



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XIX  
Issue 472

## Another Cook at "Bible Study"

### The Misuse of II Timothy 2:15 and the Abuse of Christ's Body

Part 1 of 4

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (KJV).*

#### INTRODUCTION

Our natural tendency is to view things from the perspective of our own environments. Religious teaching and traditions, along with social norms and standards, play major roles in our preconceived ideas about everything. In other words, it is our predisposition to view everything through religious and social filters.

The believer's journey is a *progressive* freedom from such predetermined notions. An underlying role of the Bible teacher is the challenging of such religious and social viewpoints through the enlightenment of the Scriptures, thus bringing *genuine* liberty to the heart and life of the believer.

The true teacher of Scripture does not exercise dominion over the faith of his listeners but is a helper of their joy, resulting in their individual stand in faith (II Corinthians 1:24).<sup>1</sup> This joyful position in faith is inherent in deliverance from religion's and society's vanity and enslavement (Galatians 5:1).<sup>2</sup>

With this in mind, the goal of this study will be to:



- Clarify the truth regarding "study";
- Give us greater appreciation for our place on the stage of human history;
- Provide gratitude for our access to the Scriptures;
- Bring humble thanksgiving to our hearts;
- Validate the teaching ministry;
- Remind us that modern man should not attach new meaning to Scriptures that did not exist for the contemporaries of its authors;
- Remove unnecessary burdens caused by the misuse of Scripture passages.

#### AN IMAGINARY "STUDY"

Imagine with me: You are a student of Scripture. You sit in an empty room. Your purpose in this room is to dedicate yourself to getting to the truth of Scripture. You'll devote the next 10 years to study. Because the room is empty, you'll need to bring your own study resources.

Here are the "rules" for this imaginary "study":

- (1) You will not be able to carry your computer or any other electronic devices with you.

(By the way, how many of you came to truth by some

1. "Not that we are lording it over your faith, but are fellow workers of your joy, for you stand fast in the faith" (Concordant Version).  
2. "For freedom Christ frees us! Stand firm, then, and be not again enthralled with the yoke of slavery." (Concordant Version).

## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
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- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
  - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

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*STUDY (continued from front page)*

electronic means that, only a few years ago, did not even exist? This is extremely humbling, is it not?)

- (2) You can bring only 10 books with you.
- (3) You will not be able to acquire any additional books once you get there.
- (4) Name the 10 books you would bring.

My own personal selections would be:

- ✓ *Concordant NT* (1926)
- ✓ *Concordant OT* (2008)
- ✓ *Concordant Greek Text* (1926)
- ✓ *Dabhar Transalation* (2005)
- ✓ *The Companion Bible* (Bullinger, 1914)
- ✓ *Critical Greek Lexicon* (Bullinger, 1887)
- ✓ *Figures of Speech* (Bullinger, 1898)
- ✓ *Concordant Commentary* (Knoch, 1968)
- ✓ *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (1890)
- ✓ *The Problem of Evil* (Knoch, 1976)

Notice that I have placed beside each of my selections their original dates of publication. The oldest resource on my list is only 127 years old (1887).<sup>3</sup> (The house I live in is nearly that old!)

What's my point? Well, if I went back to 1886, none of my chosen tools would exist. If I wanted them in 1886, I would be forced to re-create all of the eventual work that would end up being done by Bullinger, Knoch, Strong and the various translators of my 10 chosen books.

When we consider how advantaged we are with so many study tools, it is extremely humbling, is it not?

Keep all of this in mind, as we'll revisit this point later.

### QUESTIONS RELATED TO "STUDYING"

Now that we have our imaginary "study" in place, let's ask some basic questions.

Why would anyone study the Scriptures? Would it not be, at least initially, to get at the truth of Scriptures?

3. For historical perspective, 1887 is the year that the US leased Pearl Harbor from Hawaii, and the year that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes story was published.

Then we must beg to ask, *Exactly what is "studying"?*

Is it simply a matter of reading the Bible? Of reading Bible study books? Of acquiring and utilizing the right Bible study tools?

Is the issue in "Bible Study" the *quality* of effort involved? Is it a matter of applying the right amount of labor? Will the *harder* one studies be a guarantee of anything?

Or, is it an issue of the *quantity* of study? Is it a matter of investing the proper amount of time? Will the *longer* one studies be a guarantee of anything?

Will *any* of these assure that we will acquire knowledge of the truth?

### IS BIBLE STUDY THE KEY TO TRUTH ACQUISITION?

Take Joel and Tom studying any given topic in Scripture. Let's say Joel spends 30 years studying a certain subject and Tom spends three months studying the same one. Which one will arrive at *the truth* regarding their themes? We can't really answer that question, can we?

The fact that Joel spent 30 years is no guarantee that he will have the correct understanding. The fact that Tom studied for only three months is no indication that his understanding will be incorrect or inadequate.

Let's look at it another way. Let's say Joel has a large library filled with many volumes of Bible study resources, while Tom has only a very meager selection. Now, which one will arrive at *the truth* regarding their themes? Again, we can't answer that question.

The fact that Joel has far greater resource tools is no assurance that he will have the correct understanding, and the fact that Tom has only a handful of aids is no suggestion that his understanding will be incorrect.

That students invests many hours, weeks, months or years in a particular study, and may have amassed large collections of resource tools, might reveal that they are *passionate* about their subject – but it is no guarantee that they are *correct*. ▶

Neither does a relatively small amount of time spent in study, with few aids, mean that one is less passionate or that one does not have a firm grasp of the truth.

Paul speaks of those who are,

*Always learning and yet not at any time able to come into a realization of the truth (II Timothy 3:7).*

Why is this so? How can this be? It is because the key to grasping truth is **faith**, and faith is a **gift**.

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8)*

*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29)*

You could even be shut up in your “study” with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and not get to the truth. We know this because many of those who were exposed to His earthly teaching ministry were blinded to it.

*Yet, after His having done so many signs in front of them, they believed not in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet, which he said, may be being fulfilled, “Lord, who believes our tidings? And the arm of the Lord, to whom was it revealed?” Therefore they could not believe, seeing that Isaiah said again that “He has*

*blinded their eyes and callouses their heart, lest they may be perceiving with their eyes, and should be apprehending with their heart, and may be turning about, and I shall be healing them” (John 12:37).*

It is important to remember that we don’t find God; He finds us. We don’t find the truth; the truth finds us.

Truth is not earned or learned – truth is revealed.  
– Al Stahl

This is extremely humbling, is it not?

### THE “STUDY COMMAND”

I’m going to give you a verse. It’s a verse that I formerly used to place people into bondage. For three decades it was my underlying insistence to others. It’s II Timothy 2:15. Here it is as I gave it to them:

*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (KJV).*

My constant assertion that others study *as I did* was a result of tradition, mistranslation and misapplication.

### Use of the Word “Study” in Scripture

For as often as I mentioned “study” in those 30 years, you would think that it was the *major* theme of the



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Scriptures. You would imagine that the Bible is filled with it. The truth is startling.

"Study" is used:

- 3 times in the *King James Version*
- 2 times in the *Concordant Version*
- 0 times in the *Dabhar Version*

Here are the three usages of "study" in the *King James Version*:

*Of making many books there is no end; and much **study** is a weariness of the flesh* (Ecclesiastes 12:12).

***Study** to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you* (I Thessalonians 4:11).

***Study** to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth* (II Timothy 2:15).

Here are the two usages of "study" in the *Concordant Version*.

*Of the making of many scrolls there is no end, and much **study** is weariness to the flesh* (Ecclesiastes 12:12).

***Study** [consider] the anemones [lilies] of the field, how they are growing* (Matthew 6:28).

The *Dabhar Version* does not use the English word "study" as a translation of any Hebrew or Greek words. Here are the English words used by the *Dabhar* in the above references:

Ecclesiastes 12:12

**"discovery"**

Matthew 6:28

**"down-learn"**

I Thessalonians 4:11

**"value as befrieworthy"**

II Timothy 2:15

**"Be diligent"**



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The Greek word rendered “study” in the *King James Version* is σπουδάζω (*spoudazō*). Here is its definition:

- use speed, that is, to make effort, be prompt or earnest (Strong)<sup>4</sup>
- to hasten, make haste, to exert one's self, endeavor, give diligence (Thayer)<sup>5</sup>
- to speed, make haste (as manifested in diligence, earnestness, zeal, etc.) (Bullinger)<sup>6</sup>
- be-diligent (Knoch)<sup>7</sup>

Based on the meaning of the Greek word, how did the English word “study” even get into II Timothy 2:15?

Surely no one would deny that “studying” could, or even should, be a part of the “diligence” to which Paul refers; but it is not the meaning of the word used by Paul.

Here is how literal versions translate σπουδάζω (*spoudazō*) in II Timothy 2:15:

*Endeavor (CV).*  
*Be diligent (Young; Dabhar)*  
*Give diligence (Rotherham)*

### WRITTEN TO TIMOTHY

This may come as a shock to you, but II Timothy 2:15 is actually *not* an instruction to the Body of Christ at-

4. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Greek Dictionary.
5. *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*.
6. *Critical Lexicon*.
7. *Concordant Keyword Concordance*.

large, but is a commission to a *certain* member of the Body of Christ: Timothy, Paul's successor.

This instruction, like others found given to Timothy in this same book (*i.e.*, “*Herald the word*”<sup>8</sup> and “*do the work of an evangelist*”<sup>9</sup>) can't properly be charged to the Body of Christ as a whole. Doing so actually violates the rest of injunction to, “*rightly divide the Word of Truth.*”

### PLEASE DON'T MISUNDERSTAND

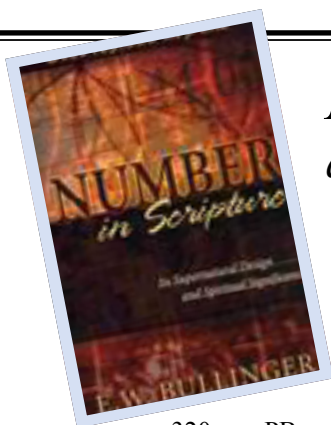
It is critical that you do not misunderstand my point here. I am not attacking the study of Scripture, or diminishing its importance in any way. The simple fact is that I have devoted my life to the study of Scripture. It is my passion.

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Our weekly periodical is the *Bible Student's Notebook*. Our main book publishing imprint is *Bible Student's Press*, and our online radio station is *Bible Student's Radio*. So, to think that I am saying that the study of the Scriptures are not important to me would be to misunderstand what I am saying.

(*To be continued.*)

8. 4:2.
9. 4:5.



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