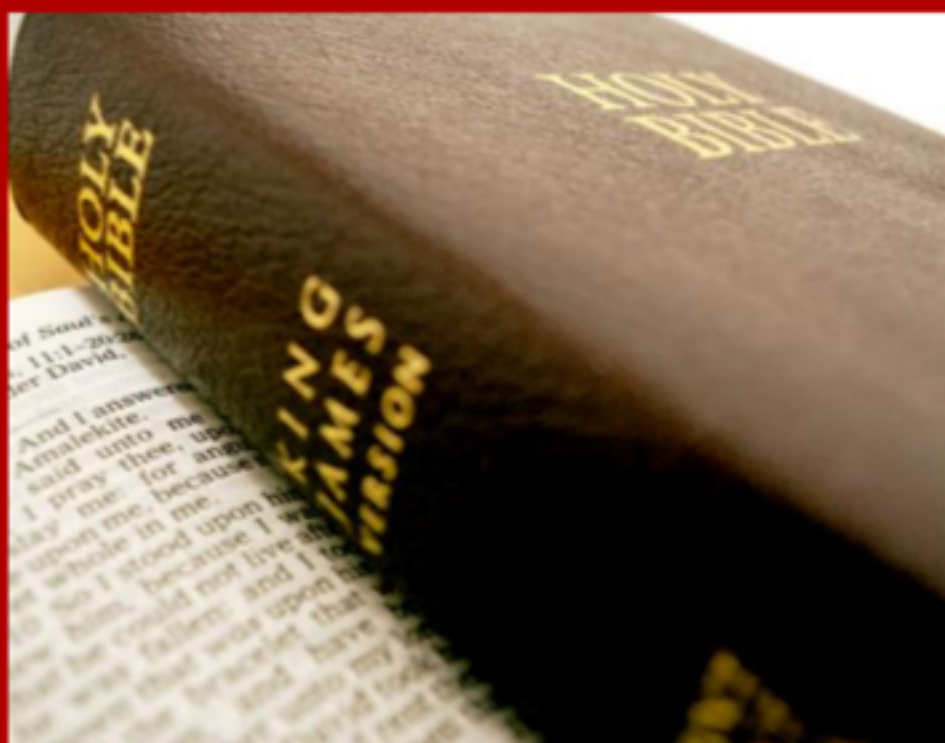


COMMENDING A HOLY DISCIPLINE

– *a requisite for the yield of an eternal bounty of blessedness and joyful harvest*



A Systematic Scheme To Facilitate
The Calibrated Reading Of The
Bible Synchronously So As To
Cover It In A Calendar Year

ELIJAH THOMAS CHACKO

It is our pleasure and privilege once again to commend to you the Systematic Bible Reading Scheme. It is designed to help you to cover the whole realm of the Scriptures in one calendar year, a practice that was cherished by some of our most eminent godly forebears. It is our desire that this discipline may enhance your acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures.

Many reasons are afforded for the spiritual dearth and desolation of one's life but perhaps the most fundamental problem is the neglect of the means of grace; the chiefest being the abandonment of the reading and meditation of the Bible. While I agree that this is largely a problem of discipline rather than one of deliberate avoidance, nevertheless the harm and damage to the soul is all the same. Nothing is more irreverent to life than a careless and haphazard attitude to the approach and use of the Word of God.

The principal intent of recommending the Bible Reading Scheme is to facilitate the reading of the whole Bible to synchronously cover the span of the calendar year; it is to help maintain discipline in the devotional practice of studying Scriptures daily. For when you attempt to keep abreast at it, you will uncover the strongholds of sin that fetter and prevent you from carrying out your noble resolution of reading the Bible daily. We then experience the forces of inhibition at work when it comes to according priority to this spiritual exercise. Yet the health and spiritual nurture of our soul depends very much upon the manner in which we employ the means of grace, particularly the reading of the Bible. We ought to redeem time and we are to make it count for eternity, but alas, the truth is that many do not even make the reading of the Holy Bible a daily necessity. The patriarch Job said of the Word of God: *"I have esteemed the words of His mouth*

*more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12b). How needful it is for us to establish this discipline of delighting in the Scriptures daily. I know of pastors who are intimidated by the prospect of preaching from the Old Testament Scriptures; what then of the congregations under their charge? Consider for instance the Dispensational error in their theological stance as they affirm: “Fundamental doctrines (of their churches): ... (5) Its laws and doctrines: The New Testament and that only” (*The Trail Of Blood:- Following the Christians Down through the Centuries – or, The History of Baptist Churches from the Time of Christ, Their Founder, to the Present Day, by J.M. Carroll, 1931*). I know of Bible college students who are flagrantly ignorant of rudimentary Scriptural truths yet attempting to muster proficiency in Hebrew and Greek languages in their theological curriculum. I know of doctors in Bible seminaries who do not really believe that the Bible is the Word of God. Surely the root of unbelief stems from the sheer dereliction of this practice of reading the Holy Writ. Truly the last days have arrived and perilous times are prevailing, when men shall be, as Paul said, “*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*” (II Timothy 3:4b). But we do not want to forget the wonderful and sure antidote that Paul recommended to Timothy so that his heart would not wax cold in the frightening chill of apostasy pervasive in Christendom then: “*But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived*” (II Timothy 3:13). So, what is Paul’s prescription for such a lethal and widespread spiritual epidemic? “*But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for**

instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:14-17). Note that in enjoining Timothy to engage himself continually in the Scriptures, Paul recommended the whole Scriptures (all Scripture). In those days the canonicity of the New Testament was yet to be established, wherefore there is little doubt that Paul was particularly referring to the Old Testament Scriptures.

He who makes a discipline of reading the Scriptures comprehensively will eventually discover the effects of the imputation of the fall of our primeval parents and the power of sin in his own life. He will have a growing sense of the infinite perfection of the attributes of the blessed Persons of the Godhead. He would then appreciate deeply the provision of the mediatorship, surety and saviourhood in the Person of Jesus Christ, the perfect Sacrifice that God Himself has provided for His people. Thereafter, by the grace of God, he would be impelled to certify to himself to have an interest in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. He will then endeavour to enjoy the spiritual privileges and graces that are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). For all these, he has the Scriptures as his light and compass to grant him a sure sense of direction and a quantum of assurance concerning his prevailing disposition. *"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"* (Psalm 119:105).

O, what delights await us when we indulge in the Scriptures. I know of those who preoccupy themselves with religious books at the expense of spending time in the Scriptures. Sadly, this is a subtle form of the principle of papacy which discourages its adherents from being engrossed in the Scriptures. Nothing should take the place and primacy of the meditation of the Scriptures. How can

we meditate upon the Scriptures if in the first place we do not read it at all?

Go to the nearest Christian book-store and it is very likely that you will shudder at the dearth of good spiritual material for sale. The proprietor might well enunciate the rule of economics that supply must meet demand. But tragically this reflects the appetite of the patrons. How can there be spiritual hunger and thirst if the Bible is so grossly neglected and ignored? How can there be maintenance of spiritual desires and effects, if the habit of reading the Bible is something that is determined by moods or human capriciousness or the availability of the residue of our time after catering to the things of this world?

My dear friends, one thing is needful. As our Lord Jesus Christ gently admonished Martha, we too ought not to be encumbered in the things of this world. To sit at Jesus' feet to hear His words, as Mary did, is the one thing needful (Luke 10:42). We recollect the unforgettable words of our Lord "*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life*" (John 6:63b). It remains for us to verify this truth experimentally in our own lives. For the meditation of Scriptures brings unspeakable delight when it is done in faith and diligence. There is no greater practical way to wait upon the Lord than to dwell upon the Scriptures. "*Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors. For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD*" (Proverbs 8:34,35). The man who waits at the posts of God's doors does so reading the Bible in faith and expectancy.

Having appreciated the vital importance of such a holy habit and having perceived how difficult it is to keep this up merely by the resolve of the

flesh, then anything that fosters this holy discipline should be welcomed! Wherefore we are glad to endorse this scheme to you, unless you have adopted some other acceptable scheme for the self-same purpose.

I desire that at the end of the new year, you may not regret for having squandered the spiritual resources and opportunities that God would so graciously make available to you. For it is said of the prodigal that he *“wasted his substance with riotous living... had spent all”* (Luke 15:13b,14a). It is therefore essential for us to beseech the Almighty God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us mercy to intimately acquaint ourselves with His Word. Let this resolve be ardently committed to God the Father, the Giver of every good gift and every perfect gift (James 1:17). For when this is mercifully granted, almost everything else is put to perspective. I suggest therefore you employ the acrostic song of Psalm 119 as a special and personal prayer for the purpose of fulfilling this quest in your own life. The good Lord be pleased to answer you in this most needful matter. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be effectual in your lives. May you taste more of the power of the Word of God as you sojourn by faith in the remaining days of your earthly pilgrimage. ❧

 **The Westminster Tradition**
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE REFORMED FAITH

Publishing Abroad And Shunning Not To Declare All The Counsel Of God

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