

“Of the Making of Many Books There is No End”

By Paul R. Blake

“And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Ecc. 12:12). Solomon clearly evidenced the wisdom of inspiration when he penned this passage. He was the writer of a number of books, three of which are in the Old Testament. In addition, he wrote 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs (1Kings 4:32), as well as Psalms 72 and 127. However, spiritual study is not the object of Solomon's admonition. We are encouraged in both Testaments to spend time with Holy Writ in order to better understand the will of God and to draw closer to Him through His word. The 119th Psalm is an outpouring of the joy David felt over learning the precepts of the Lord. Paul told Timothy to be diligent in gaining the approval of God through rightly dividing His word.

In addition, the Preacher of Ecclesiastes is not warning God's children away from the written works of faithful men. Solomon himself created more songs and proverbs than can be found in the pages of the inspired books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or Song of Solomon. A great host of Christians have grown spiritually by reading and encouraging or edifying article in a bulletin. Sinners have been converted by reading a tract that convicted them of error and outlined the plan of salvation from sin. Young evangelists have had difficult issues made clear for them by the well written books of godly men. Granted, one must be cautious by knowing that what is written by men can never void what was inspired of God.

Furthermore, Solomon is not teaching that one should avoid reading and studying secular writings. He is stating that the production of secular works is virtually limitless, i.e. that it would not be possible to read all of them, let alone retain most of what one reads in them. In fact, Solomon points out that to make the attempt to read and know all things that men have written would be detrimental to one's own health. Yet again, he is not forbidding reading and studying the writings of men, he is warning of “much study,” indicating excess of attention to secular writings.

Rather, the wise king is enjoining God's people to have balance in their lives. An old saying goes something like “Reading makes a full man; writing makes a correct man; speaking makes a ready man.” Paul drew a connection between study and proper understanding of truth (2Tim. 2:15). Peter linked prior study to preparedness to defend our faith (1Peter 3:15). When we study the word of God, when we are edified by what devout men have written about the truth, and when we have a good knowledge of the world around us and how it works as well as the people in it and how they think, then we are fully living what Solomon wrote. We will have the right balance, the proper mix, that will enable us to grow in faith, to teach the lost, to edify our brother, and to put to silence the opponents of truth.

Consider the consequences of reading and studying only. What time has such a one set aside to share what he has learned with others? It would be as if one went to public school for his entire lifetime. While he has learned, he has not put his learning to any practical use.

Secondly, what time has such a person set aside to practice what he has learned? How can he prove that he has truly learned anything until he exercises what he has learned? Eventually he must lay aside the books and put into effect the principles he studied.

Third, while he is engaged in study, the rest of his existence lies idle. Physically, the sedentary life of a student leads to a body weakened by inactivity. Mentally, the isolation of the study room precludes interaction with other people and separates one from other stimulating activities. Social skills begin to deteriorate. Emotionally, one can become stilted and dull as the unending rows of words on the pages of the “many books.”

Solomon's message of balance is important. Too little study will lead to ignorance, and ignorance brings sin, suffering, and poverty. Too much study leads to a life wasted in an attempt to do the impossible, that is, trying to fit the ocean of human written works into the limited space

of a human mind in three score and ten years. Therefore, study the word of God diligently, read some of the things godly men have written, learn about the world around you. And then, go out and practice what you have learned and teach it to others.

Nobody Says Amen

By Ernestine Adkins

We come in early and take our pew,
And we sit there quietly for an hour or two.
The preacher has a cute little sermonette,
And he starts with a joke so we won't forget.
Some of us mumble a few short songs --
No instrumental music, for we know that's wrong.
We take communion with a somber face,
And we throw in a dollar when they pass the plate.
We repeat long prayers with heads bowed low,
Shake hands all around, grab our Bible and go.
The strongest of us will return at dark;
For when the doors are opened, we take our part.
In decency and order we place great store,
But nobody says amen any more.

What Is Indiscriminate Compassion?

“Take a look at a rose. Is it possible for the rose to say, “I'll offer my fragrance to good people and withhold it from bad people?” Or can you imagine a lamp that withholds its rays from a wicked person who seeks to walk in its light? It could do that only by ceasing to be a lamp. And observe how indiscriminately a tree gives its shade to everyone, good and bad, young and old, high and low; to animals and humans and every living creature -- even to the one who seeks to cut it down. This is the first quality of compassion -- its indiscriminate character.”
(Anthony DeMello)

A Moments Wisdom

--Someone has said that the only Bible which millions of people read today is the daily example of Christians, your example and mine.
--Prayer is the language of the children of God. He who is begotten of God speaks this language. He calls God Abba, Father, in the true spirit of supplication.
--Bereavement is the deepest initiation into the mysteries of human life, an initiation more searching and profound than even happy love. Bereavement is the sharpest challenge to our trust in God; if faith can overcome this, there is no mountain which it cannot remove.
--Pure wisdom always directs itself towards God, and the purest wisdom is in knowing God.
--Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.
--We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light. (Plato)
--How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a weary world.
(Shakespeare)