

(Guidelines) Begin With Prayer Contd

by J. Vernon McGee

J. Vernon McGee emphasizes the necessity of prayer and the Holy Spirit's guidance in understanding Scripture and spiritual truths.

Duration: 18:15

Scripture: John 16:12

Topics: "Bible Study", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the Bible as the ultimate source of knowledge and guidance. He highlights that the Spirit of God is the true teacher and can reveal the wonders of the book to believers. The speaker also criticizes those who prioritize worldly activities over Bible study, questioning their commitment to their faith. He concludes by emphasizing that the Bible is a human book, written in a language that speaks directly to our hearts.

Transcript

May I say to you, I saw a layman when I was pastor and have been pastor here in Southern California. I've seen several laymen that have lost their zeal for the things of God. Men that I found out I couldn't depend on.

There was one man who came to me as he began a new business and he said, I'm going to support your radio. And he did for a while until he became very successful. And then he quit supporting radio.

You think I'm going to pray for that man to be more successful in business? No, my friend. May I say to you, Paul did not pray that the Ephesians had become wealthy. Well, you say, well, what in the world did he pray for? He prayed this.

He says, Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. Now, what in the world is Paul going to pray for? Listen, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. That's Ephesians 1, 17, 18.

Did you notice he didn't pray for anything physical? He prayed that they might have wisdom in the revelation of the knowledge of him. That is, that the Spirit of God might be their teacher, opening the Word of God to their hearts and lives. And may I say this to you, and I'm saying it very sincerely and very candidly.

I trust you will pray for this radio ministry. I trust you'll pray for the financial part, because I'll be very frank with you. We live in a very cold-blooded world today as far as business is concerned, and that even among Christians.

You don't pay your bills today, you're in trouble. And we have to pay for radio, and we do depend on our listeners. Now, that's putting it just brutally frank, but that's the way it is.

And I do encourage people to pray for the ministry. But let me tell you something most of all, and especially as we begin this five-year program, will you pray that this poor preacher might have his eyes open, and as we go through this book, that the Spirit of God might be the teacher? I confess to you very frankly, we're not going to get anywhere at all if the Spirit of God is not our teacher. This is a closed book.

And it's the reason today that so many just don't get anything out of it. It's simply because they're not letting the Spirit of God teach them. Now, Paul makes it very clear that he was praying for that.

And this is his first prayer for these people, that they might have a wisdom and an understanding of the revelation of the knowledge of him. And the revelation is in the book here. Now, he wanted them to know the Word of God.

He wanted their eyes, their understanding to be enlightened. And you will recall that he also said to the Corinthians that eye hath not seen. Therefore, your eyes got to be open if you're going to see it.

And that your ear hath not heard. And it just can't come through the ear gate even on the radio. And I have discovered this after quite a few years of being a minister.

I find out that some people hear a message and they just turn the radio off. They say, that poor fellow, he's not saying anything. Then somebody else, why, they find in it a great blessing.

Well, what's the difference? Well, the difference has to be not in the message, because it has to be either one or the other. But the very interesting thing is, it's both. To the man who said it was foolishness unto him, well, it was foolishness unto him.

It actually was. And to the man, frankly, that it was a great blessing to his heart, well, isn't that what Paul said again to the Corinthians? For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. But unto us that are saved, it is the power of God unto salvation.

Now, isn't that an amazing thing? That one person, he hears one thing, and another person hears something else. What is the difference? The difference is the fact that the Spirit of God is the one that does the teaching. And that's the reason we ought to always, before you begin the study of the Word of God, friends, you ought to begin with prayer.

Ask the Spirit of God to open your heart, that you may hear the still, small voice of the Son of God. You remember that crowd there that day? A voice out of heaven said, This is my beloved Son. And he says, I've heard you, and I'll hear you again.

And there was some that was standing there, and you know what they said? They said it thundered. It was natural. And somebody else, they heard the Spirit of God speaking to the Son of God.

May I say to you, makes all the difference in the world today. And again, we're handling a supernatural book. Don't forget that.

It's a human book. It's got in it all kinds of things that deal with us human beings, because it was written to us. And God wanted to communicate to us, and He gave us this.

And He speaks our language. He speaks right to our hearts. He speaks to meet our needs today.

And that's so important to see. Now Paul writes to the Corinthians, and he says this. We've looked at this before.

Now ye have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God, which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. Now, you see, that's the reason that the Spirit of God must be our teacher, because we could never know the things of God unless the Spirit of God were our teacher.

Now I want to begin today with a very interesting verse of Scripture. I have read now from I Corinthians 2 on two separate occasions when we were looking at the book, and now since we have been considering this matter of always begin with prayer, but I bypassed one verse. I read before this verse, I read after this verse, but did not read it.

I'd like to read it today, and that's verse 11 of I Corinthians 2, for what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him, even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. Now that puts in a very succinct and certainly in an understandable manner of why the Spirit of God must be our teacher, because you and I understand each other, but we do not understand God. That is normally and naturally.

Only the Spirit of God can reveal the things of God to us. Now I mean that you and I understand each other. I believe that today that it's perfect nonsense to talk about that we've got a generation today that we can't communicate with.

We have the generation gap today. I recognize that's always been true, that it's difficult for an older person and a younger person to see eye to eye, but that's no reason why they can't communicate one with the other. We can communicate one with another because we're all human beings.

We understand each other, but I frankly don't understand God unless it's revealed to me. I don't know how God feels. I've often wondered, at least I used to wonder, well, I wonder how He'd feel at a funeral.

Well, go with the Lord Jesus. He went to several funerals. He always broke up a funeral, by the way, but I find Him there at the funeral of Lazarus saying, Jesus, well, I know how He feels today.

I know how He feels about many things, because the Spirit of God and the Word of God has revealed this to us today. No man knoweth the things of a man, for what man knoweth the things of a man save the

spirit of man which is in him. When I was Pastor in Nashville, Tennessee, I got up one bright morning and looked out my window, and during the night about five inches of snow had fallen and had covered up all of the ugliness that was around, the trees that had lost their leaves, the grass that was dead.

It was all covered with a beautiful white blanket. I sat upstairs in my study looking out over the scene, and right across the street from me, that is the same side that I was on, but directly across where the back end of his house was the same way mine was. I hope I've made that clear.

And I noticed this elder of mine who lived there, he came out on his porch, and he had two coal scuttles filled with ashes. He was going out to the alleyway to empty them there in a place that was put there for that purpose. And I saw him stop and look over the landscape, and I just smiled, because I knew how he felt.

You know how he felt? Just like I felt, looking out on that snow that had fallen during the night. And when he started down the steps, though, he slipped and fell. And he didn't want to, you know, spill ashes, so he just held them out.

And I want to tell you, he hit one of those steps with a real bump. And I watched him, and I couldn't help but laugh. I guess if he'd broken his neck, I would have laughed.

But I noticed that he looked around, and he was satisfied nobody had seen him. So he got up with great satisfaction, and he started out again. You know, he got about halfway out on the sidewalk, and we had a repeat performance, only this time he fell much farther, because it was all the way to the sidewalk.

And it looked to me like he bounced when he hit. And this time he really scanned the landscape. He didn't want anybody to see what he had done, you see.

And I knew how he felt. I'd feel the same way, be embarrassed. And so I laughed.

I couldn't help but laugh. He got up, and he looked over the landscape. He went out and emptied his ashes, and he started back, and he got back to the porch, and he looked over the landscape again.

I don't think over the time to see the snow, but I make good and sure that no one had seen him fall, at least twice. And so I didn't say a word until Sunday morning. And when he was sitting in church, when I came in, I went right by where he sat.

And I leaned down, and I said, You sure did look funny yesterday carrying out the ashes. And he looked at me in amazement. He said, Did you see me? And I said, Yes.

And he said, Well, I didn't think anybody saw me. And I said, I thought that. I said, I knew exactly how you felt.

You see, he had a human spirit. I have a human spirit. We understand each other.

And you and I understand each other, you see. And I don't think there's too much of a generation gap anywhere, because I think human beings understand each other. But who can understand each God? Well, the point is, Paul says, the Spirit of God.

And that's the reason that the Holy Spirit teacheth us comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Now, Renan, the French skeptic, he made an attack on the Word of God. I'm sure many of you have heard that or know

that.

Did you know that he wrote A Life of Christ? And his book is divided into two sections. One is the historical section. The other is the interpretation of Christ.

And as far as the first part is concerned, there probably has never been written a more brilliant life of Christ by any person. But his interpretation of Christ is positively absurd. I'm of the opinion that a 12-year-old Sunday school boy could do better.

Now, what's the explanation of that? Well, the Spirit of God doesn't need to teach you history, doesn't need to teach you facts that you can dig out for yourself. A very clever mind can dig all these out, and that's exactly what he had done. He'd made a real study.

But the interpretation is altogether different. The Spirit of God has to do the interpreting, and He alone must be the teacher to lead and guide us into all truth. We must have the Spirit of God to open our eyes to see.

The story is told of Holman Hunt, the great artist, who, by the way, was a Christian. And he had one time a one-man art show, and he had there a painting of a sunset. And it was a brilliant thing, a beautiful thing.

A lady came by. She was rather a country bumpkin. And she looked it over, and it was a startling thing to her, too.

But she made this comment. She said, whoever saw a sunset like that? And Holman Hunt, who was there, just happened to overhear what she said. And he replied.

He said, Madam, don't you wish you could see one like that? You know, there are many folk today who look at the Word of God, they read the Bible, they don't really see anything. They marvel and wonder how anyone could be interested in it. You find today many people.

I had a member of my own church make the statement, my, I wouldn't waste my time coming to Bible study on Thursday night. I'd have to drive fifteen miles. Well, that party will drive more than fifteen miles to see the Dodgers play or the Lakers play in a game.

And they go much farther than that for some little silly party that they put on. But no, not for Bible study. May I say to you, only the Spirit of God can reveal the wonders of the book to you.

And that, by the way, makes you wonder about some of our church folk. I take the position today that the Bible is the real test of a believer, and his attitude and relationship to the book is very important and should be taken in consideration. Now again, let me read a passage of Scripture that's very important, only I'm going to read all of it this time.

In this connection, it's John 16, 12-16. The Lord Himself made this statement, "...I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He'll guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He'll show you things to come.

He shall glorify Me, He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine. Therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you a little while, and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father." You see, the Lord Jesus

is saying that we're to ask.

He has many things for us, and He wants to reveal these things to us by the Holy Spirit. And He said in John 14, 26, "...but the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Now, the Holy Spirit is the Teacher, and He must be the one to lead us and to guide us into all truth. If you ever learn anything, my beloved, through this Bible study program that we're beginning now in just a few days to initiate, it will not be because this poor preacher is the Teacher.

It will be because the Spirit of God is opening up the Word of God to you. And you know what? We're going to depend on Him to do just that. This is the first guideline.

Begin with prayer. Ask the Spirit of God to be your Teacher.

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