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GROWING THROUGH BIBLE STUDY
(Lesson for July 18, 1954)
Acts 17:10, 11; 1 Tim. 4:13-16; 2 Tim. 1:5; 2:15; 3:14-17; Heb. 4:12

THE LESSON AS A WHOLE
By J. C. Macaulay, D.D.

Approach to the Lesson

As long ago as the ninth century there reigned a king in England by the name of Alfred. He well earned the title, "The Great". He it was who halted the Danish Conquest, established the English Navy, made great strides in the unification of the country, introduced liberal education, codified the laws, and was the father of English prose. But, considering the age in which he lived, nothing better justified his title than his expressed wish that every child in England should be able to read, and should have the Bible to read. Centuries were to roll by before his wish came true.

Now we can read, and we have the Bible to read. But do we read it? The ability to read is good, if it is turned to good account. Otherwise, it can become one's damnation. What we read is one of the largest factors in determining conduct, and character, and destiny. For, just as what we eat feeds our body, so what we read feeds our mind and soul. To feed trash and poison to the body is to court death. What about the trash and poison that are fed to the mind? That brings death, too, and a more tragic death at that. We have only to look at the popular magazine stand to know "the diet on which millions in this enlightened land are feeding the mind, and it does not promise well for the future.

If only we could induce all Christians to put the Bible at the head of their reading list, there would be an immediate

upsurge of spiritual strength and effectiveness. It is the neglect of Bible reading that has weakened the life and witness of the church, making its members completely devoid of discernment with regard to both doctrine and behavior. The ease with which many fall victim to heretical teaching, and their contentment with worldly standards of conduct, stem from this neglect of the Bible. Back to the Bible, in the church, in the home, in the secret place! Then we shall see advance instead of retrogression, strength instead of weakness, righteousness instead of delinquency.

Man, earthy, of the earth, an hungered feeds
On earth's dark poison tree—
Wild gourds, and deadly roots,
And bitter weeds;
And as his food is he.
And hungry souls there are
That find and eat
God's manna day by day,
And glad they are, their life is
fresh and sweet,
For as their food are they

Verse by Verse
Acts 17:10—"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea . . ." The "brethren" referred to were the believers in Thessalonica (modern Salonika), where the Jews bitterly opposed the teaching of Paul. Berea (modern Verolia) is sixty miles from Salonika.

Verse 11—"more noble—received the word—and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." The nobility of the Berean Jews consisted in their open-mindedness, coupled with carefulness to judge all things by the Scriptures, which to them constituted the final authority. Prejudice, not the Word of God, dictated the action of the Thessalonians.

1 Tim. 4:13—"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." Three ministerial duties to which Timothy was urged to give attention—the reading, the exhortation, and the teaching. (Note the definite articles, omitted in K.J.V.) There can be no doubt that it is the reading of Scriptures that is here in view, the other two following from it.

Verse 14—"Neglect not the gift . . . given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." Here are three actions: a divine action, bestowing a "gift" for ministry; a corporate action, in which the elders as a body recognize and solemnly set aside to the ministry a man manifestly chosen of God; and an individual action, making use of the divine endowment in faithful service.

Verse 15—"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." First, meditation; then, ministry with utter abandon. Only thus can a minister make progress in life and service. If there is no progress in the minister, there is not likely to be progress in the people.

Verse 16—"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine . . . both save thyself, and them that hear thee." The minister, as well as his doctrine, must be sound. Unless a minister gives attention to his own spiritual state, his teaching will contribute little to the saving of his hearers.

2 Tim. 1:5—" . . . unfeigned faith . . . first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice . . . in thee also." Timothy's father was a Greek, and apparently a heathen, but the united prayers and efforts of his mother and grandmother bore fruit in the young man.

Chap. 3:14—" . . . Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing." The idea in "rightly dividing" is "cutting a straight line." It is not so much skill in fitting every text into its right category that is in mind here, but rather squarely fitting the life to the Scripture, dealing squarely and honestly with the "word of truth."

Chap. 3:14—" . . . the things which thou has learned and hast been assured of." Timothy's learning was not purely academic. Paul was here referring to the basic piety which Timothy had learned from his mother and grandmother, backed by their godly life.

Verse 16—"From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures . . . able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The scriptures referred to are, of course, the Old Testament, but notice that the end of the Old Testament is "faith which is in Christ Jesus." Timothy's training in the ancient Scriptures was a great preparation for the gospel.

Verse 17—"That the men of



Despite the fact that her eyesight has been failing as well as her hearing and she finds it more difficult to get about, Mrs. Lucy Elliot attended a party at Agincourt last week for the family. As to the oldest visitor at the reunion, it wasn't even close—Mrs. Elliot is 105. Four of her five children were present for the reunion and birthday party, Mrs. Mason, Hugh Elliot, Mrs. F. G. Yeamans and Mrs. Lyman Kennedy. Another son lives in British Columbia. She has fifteen grandchildren and 31 great-grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren. She has spent her entire lifetime in the Agincourt area.

God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In the original, "perfect" is the adjective form, and "thoroughly furnished" is a verbal form of the same word. In each case the idea is "fully equipped." Here, then, is great emphasis on the part played by the Scriptures in preparing a man for service.

Heb. 4:12—"For the word of God is quick and powerful . . . a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." "Quick" here means "living" and "powerful" signifies "operative." Its penetrating power reaches the deepest secrets of man's innermost being, and it imperiously sits in judgment on man's thoughts and intentions, before these ever express themselves in action.

The Heart of the Lesson
The one thing which the varied portions of our lesson have in common is their emphasis on the Word of God.
The first portion, in Acts 17, draws a comparison between the Thessalonian Jews and their Berean Jews, based upon their attitude to the Scriptures. The former were so confirmed in tradition and prejudice that they would not admit even of an inquiry into the Gospel which Paul preached. The Bereans, on the other hand, were open-minded. That does not mean that they would swallow everything offered to them. They recognized a canon, a standard, the Holy Scriptures, and to the test of these they brought the "new" doctrine. It was a well guarded open-mindedness which made the Bereans "more noble."

The second passage, 1 Timothy 4:13-16, deals with the ministerial life and work and shows how vital a place the Word of God has in this sphere. Whether the "reading" of verse 13 refers to the reading of the Scriptures in the public service, or to the minister's private reading, the Scriptures are definitely in mind as the basis for the exhorting and the teaching. Exhorting and teaching that are not grounded in the Word will have little authority, and little effect. See, too, the emphasis on the development of the minister himself, in regard both to his gift and to his character. Thorough preparation, constant discipline, and personal progress are requirements for effective ministry, and these stem back to the minister's relation to his Bible.

The passages chosen from 2 Timothy continue the theme of the minister and his Bible. Blessed is the man who has the heritage of godly parents and has imbibed the Scriptures from childhood. And three blessed is he who carries his early reverence for the Word of God through all his days. For a man's approvedness before God depends on the use he makes of the "word of truth." He must first apply it to himself, gauging his life by it as men test a wall by a plumb line. Only the man who has profited by the teachings and reproofs and correctings and child-training of the Scriptures can wield them to like ends in the lives of others.

Our last passage, Hebrews 4:12, should give great encouragement to those who handle

Food, Tobacco, Liquor Bill Up \$126,000,000 in Year
Canada's food bill rose by \$90,000,000 last year. The tab for tobacco and liquor increased by \$36,000,000.
The national accounts, measuring statistically the size and character of the Canadian economy, estimated yesterday that Canadians boosted their spending on consumer goods and services last year to a record \$45,165,000,000.
This is a jump of \$762,000,000 from the previous high of \$14,403,000,000 in 1952. By far the largest single amount was spent on food which rose to a high of \$3,755,000,000, up from \$3,665,000,000 in 1952. The bill for tobacco and liquor increased to \$1,334,000,000 from \$1,208,000,000.

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