless truths of God's Word and who recognize the unchanging principles of God's will for His people. It is primarily intended to strengthen those who enjoy fellowship in local assemblies of believers who are gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Editors: Joel Portman & Jim Brown

Publisher: Joel Portman

1200 Forest Glen Ct. SE,
Cedar Rapids, IA, 52403

All Correspondence to: mail@truthsforourday.com

All issues of "Truths for our Day" are available by clicking on the link below. This will take you to the index for Truths For Our Day

Please read this notice:

We permit and encourage you to reprint any issue of "Truths for our Day" that you desire, either for yourself, or to share with other believers. However, if you wish to copy an individual article, we will forward your request to the copyright owner of the article to request his permission. For this reason, the format of the publication is locked to prevent unauthorized publication of articles that the author would prefer to reserve. Please do not copy them in any other way. We want to respect the ownership of all those who have written articles.

We also hope you will let others know about "Truths for our Day" and encourage them to subscribe as well. They may do so by simply sending an e-mail to this email address:

mail@truthsforourday.com

Thank you

Public Reading

John begins the Revelation with these words: "Blessed is he that readeth (aloud), and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." (Rev. 1:3). In Nehemiah 8, we read that Ezra "read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." Those three conditions should still apply today. Reading the Word publicly should always be with distinctness, with reverence, and with care. A man once stood on the platform of an assembly and began to read prior to speaking, but his reading was so poor and careless that an elder stood up in the meeting. He said to him, "We believe that God's Word should be read in a clear, distinct manner. Therefore, permit me to read the Holy Scriptures for you." This could be repeated at times in our gatherings. Some brothers read the Scripture so rapidly that they fail to express the reverence that one should have for it. Some, especially older ones, in the audience may not be able to understand what is being read. We don't need to be in a rush to read the Scriptures! Take time, since what you read in God's Word is far more important than what you will say!

We need to read what is relevant to the message. Some might read extensively and include portions that have no bearing on the message. That may be profitable, except when it reveals that the speaker really doesn't have a definite message or a purpose in speaking. Reading too much can only serve to distract the minds of the people from that which is intended in the message.

We should read the Scriptures thoughtfully, putting emphasis on the portions that are more vital to what is being spoken. Intelligence in handling God's Word is a means of expressing its importance to the heart and mind of the listener.

Other comments could be included by others who also think of the infinite value of God's Word. One can only say that as we grow older and mature spiritually, our appreciation for it only increases, and its importance in our lives becomes more personal and precious. May we resist the pressures of this "present evil age" (Gal. 1:4) and adhere closely to the precious truths that have been tested and proven by time and experience and which are still life's most valuable and important.

If professed principles don't hold us, there's no actual value in professing those principles because we don't really hold them.

J. Portman

The Book of God

Anon

We believe that the Bible, as written in the original Hebrew and Greek languages, is the very Word of the only wise and the only true God. With Him, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. He sees the end from the beginning, and not only the end, but every stage of the way. We therefore hold it to be nothing short of blasphemy to assert that we have arrived at a time when the Bible is not sufficient, or that we are compelled to travel outside its covers to find ample guidance and instruction for the whole of our earthly pilgrimage.

The Bible is a perfect chart in which every contingency of the Christian mariner has been anticipated. Every rock, every sandbank, every shoal, every strand, every island has been carefully noted down. All the need of the Church of God, its members and its ministers has been most fully provided for. How could it be otherwise since the Bible is the Word of God? Could the mind of God have devised, or His finger sketched an imperfect chart? Impossible! We must either deny the Divinity or admit the sufficiency of the Book. We are absolutely shut up to these alternatives. There is not so much as a single point between those two positions. If the Book is incomplete, it cannot be of God; if it be of God, it must be perfect. But if we are compelled to turn to other sources for guidance and instruction, as to the path of the Church of God, its members or its ministers, then the Bible is incomplete.

What then are we to do? If the Bible is not a Divine and therefore all-sufficient guide book, what remains? Some would turn to tradition. But once we have launched into that wide field, our ears are assailed by many strange and conflicting sounds. We may meet with a tradition which seems authentic, venerable, well worthy of respect and confidence, but directly we have done so, another tradition crosses our path, presenting equally strong claims on our confidence, yet leading us in quite an opposite direction. Thus it is with tradition. The mind is bewildered, and one is reminded of the assembly at Ephesus concerning which we read, "Some cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused" (Acts 19:32).

The fact is, we need a perfect guide and standard, and this we have by Divine revelation within the covers of our most precious Bible. We can rest with complete confidence on the Divine declaration of 2 Tim. 3:16,17, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work".

How we should bless God for this. How we should praise His Name for His mercy, in that He has

not left His Church dependent on the conflicting shadows of human tradition, but on the steady light of Divine revelation.

We do not want tradition to assist Revelation, but we use Revelation as the test of tradition. What Revelation does not sanction, we reject.

In the sphere of religion, as in other spheres, the things about which men are agreed are apt to be the things that are least worth holding; the really important things are the things about which men will fight.

J. Machen Graham
"Christianity and Liberalism"

Simple Hints on Bible Reading

The Believer's Magazine

Christ is the key to the Bible. The written Word reveals the Living Word. Christ and the Scriptures are inseparable. The Word, from first to last is full of Christ.

Patriarchs, psalmists, prophets, tell of His coming in grace and in glory. Types and shadows, persons and things, tell of His peerless Person and His perfect work. The Gospels trace His path from the manger to the Cross, and back to heaven again. The Epistles unfold His glories in resurrection, His people's association with Him, and the glory to come. The Bible is full of Christ; He is its Alpha and Omega.

Read your Bible to find Christ, not to learn doctrine, or to get information, merely. Read it for yourself, for your own soul's need. Not so much that you may speak of what you read to others, as to nourish your own spiritual life, to cleanse your ways and to enlighten your path.

Read the Word of God slowly, carefully and reverently; not as a newspaper, but as one listening to the voice of the Eternal God. Compare Scripture with Scripture.

Do not come to the Bible to get your ideas confirmed, or wrest the Word to support them. Come with an open mind, ready to be taught; willing to unlearn the false, and to learn the true. Count on the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He has come. He abides in you to guide you into all the truth. He inspired the Word. He is able to interpret it. He will, if you allow Him to do so. And, having found the words of God, 'eat' them (Jer.15:16); having learned His will, do it (John 7:17).

Daily Bible Reading

Samuel Ridout

First of all in importance, and no doubt in the practice of the majority of God's people, we place the daily, regular reading of the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, repeatedly and throughout life. Often, men of much knowledge of different portions of Scripture, quite familiar perhaps with the original tongues, show the greatest ignorance of the simple historical facts narrated throughout the Bible, together with an evident unfamiliarity with the whole manner of Scripture. No words of ours can express too strongly the absolute importance of having the mind and heart thoroughly saturated with the knowledge of the letter of Scripture from beginning to end. Nothing really in the way of Bible knowledge can take the place of this. It is the broad foundation upon which the superstructure of subsequent detail must rest; and if this foundation is not broad and deep, the superstructure, no matter how high and intricate, will lack in stability.

Ruskin, the great master of English, and in many ways a remarkable man, declared that the most valuable part of his education was in the letter of the Bible, he having been compelled from early childhood to read a number of chapters regularly every day, and when he had completed the book, to start afresh. Always bearing in mind what we said at the beginning, that a spiritual knowledge of the Scriptures is absolutely indispensable; and speaking now simply of what is before us, the methods of Bible study, we desire to reiterate with emphasis the necessity and importance of this daily reading.

Let us be very simple and explicit. In every Christian home there should be the reading of the word of God and prayer at least once a day. No matter how strenuous the life and busy, let nothing rob the family of this simple and most precious privilege. Let some hour be selected morning or evening, when the family can be gathered for a few minutes and a chapter be read carefully and attentively, either by one or in turn. The time consumed in this way is well spent and will in itself help to keep fresh in our mind, from early childhood, the great outstanding facts and truths of the precious word of God. It is probably better to begin with the Gospels and to go through the New Testament, then to take up the Old. Anyone can make certain selections which would be perhaps more suited to the younger members of the family, and certain portions could be left for more private reading; but in the main it may be said that we should put honor upon God's precious Word by reading it throughout. Few indeed are the portions which will not yield edification when read in this way. Indeed, the less attractive portions will often be found to offer suggestions for profitable conversation and serve to awaken and confirm the interest in the entire book.

In addition to the family reading, we speak next of the private reading by each one, of at least a single chapter every day. Here, too, it is well to follow the order suggested above and begin with the New Testament, and having finished that, to go to the Old. If but one chapter a day can be read, the entire Scriptures will have been gone over in the course of three years; and, similarly, two or three chapters a day will complete the entire book in a much shorter time. An attentive reading of an ordinary chapter will consume not more than ten minutes. Surely, the busiest life can find or take ten minutes for such a work as this.

Regularity and system are most important here. One can carefully study the duties and responsibilities of the day and devote a certain time, as far as possible, to this reading. We are creatures of habit, and when once it is a settled fact that our daily chapter or two is to be read, little difficulty will be found in carrying out the plan. Here, as in most of our spiritual conflicts, the victory is won in the heart, when the purpose is fully established before God of going on with His word. It is probably better, wherever possible, to be reading in two places, one in the Old and the other in the New Testament. Thus, in the morning, Matthew might be begun, and in the evening Genesis; and when each Testament is completed, turn back again with renewed zest to the first chapter.

In a life where there is a measure of leisure, there should not be the slightest difficulty in reading through the entire Scriptures at least once a year. Half an hour a day will easily accomplish this; and where one of the chapters is read in the family, it would leave but two others to be read alone.

Quite similar to the practice just recommended, and indeed a part of it, is the practice of reading a whole book through at a sitting. For instance, the gospel of Mark can be read as we would an article in a magazine, and in as short a time. It has been said that a little over one hour is sufficient for this. So, too, a little longer time would suffice for reading through either of the other Gospels or the Acts. In this way we get a good general idea of the contents of the book, much as a journey through a region of country enables us to form a fairly correct idea of its character.

This rapid survey reading, as we may call it, is also of much value as an introduction to the study of each of the Epistles. We read it through at a sitting and then take it up more in detail.

The same may be said as to the Old Testament. The life of Abraham or of Joseph or of David could be read through in this way, giving us, as we would find, something more than the mere facts, the purpose of the Spirit as a whole, with reference to the life recorded. So, too, each of the Prophets could be read at a sitting or two, giving us the main themes and general course of what was in the Spirit's mind. Such "quantity reading" as we may call it, should not be indulged into the exclusion of the regular plodding along with the daily chapter or

two, but could be introduced from time to time as a complete change, and as we said, for the purposes of introductory study.

A word perhaps may be said as to the kind of Bible to be used. In this, individual taste and mental peculiarities must be considered. Some have a strong local memory and locate a passage from its position on the page. If one may speak for others, this is not a faculty particularly to be encouraged, because, should we be deprived of our usual Bible at any time, we may find ourselves rather helpless in handling a strange book. Wherever possible, it may be well to have two Bibles, one for outside use, such as at meetings or carried in the pocket with us, not too large; and another for the table at home. This latter may be an ordinary cheap book, which we do not hesitate to mark. Favorite verses, striking or difficult passages may be noted here without much reference to special neatness, while in the book which we preserve for more permanent use, the notes and markings are more carefully inserted.

A prominent lecturer used to suggest that one Bible could be used for marking and be completely filled in a year. This is probably quite unnecessary, but not many years will pass before a book can be so completely marked up that there will not be room for further insertions.

We are not going to spend much time over details here, but a few words as to Bible marking may not be out of place. Pen and ink are to be preferred rather than lead pencil, whose marks are easily blurred. When once even pencil marks are put in a Bible, they cannot well be erased, and therefore they might as well be put in the more permanent ink. In reading our daily morning chapter, for instance, we are struck with the beauty or appropriateness of some special sentence. This can be marked by a simple line at the side or possibly underlined throughout. Perhaps some prominent words may be particularly underscored. For instance, in Genesis 1:1 we might draw a straight, black line under the first four words: "In the beginning, God." How many thoughts are suggested by this phrase! "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." There, in the beginning, before an atom of the vast universe of His creation had been called out of nothingness, God was as He is, eternally the same. On the side of these words might be written the reference to John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word," giving the marvelous, blessed fact that He who became flesh and tabernacled amongst us in lowliness, to serve us in our need and to go to the cross for our sins, was none other than God, One who was daily with Him, delighting in Him, and whose delights were with the sons of men. Thus, we could easily add the reference to Prov. 8; and other passages of Scripture would naturally suggest themselves, so that before long

we would have quite a number of Bible references on the margin opposite our first verse.

We are not, as has been said, giving more than a few obvious hints as to Bible marking. Everyone will have his own system, but we would suggest that each one learn to make his own or additional references to parallel passages of Scripture which elucidate the text. This has been found most helpful and profitable.

As we read our chapter, there will sometimes be an obscure verse; for instance, Gal. 3:20: "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." We look at the connection and try to gather the meaning but are not quite clear. We may possibly consult helps, or if these are wanting, or prove not entirely satisfactory, we put a simple "?" by the side of the verse or some other mark of interrogation. It would probably be well for us all if we inserted these question marks along our Bibles wherever we do not fully understand the thought. It would be interesting in our next reading to notice how many of these "?s" could now be dispensed with. In the meanwhile, our attention will have been riveted by the fact that we are asking ourselves, Do we understand what we are reading?...

At the risk of repetition, we speak a further word as to the necessity for regularity and system in the work of Bible reading. Let it be settled before God, of course not in a legal way, but in the liberty of true love, that we must and shall read our Bibles regularly and systematically. Let us give them the first place,—if possible, a few minutes in the morning when the mind is fresh, and it will probably help in giving tone to the mental system for the entire day, even if we rise a few minutes earlier in order to devote from five to fifteen minutes to what will become an ever-increasing delight if we go on with God.

It is astonishing how much of what we read at this time will go with us during the day. Unknown to ourselves, we will be turning over what has been read; probably we will find occasion to speak of it to others, and in various ways find that it is becoming a part of our mental and spiritual equipment. Let us not expect to see great results from the practice of a single day or week, but continue steadfastly on, not overtaxing ourselves by devoting too much time in our endeavoring to "catch up" that which we have inevitably lost. God is not a hard Master and His service is perfect freedom. It will be found that we would as soon think of being deprived of our daily food as of missing what is of far more importance...daily Bible reading.

How to Read the Bible

George Mueller

"Give attendance unto reading" - 1 Timothy 4:13.

It is not only day by day that we should read the Word of God, but as we do so, let us consider the following matters. We should Read the Word of God Regularly - through the Old and New Testaments; not certain parts only, but regularly onward. We should put a mark in where we left off last time, and then go on from there when we come to it again. I know that this is the practice of many, yet, because there are some who do not do so, I repeat this deeply important point. For many years I have attended to this, and I find the blessedness of it continually. One advantage of this plan is, that you never get tired of reading the Scriptures. They are always fresh and new to you.

We should Read the Word of God Meditatively. We have to remember that our own intellect cannot fathom the Scriptures. We must, in true humility of soul wait upon God, that He, by His Spirit, would be pleased to instruct us. We must also seek to couple with this, meditation upon the Word of God. It is not enough that we go through it in a cursory way, just to satisfy our conscience. In a greater or lesser degree, we should seek to dwell upon what we read.

We should Read the Word of God Personally. There is a very real temptation into which teachers of the Word, Sunday School teachers, parents or others are in danger of falling - that of reading the Scriptures for others. I do not mean to say that God will not bring good out of your reading for others, but we should seek to get good out of it for ourselves. How does this suit Me? How does this instruct Me? In what way may it improve Me? We shall thus carry away a personal blessing from the Word of God. We Should Read the Word of God Practically. There is another point of the deepest importance - that we aim to practice what we find in the Scriptures. We may be feeble in our attempts to do it, nevertheless, this must be the great aim, the holy, godly purpose, that, by the grace of God, we will carry out in our life what we find in the Divine testimony. If this be lacking, no matter how carefully, how regularly, we read the Scriptures, after all, we shall lose the blessing which we seek. Though often, it may be, we shall be like the tree in winter, with no blossom seen, yet it is growing downward; so it will be with us. It will be entirely impossible that we remain still; we shall make some progress in knowledge and grace.

We Should Read the Word of God Persistently. We see in these days that by tens of thousands, publications are issued from the press, and it is Satan's special purpose to put as many as he can into our hands to keep us from the Scriptures. But be determined rather to tear them to pieces, if they keep you from God's Word. I do not mean to say there is no blessing to be found in human writings; most assuredly there is; and

**We have money in the church today
but not many Macedonians. Modern
Macedonians give money but the early
Macedonians first gave God the
Macedonians!**

God gives blessing through human writings. But if the question be whether I should read the Word of God or human writings, then most assuredly the answer should be, the Word of God, for it is God's own voice speaking directly to my soul.

Habakkuk's Perplexity, pt. 2

Joel Portman

Conditions of Habakkuk's day caused consternation in his heart. Much more severe was the message that the Lord gave him in response to his cry! God was going to raise (empower) the Chaldeans (Babylonians) to execute punishment on His people (1:5-11). In other words, a more sinful, violent nation would be used by the Lord to judge the sinful, violent people who surrounded Habakkuk. Barnes' comment on Hab. 1:5 is, "The Jews flattered themselves that, being the people of God, He would not fulfill His threats upon them. They had become like the pagan in wickedness; God bids them look out among them for the instrument of His displeasure. It was an aggravation of their punishment, that God, who had once chosen them, would now choose these whom He had not chosen, to chasten them," ("Notes on the Bible"). But to Habakkuk, the thought that this vicious, violent, and powerful nation would be the instruments in God's hand to punish His own people was more than he could comprehend. The history of the nations shows us that God often uses nations to punish and correct other nations, not only in the past, but certainly it is within His power and purpose to continue to do so.

God has every right, as the Righteous Judge of all the earth (Gen. 18:25) to use whatever instrument He so desires to accomplish His purpose. The succession of Gentile powers as Daniel saw in his visions indicates this clearly. Moses warned the people of this in Deut. 28:49-52. Events similar are recorded in 2 Kings 24:2 regarding God's judgment on Judah during the reign of Jehoiakim. Jeremiah and other prophets told the people that this would occur (Jer. 1:15-16, 5:15, 6:22-23). Yet, as would be normal, the thought of this filled Habakkuk's heart with great fear as he considered the terror and fearful results of such an invasion. One cannot fault him for this; these were his people and he was in the midst of them. The uncertainty concerning the future in any day, ours included, can cause consternation to any heart that thinks of the fearful effects of God's judgment on any people where one dwells. So we read, following the Lord's description of the invading nation, his expression of personal perplexity in 1:12-17.

Perplexity of Habakkuk

Habakkuk's response is based on a number of truths he knew concerning His God:

1. The Greatness of God as compared with all other gods (1:12)
2. The Enduring Promises of God to the nation (1:12)
3. The Righteousness of God in His judgment (1:12)
4. The Holiness of God in His assessment of men (1:13)
5. The Power of God to overcome all adversaries (1:14-17)

His response in this dilemma is a profitable example to any who are in similar conditions of uncertainty. The Lord justifies his attitude of confidence in God alone by assuring him that "The just shall live by his faith," (2:4). God always responds positively when His people submerge their own feelings, thoughts and consternation to the unswerving confidence in their God. He is a pattern to all who face similar conditions and have like concerns. We can always turn to God and leave the uncertainty of the outcome in His hands. He is able, He is righteous, He is always dependable and proves His sufficiency to His people.

Yet his knowledge of God's character always carries with it a reminder and a caution. He reiterates a principle that is always true: God, because of His justice and holiness, cannot tolerate evil, neither can He condone unrighteousness (1:13). In Habakkuk's concern, he was thinking of the extreme unrighteousness of the Chaldeans as compared with that of Judah, but the principle remains the same. God was bringing these severe conditions on them because of their own evil and iniquity, even as He would also judge the Chaldeans. If God's people live in the consciousness of the holy character of their God, they would be preserved from the deserved judgments from His hand. It is when we lose sight of this that we receive the discipline that we deserve (Heb. 12:5-11). Yet when God disciplines and chastens His people, it is always in love, for their ultimate blessing, and not to destroy them.

Habakkuk's final word must be ours as well; "I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me and what I shall answer when I am reproved," (Hab. 2:1). Patient waiting on God and expectant looking toward Him for an answer will always result in words that will console, encourage and direct, even as the Lord's did to this believer. How often we fail to remain constant in our willingness to anticipate that God will speak peace unto His people (Ps. 85:8). He is one who never fails, and He desires that our confidence in Him should not waver, regardless of the circumstances under which we live.

CALEB

“He wholly followed the LORD God” (Josh. 14:14)

Alan Davidson

The word of our Risen Lord to Peter was, “Follow thou Me” (John 21:22). Caleb in the O.T. was known as the man “who wholly followed the Lord.” God said it (Num. 14:24); Moses said it (Num. 32:12; Deut. 1:36); Joshua said it (Josh. 14:8-9,14). Six times it is recorded of Caleb, “He hath fully followed the LORD”. He did not follow afar off. He followed fully, wholly and faithfully. He never wandered or deviated; he never strayed or lowered his standards; he was perpetually wholehearted. He was one of the spies sent into the land. He was courageous and persevered. Ten faithless spies would not enter in because of unbelief and they discouraged thousands of others from entering in. Joshua and Caleb not only entered into Canaan themselves, but they were used by God to lead the next generation into their inheritance in the Promised Land.

“LET US GO UP AT ONCE” (Num. 13:30)

At forty years of age, Caleb was ready to go. “And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it!” (Num. 13:30). They had GOD. At Kadesh-barnea, Moses said, “Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it ... fear not, neither be discouraged” (Deut. 1:21). This was the warrant for immediate possession. They brought back GRAPES; large, luxurious, clusters in abundance. David wrote, “O taste and see that the LORD is good” (Psa. 34:8). The Bride said, “His fruit was sweet to my taste” (S. of S. 2:3). “A good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey.” “When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which He hath given thee” (Deut. 8:7-8,10). But the unbelieving ten spies saw GIANTS and cities walled up to heaven. Actually the walls of Jericho fell down. The rebels said that they were like GRASSHOPPERS before the sons of the Anakims.

Unbelief magnifies difficulties. God was in heaven above the wall. The inhabitants of Canaan knew that the Lord had given them the land; “Your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you” (Josh. 2:9). God in grace, permitted the mission of the spies just as later, He granted unto them Saul, their choice of a king to rule over them. The people said, “We will send men before us” (Deut. 1:22). God had delivered them and led them out of Egypt with mighty power. God promised that there would not be a man to stand before them and commanded that they turn not to the right hand or to the

left. Caleb by faith, said, “Let us go up at once” (Num. 13:30). The people in fear, said, “Let us return into Egypt” (Num. 14:4). **Faith** measures from God to the difficulties and does not need creature eyes to approve what God has given. Unbelief sees the difficulties but fails to see God.

The flesh always needs the flesh to lean on and results in the manifestation of the unbelief that was in their heart. They thought that the Amalekites and the Canaanites were going to destroy them, forgetting that Pharaoh of Egypt had already sought to destroy them. The “evil report” insulted God, discredited the inheritance and expressed defamation and slander. “But all the congregation bade stone them with stones” (Num. 14:10). In this, the faithful were like the Lord Himself; He said, “I and My Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him” (John 10:3031).

The giants did not disturb Caleb nor did the traitors who were ready to stone him. For forty days, they searched the land but the subsequent unbelief of the congregation gave way to forty years of wandering in the wilderness. The wilderness was of no interest to Caleb. He was in the wilderness but not of it. Caleb followed the Lord daily without division of heart; he followed the Lord faithfully without any doubt of mind; he followed the Lord cheerfully without deviating or murmuring. During all the forty years, he focused by faith upon the promises of God’s Word, the purposes of the Divine call, and the prospect of the certain possession of the inheritance of the Lord.

Faith sees the mountains, recognises the hindrances and is not ignorant of the giants but looks them straight in the face. Caleb was not reckless, he was not insensible to the reality, he knew that he was in the minority but he did not take offence. Faith looks to God alone, leans upon God and brings in the living God. There is no mountain too high for Caleb, no wall was too strong, no city too great, no giant too powerful. He is in agreement with Moses and Joshua in rebuking the unbelief of the people (Deut. 1:36,38). His faith is in the promises of his omnipotent God. After another forty five years, he says; “The LORD hath kept me alive” (Josh. 14:10). During the testing years of wilderness wandering, Caleb lived in the good of the Promised Land through anticipatory appropriating faith.

The believer who follows the Lord in obedience to God’s Word and has a holy conviction of the leading of the Holy Spirit in the path of God’s Will, is immortal until the end of the journey. In the spiritual life, there should be no generation gap. Paul was conscious of that abundant grace when he wrote: “Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2Cor. 4:16). The physical strength and stamina of the body may fail us in advancing years, but with the power of the Spirit of God indwelling, we

should ever strive as near as possible to the fulness we have in Christ.

"GIVE ME THIS MOUNTAIN" (Josh. 14:12)

Caleb was a man of altitudes, of higher ground, setting his affections upon things above. The inheritance belonged to Caleb by Divine promise but it was not actually given to him until he came forward and petitioned to receive it. Great and precious promises are given to us in the Scriptures but they are only enjoyed in a spiritual life of faith. Paul wrote, "that I may apprehend (lay hold of) that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12). We have; "The earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14). Yet we are exhorted; "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:11-12).

The believers at Colosse faced the giants of; "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments (elements) of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). Titus brought back a good report from Corinth (2Cor. 7:6). An evil report will discourage others from going in to enjoy the spiritual privileges of our inheritance in Christ. Are we content to live on a low, semi worldly level; take it easy and criticize our brethren who are willing to serve? This will develop into negligence of meetings, disobedience to the Word of God and an unhealthy spiritual condition. Perhaps these words are being read by a believer who is discouraged, downhearted amid trials and difficulties and feeling like giving up because of your lack of spiritual progress. Do you need a lift?

"I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I onward bound,
'Lord, plant my feet on higher ground'.
Lord lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on heaven's table-land;
A higher plane than I have found,
'Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.'"
Johnson Oatman Jr. (1856-1926)

"The Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out" (Josh. 14:12). The words of Caleb are a rebuke to lethargy in the service of God. He could have said, 'I am too old, I have been denied the chance to achieve the heights of early life'. Moses, the man of God is now dead. Moses himself, was delayed for forty years before leading the people out of Egypt. The moment of opportunity had tarried long. Caleb did not say that 'for me the inheritance is not scarcely worth having'. His faith is undiminished, his zeal is as fiery as ever, he "wholly followed the LORD"; nothing less than God's best, the

length, breadth and height will satisfy the veteran who knew God.

"Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb ... because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel ... And the land had rest from war" (Josh. 14:14-15). Romans 14:19 says, "Follow after the things which make for peace". We are exhorted to; "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts" (1 Cor. 14:1). "Follow that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:15). The man of God is to; "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Tim. 6:11). Hebrews 11 speaks of those who by faith, "waxed valiant in fight (mighty in war)" (v 34): "whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation (the issue of their life)" (Heb. 13:7). Faith reserves the right to go straight on following the Lord.

"Hebron" means "fellowship". If we follow the Lord we will be led to the fellowship of the N.T. assembly gathered in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Hebron was the place of choice; Abraham dwelt there when Lot chose the well-watered plain (Gen. 13:18). Like the assembly, it was the place of the altar and the promises. It was the place of death; Sarah died and was buried there. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the patriarchs were buried there. At Hebron, the Cave of Machpelah means, "two doors", a way in and a way out. On the first day of the week we gather to remember the Lord's death but rejoice in His resurrection.

Like Hebron, the assembly is the place of faith with nothing to attract the flesh; the place of commission; from Hebron, Joseph was sent forth to seek his brethren. It became a city of refuge and a city of the Levites as the assembly should be a place of refuge and service. It was a place of authority and leadership where David was anointed king of Judah (2 Sam. 2:1-4), and king over all Israel (2 Sam. 5:3). For Caleb, it was the place of the inheritance, the resting place of the pilgrim warrior (Josh. 15:13). It was the centre of the promise, "His seed shall possess it" (Num. 14:24). To his daughter, he gave, "The upper springs, and the nether springs" (Josh. 15:19).

In the Word of God, we find wells of spiritual refreshment and encouragement to follow the Lord (John 21:22). As the Lord was about to ascend, twice He said to Peter, "FOLLOW Me" (John 21:19). Peter seeing him (John) said to Jesus, "Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? FOLLOW thou Me'" (John 21:21-22). Peter repeated the exhortation in his epistle; "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us (His expiatory sufferings – 1 Pet. 2:24), leaving us an example (His exemplary sufferings), that ye should FOLLOW His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21).

What do You Think?

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”

Genesis 1:1

Carlos E. Fariñas

Throughout history, our world has been home to many brilliant and dedicated minds who have spent years of their lives seeking explanations for the marvelous phenomena we witness daily. They have sought to unravel the wonder of life in animals, plants, and human beings. It has been an immense challenge to discover how our astonishing universe came into being, how the first human appeared, and how humanity spread across the earth.

Several decades ago, a distinguished Belgian priest and physicist, recognized as a pioneer in cosmology, proposed what he called the Big Bang Theory. Through it, he sought to explain the origin of the universe as the result of a massive explosion. Yet, despite the sophistication of his reasoning, he could not convincingly explain how the vast diversity of stars came to be, nor the unique features of our planet—characteristics unmatched by any other in the solar system.

Any student in secondary or pre-university studies is inevitably fascinated when learning about galaxies, and especially about our Solar System. It is truly remarkable to see how each planet revolves around the Sun—the great center of the system. Even more intriguing is the fact that these orbits are not perfectly circular but elliptical, elongated like the shape of an egg. In addition, the Earth rotates on an invisible internal axis. As it circles the Sun and simultaneously spins on its axis, the Earth finds itself twice a year closer to the Sun and twice farther away, producing the change of seasons. The tilt and rotation of the planet also explain why, while one hemisphere experiences the heat of summer, the opposite side endures the cold of winter. In the Northern Hemisphere, the coldest season extends from mid-November through February, while at the same time, the Southern Hemisphere enjoys a hot summer. Such harmony cannot be explained away by mere mathematical formulas or chance speculations—it points clearly to a supreme, intelligent mind who designed and sustains it all.

But the marvels of our world do not end there. Many wonders escape our notice, either because we take them for granted or because we do not know them. Take, for instance, the polar bear, that massive creature dwelling among ice and snow. Observing it raises an obvious question: how does it survive in such extreme temperatures? Zoologists explain that its white fur is in fact composed of tiny hollow cylinders that act like prisms, breaking down the sun's rays and channeling their energy to the skin. The bear's skin is not white but black, absorbing the heat transmitted through the fur. Beneath it, a thick layer of fat acts like a thermal engine,

retaining warmth. Ironically, the polar bear's greatest threat is not freezing to death, but overheating when it exerts itself too much.

Equally marvelous is the mango tree. After the fruiting season, many old leaves fall. With the rains, the branch tips sprout tiny whitish blossoms, soon followed by reddish shoots that grow into broad leaves. These gradually shift from reddish-brown to yellowish, until they take on the deep green shade that characterizes the tree—until the next cycle of fruit arrives.

And what can we say about the extraordinary and intricate system of human life? Each day we continue to uncover new mysteries about our own bodies. Can such wonders truly be the product of chance? Can we honestly attribute the complexity of our cells, organs, and the perfect cooperation among them to mere accident or spontaneous processes?

The apostle Paul provides the answer in his letter to the Colossians: "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:15–17)

King Solomon echoes this truth in Ecclesiastes: "I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end." (Ecclesiastes 3:10–11)

The book of Genesis begins by affirming that in the beginning, an intelligent and powerful Being—whom we know as God—created every element of our universe, our planet, and all living beings. The apostle John, in his Gospel, teaches us the same truth: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men... The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:1, 3–4, 14)

These words resonate with Paul's testimony to the Colossians. Reflecting on the miracle of conception, growth, and birth of every human life, we cannot help but be moved in awe and worship. God, in His infinite love, gave His only Son to accomplish the work of redemption—for every human being who recognizes their sinfulness and separation from God and accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This is perhaps the greatest of all God's wonders: that the Righteous One died for the unrighteous, bearing in His own body the punishment our sins deserved, to reconcile us to God and grant us eternal life in His glory.