

## So Very Often. . .

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So very often when I read the Bible I do not study it. Oh, I look up from the words once in a while or reread them so that I might think about them a little more—but so very often I run stuck. And it is easy for my mind to wander. My mind does not think too long about just one thing, but it likes to bring in other thoughts which have nothing to do with the words I read. No, I will not kid myself or you: I am the one who likes with my mind so often to think about everything else except the subject at hand. Thus, when in my hand is the Bible, I often imagine it were a tennis racket or a novel or some sort of puzzle with which I could play. So often it is that I am crying to myself with the Bible open before me: “Oh that I could do anything but study the Scriptures!”

Why just the other day I was reading in Luke the 12th chapter. As so very often is the case, I was reading in the Bible just so that I would feel good about having read at least something. I was in that lazy frame of mind where it did not matter to me how much I understood, nor did it matter if I learned anything new or anything old in a new way. No, I just wanted to get through my daily routine which I so often pretend is devotion to God. Reading then I was fighting off boredom. Actually, I was not even fighting: reading, and right there in Luke, the words of our Savior even, was a real chore.

Please, I must show you how and what I was thinking.

The words of Jesus in Luke 12:29 were before my blank eyes: “And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.” I had just eaten a couple of burgers and corn and ice cream for dessert and had washed it all down with some Mountain Dew. I was full. So full was I that most of my blood was down in my stomach, I am sure, helping me to digest. Only enough blood was in my head so that I could think that sleeping would be a very good thing to do soon. Jesus’ words I did not hope to study. Indeed, at that point all I longed for, after this big meal and after such a long day at work, was a nap; all I wanted was to catch a few winks. The Bible would soon be my blanket.

“Why,” you ask, “did you pick up the Bible in the first place?” The answer is: I really do not know. Maybe I picked it up as I pick up and read the Press. Reading the Press I choose what I want to read and disregard the rest. Also of press articles I judge what is true and what is false and what is important and what is unimportant. Yes, I do think that in my tired and lazy state I was reading God’s Word as if I were skimming the headlines, glancing at an editorial, or reading statistics in the sports section. What was true to me in the Bible was only what I wanted to see with eyes half-shut and with my mind set to justify myself. I was full of myself, and there was no room, no room in my heart, to eat and digest God’s meat and drink of His Word!

Bound for bed I quickly read: “And seek not ye what ye shall eat. . .” Our Lord must not have been referring to me in this verse in Luke 12, I reasoned. Why I am full of food and surely do not need to be warned not to anxiously seek what I am already full of. If I do get hungry after my nap there is plenty more food and drink in the refrigerator—no doubting that! This verse must be especially for Christians in Ethiopia. I could even upon reading that verse say to myself:

“Our God is great Who provides for us in such abundance! Now He is providing me with sleep—the sleep of the righteous!”

That verse read much to my satisfaction, my eyes began to quiver shut. Before I dozed off however, I shifted my place in my easy chair and shook my head back and forth to clear my mind. You see, I was determined to get at least one chapter of news!

Verse 30: “For all these things do the nations of the world seek after. . .” Well, I can be quick about this one I thought. After all, I have been taught that as a covenant child I am not of the world even though I am in it. The word “world”, I began to argue with an imaginary foe, must be understood in its

context. Here in Luke 12:30 the context is clear: world, nations of the world, must refer to all those who are not of the little flock (verse 32). I, who am different from the world (and proof of this is that I so faithfully open my Bible!), must only remember not to be like them.

Verse 31: “but rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Not doubting the promise of this verse for a minute, I could boldly say with all my heart: God has been good in adding unto me all the food and drink I just had, parents, friends, this chair in which I now rest. . . And He has added all this because I seek the kingdom of God. How good of me to seek and how good of God to reward me for my seeking!

Verse 32: “Fear not. . .”

As so very often when I come upon the word “fear” in Scripture I right away thought of those perilous end-times. In those dark days, I thought, maybe in 50 years from now, when the church is being persecuted, we will look at this verse and be comforted. For now, I must only remember in case anyone quizzes me that the Bible tells us not to fear. Fear is for babies who cannot defend themselves. Also, the warning not to fear is especially for those last Christians. They will be on earth trembling in caves when in the future the nations of the world will try to overthrow their faith. Again and again in that last age to come God’s people will have to remember not to fear.

Verses 33 and 34 of Luke 12 I read having crawled onto the floor in order to prepare myself for a delicious sleep. Maybe I was not really that determined to finish the chapter after all. There I was lying stretched-flat-out on our shag rug with a pillow tucked under my chin, my glasses laid to the side. From this comfortable position I yawningly concluded that these verses must have applied only to the stingy disciples in Jesus’ time. They had to be told “sell that ye have and give alms.” The treasures of salvation in Jesus Christ, and of salvation by grace alone, did not glitter so much to them as to us. We have had for almost 2000 years now His Holy Spirit poured out upon the church and in our hearts telling us better things than could be imagined before Pentecost. Among the better things we hear is that there are deacons now who are supposed to give alms. We ought to be thankful that that burden is placed only upon a few men, and not upon us all. . .

My eyes snapped shut and I must have sunk into sleep for about 15 seconds. When I jolted awake my chin was still on the pillow, but my Bible had slipped from my fingers and my head had tilted slightly off to the right. I fumbled for the Bible and tried to read the next verse. “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. . .”

Loins? What are loins?.. I wondered. Sounds like something good to eat. We must gird them about with onions and peppers from the garden. Right at this moment, however, I do not need them. And girding them about I can only look forward to when I am hungry again, *zzz*. . .

As so very often is the case, I fell asleep reading the Bible. Maybe next time I will be able to study, and with you, what is seeking the kingdom by this, what seems to be a strange means indeed, of girding our loins and burning our lights. Until then may we sincerely pray that the Lord will wake us up. And as those who are awake may we be fighters, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5).

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