

Bible Reading

by F.W. Grant

The reading meeting is a crucial aspect of the assembly of God, where individuals can test their knowledge, enrich the whole assembly, and avoid class restrictions.

Scripture: Proverbs 27:17, Romans 12:4, 1 Corinthians 12:21, 1 Corinthians 14:26, Ephesians 4:11, Ephesians 4:16, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 10:24, 1 Peter 4:10

Topics: "Bible Study", "Spiritual Edification"

Description

F.W. Grant emphasizes the importance of the Bible Reading meeting as a crucial test of the assembly's state, where knowledge is shared, tested, and used for mutual edification. He laments the decline in interest for these meetings, attributing it to a loss of enthusiasm for truth and a diminished consciousness of the Spirit's work in individuals. Grant stresses that God's Word is meant for all His people, not to be restricted to a select few, and that teachers should empower others to seek and find spiritual knowledge independently.

Transcript

In the year 1914 F.W. Grant was deeply troubled about the declining interest in and appreciation for the Bible Reading meeting. In July of that year he wrote an article in "The Bible Treasury" entitled "The Neglect of the Reading Meeting". I conclude with some extended excerpts from that valuable article. "The Reading Meeting" is a great test of the state of an assembly; for it is there, if things be right that the knowledge, gathered in whatever way, is tested and made sure by that personal conference and comparison which help so largely in making it the realised possession of the soul.

Here we may learn too, if there be the freedom and candour of brotherly love, the needs to which the truth ministers and the ability to use it for real edification. It is of immense value to test in this way how far we have got the truth; while by this means what has been learned by each is thrown into the common fund, to enrich the whole. Those who know least would be surprised to realise how much the questions suggested by their own need may help in various ways the very people who answer them.

And this is only one of the many modes in which the waterer is watered - the minister is ministered to. The reading meeting is never, therefore, made needless or of little value by whatever multiplicity there may be of more detailed and connected teaching. Nay, all this creates a special need for the reading meeting, in order that the food laid before the whole may be individually digested and assimilated. Here, however, any lack of nearness to and confidence in one another will be surely felt as a hindrance, and need of another

sort, manifested to those who have eyes to see.....

When, over eighty years ago (now over one-hundred and fifty years-ED) the Spirit of God began to move freshly in the hearts of His people to recover them to one another, and to revive the almost lost idea of the assembly of God, the reading meetings were a marked and prominent sign of the awakened interest in His word, and that the people of God as such were awaking to claim for themselves their portion in it.

No class of men could be allowed, however gifted, however educated and sanctioned by the mass, to stand between their souls and the possession of what was needed alike by all and designed by God for all. Now, alas, the decay of the reading meeting means nothing else but the subsiding of that eager enthusiasm for the truth that then was, and the lessened consciousness of the Spirit of God being in each and all His own to give each for himself the power to acquire possession. The flood-tide is gone, and the diminished stream begins to confine itself to the old channels.

We need to proclaim again that God never designed 'theology' to be for a class of theologians, but all the treasures of His word to be for all His people, not a thing in it to be hidden, save from the eyes of the careless and indifferent, those who are willing to exchange their heavenly birthright for a mess of the world's pottage.

We need once more to assert that teachers are only a pledge on God's part of his eagerness to have all to know, - not that He has restricted to these the possession of any kind of spiritual knowledge. Teachers are only to show that there, in the living fount from which they draw, is the living water for all, as free for others as for themselves. They are only the truth of God's word made to stand out in blazon before the eyes of those who have not yet found in there where He has put it for them, and with this for a motto of encouragement to those who have faith in a God that cannot lie, "Every one that seeketh, findeth".

The success of teachers is shown by their ability to make others independent of them when men say to them, as the Samaritans to the woman of Sychar, 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying'; and in proportion as the church of God by their means is made to realise its ability for self-edification..... (Eph. iv. 11-13).....

How intolerable is the thought of class restrictions to limit and hinder the grace of God in His people, yet, alas, into which, sensibly, they so readily sink down!

The development of all gifts is necessarily hindered by it; and this is largely the reason why so few among us are going forth to labour in the ample fields on every side, and why the gatherings develop so little strength and stability. We need not talk about a "laity" to have one. Let God's people sink down into indolent acquiescence in their inability for their spiritual privileges; and little gift of any kind is likely to develop among them. Those that can be fed only with the spoon, are infants or invalids.

On the other hand, where spiritual life is strongest we shall be most fully conscious of our need of one another..... Every one has a place to fill that no other can fill; every one is necessary. Good it is to remember this, as to ourselves and as to every other. If we forget it, we cannot by this escape from the consequences.

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