

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## When It Was A Crime To Read The Bible

By Joe R. Price

By the start of the third decade of the 16th century, William Tyndale had already been on the run for five years. The king of England, Henry VIII, had declared him a felon. Fleeing Roman Catholic authorities in London (never to return to England), he went first to Cologne, France, and then Worms, Germany. What crime had this “evil” man committed? Of what rebellious act of treason was he guilty? He dared to translate and then print the New Testament in the English language!

In England in the 1520’s (indeed, throughout Europe during the middle ages), unless you were literate in Hebrew, Greek or Latin, reading the Bible for yourself was impossible. You had to rely upon what the Roman Catholic clergy said the Bible contained. You would not have been able to study the Bible for yourself to discern the truth for yourself – much less be free to practice what you learned therein. Rome ruled with an iron hand.

The Catholic Church did not want nor permit a wide transmission of the Bible and its contents. When Tyndale’s NT was published in Worms, 6,000 copies were shipped back to England. Medieval historian William Manchester reports,

*“To the bishop of London this was an intolerable, metastasizing heresy. He bought up all that were for sale and publicly burned them at St. Paul’s Cross. But the archbishop of Canterbury was dissatisfied; his spies told him that many remained in private hands. Protestant peers with country houses were loaning them out, like public libraries. Assembling his bishops, the archbishop declared that tracking them down was essential – each was placing souls in jeopardy – and so, on his instructions, dioceses organized posses, searching the homes of known literates, and offered rewards to informers – sending out the alarm to keep Christ’s revealed word from those who worshiped him.”* (*A World Lit Only By Fire*, 204-205)

Tyndale was eventually arrested and imprisoned for sixteen months in the castle of Vilvorde, near Brussels. In 1536, after being tried and convicted for heresy he was publicly executed, being tied to a stake, strangled to death, and then his corpse burned.

As we consider Tyndale’s struggle and sacrifice to provide the common Englishman with readable, discernable scriptures, we are made to thank God for the daily ease and convenience with which we can open the Bible and study it for ourselves. We are made to cherish the privilege that is ours to pour over the divine text, understand it, reflection upon it, think over it so as to bring our hearts and lives into harmony with it, as well as also teach it to others (Eph. 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Tim. 2:2).

If you have been neglecting to read, learn and live God’s word, please remember the good fortune you have: education and access – the abundant opportunity to read and know God’s word. To not drinking deeply from its well is to squander a precious blessing (cf. Jas. 4:17).

The next time you pick up your Bible and read it, remember the sacrifices of countless others who have made that simple act possible. But above all, remember the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His life on the cross and was then resurrected from the dead so that you know the truth, abide in His word and thus be freed from your sin (Jn. 8:31-36; 1:1-3, 14-18). – *The Spirit’s Sword*, November 25, 2001. ■

## Some Requirements of Bible Faith

Bible faith requires diligent study which involves reading – *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15).

Bible faith requires action – *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was”* (Jas. 1:22-24).

Bible faith requires reading and understanding what was divinely written – *“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ”* (Eph. 3:3; cf. Acts 8:30; Eph. 5:17).

Bible faith requires desire – *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”* (Matt. 5:6; cf. 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18).

We must have a healthy appetite for spiritual food in order to properly grow and maintain our faith in Christ. Daily reading will help nurture desire for spiritual things. It is my prayer that you will use the *5-Day Bible Reading Program* and make it a point to read God’s word regularly. – *tgmc* ■



### Bible Reading

By Alexander Campbell

Christians, do you read the Bible in your families every day? Do you read it in your closet every day? And do you read it not to quiet your conscience as a work of penance; but do you read it as a pleasure anxiously to be sought after? If you do, I need not tell you what utility, pleasure, and happiness is in the blessed employment. But if you do not, you may rest assured there is something greatly wrong, which, if it is not abandoned, subdued, or vanquished soon, will cause you sorrows, if not agonies, when you will be less able to conflict with them than at present. Resolve this moment, I pray you, that you will begin today to read the Bible, to enjoy God and Christ and the hope of immortality. *“Let not mercy and truth forsake thee, bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart; so shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.”* Then will you say with Solomon, *“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that getteth understanding: for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared with her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor: her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”* “Begin today: ‘tis madness to defer.” The religious world – I mean the great majority of all professors – are Bible neglecters. Their ignorance, prejudice, and error show it. I beseech you, daily, habitually, constantly, prayerfully read the Bible in its proper connections, and you will grow in grace as you grow in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord. The Lord will bless you, as he has said, in this deed. Read James 1:22-25, and may you prove it true! – *The Millennial Harbinger*, January, 1839. ■



### No Time for Bible Reading?

How much time does it take to read from Genesis to Revelation? If you would read the Bible at a standard pulpit speed (slow enough to be heard and understood), the reading time would be seventy-one (71) hours. If you would break that down into minutes and divide it into 365 days, you could read the entire Bible, cover to cover, in only 12 minutes a day. Is this too much time to spend reading about God? – *Selected* ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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