



Taking Heed ... According to Gods Word

SOME who read this message will have been diligent Bible readers for many years. Day after day, as regular as clockwork, they will have settled down in the family circle (or alone if they had to), and opened the Book. One verse each, five verses each, a chapter apiece, or “read-as-much-as-you-want-to”: the time-hallowed readings according to the **Bible Companion** will have been gone through. Once every four years, when 29 February intruded into the Calendar without a reading to match, there may even have been a lost feeling, wondering whatever to read when the daily reading wasn’t there!

Some others have not been like that at all. They might have joined in family readings because it was expected of them, preferring the five-verse-at-a-time scheme because they could count ahead to their turn and be sure not to be caught napping; watching the clock as the irksome minutes ticked by until the penance should be over.

Some will have moved with time from the second position to the first. “It was a bore at the time, of course. But how it helped later! I could never have found my way round the Bible without it. I would never have known the proof for this doctrine, the correction for that error, the guide for the other perplexing personal problem, but for this regular habit, which caused living truth to seep into my mind, mostly unperceived, every time the Book was opened.” And everyone in this position will have thanked God for the Book, for letting Brother Roberts offer us the Bible Companion to regulate our reading, for giving us parents, perhaps, who saw to it that the generation to come didn’t miss its opportunities.

BUT Some who read this message will not have had this experience. It was not a Christadelphian family they were brought up in. At church, if they went there, they had prayer books and hymn books, but the only Bible in sight was on the lectern. The Bible wasn’t conspicuous at home, either, perhaps. It was a leaflet, an advertisement, a lecture, or a conversation with a friend, which set them thinking.

Only then did they get a Bible for themselves and start searching. As as hard-earned knowledge ground its way into minds which had grown a bit stiff with age, they may have said: “This is wonderful, what I have been waiting for all these years. How fortunate they who have been brought up with this Book as their daily bread from childhood. I shall need years of diligence before I get to the point where the Christadelphian’s child is on his baptism-day.” The thought will not be envious, exactly, for this would be sinful, but it might be a little wistful.

BUT There would not be much point in reminding each other of this if we were all regular readers now. **But we are not.** Some have gone further, supplementing ordinary daily reading with diligent study which qualifies them to be teachers (and,

perhaps, under the pressure of the studying leaving the ordinary reading out for a while?). Some others may have noticed that the teacher “Doesn’t do his readings”, without noticing how much other reading he is doing, and may have followed the bad part of the example without noticing the good.

Some of our hard-working brethren have seen the danger, and acknowledged that they had made a mistake. Back to the daily Bible readings they must go, for their own sakes, and as a good example to their brethren and sisters. Some, of course, had never made the mistake at all, but the writer of these notes is one of those who has, and who has realised that it must be put right.

A HUNDRED YEARS IS A LONG TIME

For the Truth as we know it is now more than 100 years old. Fourth and fifth generations of Christadelphians are now to be found in our midst, and the old traditions are all too easily forgotten. What great-grandfather and grandfather did regularly, father has perhaps got a little slipshod over, and son and daughter could well not have been brought up to do daily readings at all.

Some readers of these notes may hardly ever have done daily readings, or may have lost the habit long since. Apart from two portions at Sunday meetings, it might be a long time since the **Bible Companion** played any part in their lives.

There might not seem to be much harm in it. If we learned the First Principles in Sunday School or public meetings; and if we have read some of the ‘works of the Truth,’ or listened to those who have, then those who did read their Bibles right through are there to do our thinking for us, and it takes a long time for the difference to be noticed.

But 100 years *is* a long time. And by this time the very secondhand nature of much of our knowledge is beginning to come out. Many of us have grown rusty in our evidences.

LETTING OTHERS THINK FOR US

We find ourselves saying more and more to the interested friend we happen to meet:

“I’ll bring you a pamphlet which explains it”; or, “I must introduce you to Mr. Dot or Mrs. Dash (usually older people), who know more about this than I do.” Less and less are we able to get our own Bibles down and “give to him that asketh a reason for the hope that is in us.” There is nothing wrong with giving a pamphlet, or an introduction either, and we do well to admit that there may be people wiser than ourselves to whom we can turn to help. But we should know what is in the pamphlet, and we should be able to check it against Scripture for ourselves. And one day Brother Dot and Sister Dash will lie sleeping, and what will the Brotherhood do then?

CLEAN HOUSE TO LET FOR SEVEN WORSE DEVILS!

Other evils creep in, when we have cleansed our house from error and accepted the Truth, without filling it with ready Bible reading. Someone writes something

disparaging about the Authority of Scripture, or even the wisdom of our dear Lord Himself, and we don't know how to answer. We don't, perhaps, even feel quite sure that there is an answer. The seeds of doubt can be so easily sown in our own minds if the wholesome Word is not there: and the late Brother Dot isn't there to help us. And before we know where we are the enemy of blatant unbelief is thundering at our doors, or the lodger of half-belief is offering us tempting rentals. Against the one we have no Sword of the Spirit to arm us; and the other eats us out of spiritual house and home while we lack the Bread of Life, and the Waters of Siloam, so graciously offered to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

An overdrawn picture? Of today, perhaps, though the likeness is recognizable within the caricature. But of tomorrow? It all depends on us, under God's gracious hand. And God will not give us stones if we ask Him for Bread.

THE BIBLE COMPANION IS NOT PERFECT?

No more it is. Brother Roberts did not claim that it was. But it *is* a plan; and we do read right through the Bible annually if we follow it, the New Testament twice. If someone worked out a better one, and persuaded the whole Brotherhood to adopt it, then it might be time for a change. But they haven't, and there are more important things to do. This will serve very well.

THIS IS NOT OUR OWN AFFAIR

This is not a private matter. You are an eye of the body, or an ear, or a tongue, a foot, a hand. The Brotherhood depends on us. For more than a century brethren and sisters have been reading in their homes according to this plan, and a lot of them, God be praised, still do. That means that tens of thousands of lips each day speak the same words from the Book of Life, and, perhaps, offer the same kind of prayers on the basis of what they have read. What power before the throne has the fervent effectual prayer of multitudes of brethren and sisters reprov'd and exhorted by the same words of grace?

We, being many, are one body, and we must never forget it. In addition to a very proper vigilance lest our gospel should be lost by sliding into easy conformity with what other men think (against which there is no better safeguard than really knowing the Book for ourselves), there is a bond of unity in meeting round the Book in our homes which utterly surpasses all the artificial social contacts which we must otherwise build up with each other.

FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE

You like going to see Brother and Sister Blank? Good! Do you take your Bible? Do they ask you to share the readings?

Do you talk about the Word of God as God-fearing men and women should? Or do you turn switches, and see sights, and hear sounds, which take your mind in entirely

different directions? If it is the former, splendid. If it is only the latter, you are doing neither yourself nor them any good.

THE SWORD GROWS RUSTY

It could well be the latter. Reform is urgently needed. All sorts of reasons have contributed to an alarming decline in the practice of family-and-friend Bible-reading. And it would be a waste of time to bother too much with what the reasons are. Whatever they are, they cannot be good ones, and the only thing that matters is to overcome them and put the matter right. There are no magic remedies. No formula will convert the negligent into the diligent. Only giving ourselves to the Word of God and to prayer, determinedly, can solve the matter. We have to roll up our sleeves and get down to it.

NEW RESOLUTIONS

New resolutions are not easy to keep. No resolution which proposes spiritual reform to the natural man comes lightly.

The Bible itself proposes the technique: it is simply: “Be not weary in well-doing.”

“AND IS PROFITABLE”

But the benefits! For those of us who need it, to put the resolution into effect is to tap the source of boundless blessings, for ourselves and for all we meet. Dying spiritual life will revive. Flagging interest in the living Word will be transformed into a growingly exciting enquiry into ever-deepening spiritual truths. Lame conversation with our brethren and sisters will be displaced by the provocation to new discovery as each talks with the other of the riches he has found; complaints and dissatisfactions will be transformed into the sweet interchange of spiritual benefit.

Weakening faith and nagging doubts will be increasingly replaced by a robust confidence which solves many of its problems and puts the rest in their proper place, on the waiting list for solution. And difficulties which elude present answers will only keep us humble as to our own powers without impairing our confidence in the Word of God.

We shall become increasingly workmen who need not to be ashamed. A renewed army of workers, for home and abroad, will find new spirit in a Book ever more intimately known, ever more dearly loved. A confident witness to the word will help to convince those who hear and see that we have been with Jesus, however much or little of any other kind of learning we may boast.

“TODAY, HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS”

There is no denying the urgency of the message. Our survival as a living community depends on it. The living Word which begat us waits to feed and nourish us. In every

walk of life we must respond to the call, and till the Lord come give attention to reading.

ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD we must judge and be judged. If we speak not according to this Word, there is no light in us. If we want to cleanse our ways and see clearly the Lord's way, we do so "by taking heed thereto, according to His Word."