

Sermon I, The Bible On Trial series. September 14, 2014 **“To Read or Not to Read?”**



Dear friends in Christ

In Christianity we have a great gift that comes to us directly in the form of the written word. The Holy Scriptures, the Bible, God’s Word, which we are to read regularly.

But how often do we read the Bible, from cover to cover? Or how often do we study it? Especially when we are so busy?

I recognize that there are some that perhaps haven’t owned a Bible, or don’t know what the Bible is really about.

So, this morning, to help us know more about the Bible, I would like to review with you, a few things about the Bible. Or if you are new to it, to help you understand it, its nature, its structure,

Let’s begin by saying that the Bible is a group of books, 66 in total. Divided in the Old Testament which has 39 book, and 27 in the New Testament.

The Old Testament points us to the coming of Christ. The New Testament tells us of the Mission and works of Christ while on earth, and later what He did through the Holy Spirit in His church.

Throughout History, there have been many versions of the Bible, some very easy to read; others sometimes seemed old and historical. In this congregation we use the English Standard Version, otherwise known as the ESV, which we began using it not long ago, two or three years. Previously we used the New International Version, also known as the NIV.

During the next few weeks, as we gather for our theme of meditation and Bible study, “The Bible on Trial”, I would like to ask you to bring your Bible with you if you have one, and use it during our services and in the Bible studies. Now, if you own a gadget, a smart phone perhaps, bring that too. There is always a free Bible app that you can download and use it instead during our Bible studies. I use this one, among others, the ESV Bible, and there is one for your preferred gadget!

Yes, during worship we would like to ask you that your phone be shut off, but you can certainly use your Bible on your smartphone.

Now, to read or not to read? It seems like not many would like to read the Bible, perhaps it’s too sacred, too confusing, or simply not interesting enough, and by that I mean it is too boring, it is not like the latest tabloid, or the latest best seller or anything like that, so we tend to put it away.

Others read for various purposes. Some people have read the Bible from a humanistic perspective. I know two people who have read the Bible as part of their philosophy and religious courses at UBC. One of them was studying world philosophies and the Bible was part of their text book as you see, from a philosophical standpoint. And the other studied world religions including Christianity, and of course as part of their text books this person had to read the Bible.

Other have studied from a legal standpoint, others from a religious view, and yet others from an anthropological view, even poetry.

Others have Bibles for superstition reasons. Let me explain. On one occasion back home, we took our church youth group to a youth gathering across the country. And through some friends we were able to secure a 15 passenger van to take us there. But of course none of us leaders had driving licenses so we asked somebody from one of our congregations to drive us there. He accepted. On the day we left to the gathering, the first thing he did was to put a Bible, this one on the screen, he put it on top of the dashboard which was reflecting the sun and blinding the windshield, which I considered dangerous for the driver. So, I asked him to remove the Bible from there so we all are kept safe, “no way” the driver said. He put the Bible there, he said for protection. So that God will bless our trip and keeps us safe. Finally he understood that it is not the book itself that has power but the Words that the Book has. It doesn't matter how many Bibles you own, but if you don't read and don't trust the author of those words, well, it wouldn't work.

So, to read or not to read? But really what is the purpose of the Bible? Is it philosophy, anthropology, superstition, or is there anything else that the Author wants to accomplish?

The Bible has two purposes; on the one hand it gives us God's Law. In it the Author prescribes everything that's required of us, and how when we don't do or are not able to do what the Law requires of us, the full extent of the law falls on us in a way of punishment and condemnations, including the death penalty, an eternal death penalty. After all, the Author is a just God, giving to each justly, according to what we do.

But the Author is not willing that we be condemned and given the death penalty. So he provides another way for us to avoid the death penalty. He provides the Gospel. And the Gospel includes everything that He does for us, through Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus Christ that God relates and comes to each one of us.

Therefore the whole Bible points us to Jesus and His works for us. Jesus is actually called “the Word of God” (Rev. 19:13)

But there is more, God's word also provides a light to our “feet and a light to (our) path” (Psalm 119:105)

One of the writers, the apostle Paul says: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

But above all, the Scriptures were written, God left His written word to each one so that we would find life.

Another writer, the apostle John, writes: “but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have **life** in his name.” (John 20:31)

Jesus said himself: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal **life**. He does not come into judgement, but has passed from death to **life**.” (John 5:24)

We are then to search the Scriptures because we will find eternal life in it. (John 5:39) There is a great benefit to reading the Bible. Next time when you are faced with the question: To read or not to read? Think and remember that in it, in the Bible you will find life.

“For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal **life**, and I will raise him up on the last day.” (John 6:40) Jesus said.

Yes dear friends, the Bible is not just another book, or just a religious book, but more, God inspired His holy writers to communicate His gospel to each and every one of us, for one purpose only, to be saved, to find life. And then, yes, to live a good life.

Luther said: “whoever believes the words of Christ and clings on to them, heavens are open and hell is shut, the devil is put in prison, and sins of the sinner are forgiven, and such is a child of Life eternal. That’s what this Book teaches you—the Holy Scriptures—and no other book on the face of the earth.” (Martin Luther (WA 48:155)

In His name, amen.