

Search The Holy Bible!

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Introduction

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life and these are they which testify of me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40).

In Alexandria I visited one of my beloveds, whose young son had just passed away a few days before. I found him holding the Holy Bible with a sweet smile on his face. After we had a joyful gathering around the Holy Bible he told me, "I am facing great difficulty in leaving the Holy Bible and opening the door to those who come to comfort me. I tend to ask the visitor to read the Bible with me, and only then I truly find an exceeding divine condolence.

"I know many people that, when they open the Holy Bible, feel as if the doors of heaven have been opened before them, and their souls hover with the wings of the Spirit and enjoy an inexpressible heavenly joy. Yet others find extreme difficulty in reading the Bible on a daily basis. What is reason behind that?"

FIRST: AN ETHICAL CONSTITUTION OR A MEETING WITH GOD

There is a great difference between a person who reads or studies the Bible as a duty to receive a blessing or as a creed that by which he must abide in order to become a kind and useful person in society and a believer that lifts up his or her heart, asking the Holy Spirit of God to raise him or her as if to Paradise. The latter would enter with familiarity into God's bosom, experience the partnership with Christ the Redeemer, and enjoy the dwelling of the Holy Trinity within him, being a holy temple. He would truly and pragmatically realize God's words: "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).

Our Lord Jesus Christ says: "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life and these are they that testify of me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40). **St. John Chrysostom** argued that this statement refers to those who search for precious metals inside the earth. They dig mines and search carefully for precious metals until they find it. Likewise, we should diligently search the Bible in order to enjoy meeting with the Savior. Some leaders of the Jews searched the Holy Bible insincerely, presenting studies and interpretations while ignoring their essence, i.e., meeting with the Messiah and getting to know Him. They don't want to meet with Him, or believe in Him, to enjoy eternal life.

St. Mark the Ascetic maintained that the Word of God is concealed behind the letters of the Bible and behind the divine commandments. Therefore, when we study the Bible and practice the commandments it is proper for us to enjoy meeting with the Desire of the nations, our Christ, the Granter of the eternal life.

SECOND: ENJOYING THE WORD OF PROPHECY

St. Peter says: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy which you would do well to heed, as unto a light that shines in the darkness until the dawn when the sun arises in your hearts. Know this first -- no prophecy of the Scripture has any private interpretation. For prophecy came not in antiquity by the will of man, but holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:19-21). He also said: "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry. They inquired about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when It testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and His subsequent glory." (1 Peter 1:10-11).

Our Lord Jesus Christ used these prophecies in His conversation with His two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus on the day of His resurrection: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them all the Scriptures of the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27), so that their hearts burned within them while He was talking with them.

THIRD: LEADING US TO HEAVEN

Wretched is the one that confines himself in the letter of the law without having his soul gush with the Spirit of God to experience the words of the Apostle: "... and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).

St. John Chrysostom said:

"You have heard the apostolic voice: It is a heavenly trumpet! It is the harp of the spirit!

"Indeed, reading the Holy Bible is like being in a garden! It is verily a paradise that does not just offer flagrant flowers but rather fruit that is capable of feeding the soul!

"We are like people smelting gold extracted from the apostolic mines, not by throwing it in the oven but by keeping it in the minds of our souls; not by burning it with earthly fire, but by the flame of the spirit!

"Let us diligently gather its small pieces, for pearls are not valued for their size but for their beauty."

He also said: "It is not possible for one who was blessed by the power of God's word to remain in this present degradation, but rather he would seek to acquire wings with which he would use to immediately soar toward the heavenly land."

"Reading the Holy Bible is exceptionally useful, for it makes the soul wise, directing the spirit toward heaven and man towards thanksgiving. It destroys the desire for earthly matters and enables our minds to continuously meditate in the coming world.

"Behold how the evangelist John drew our souls from the beginning, granting them wings, and lifted up the minds of his listeners. He lifts them up even higher than all other material matters, higher than earth and heaven, gripping the hands of his listeners and leading them above the angels themselves -- above the Cherubim and the Seraphim, above the Thrones, the Principalities and the Lordships. In brief, he leads them into a journey that crosses above all creatures."

FOURTH: ENGENDERING INNER JOY

Unfortunately, some may argue that the divine commandment is hard to keep -- even impossible -- for they view it as a literal and rigid rule that binds their freedom. However, the one that sits with the Word of God and discovers his weaknesses will confess them before God Who knows his inner thoughts and would in turn reveal His divine mysteries unto him so he may feel no more guilt. Rather, his soul would rejoice God, the Forgiver of sins, and enjoy knowing the mysteries of its heavenly Groom.

St. John Chrysostom says: "Desire to study the Holy Bible; for if you do, the Bible would take away your despondency and engender joy within you. It will eradicate vice and deepen virtue, saving you from the clamor of life and from rebellious waves. For the sea is rough, but you will sail it in a quiet and secure ship. Studying the Holy Bible is like a captain that leads your lives and like an anchor that the temptations of life cannot destroy."

FIFTH: GRANTING ENLIGHTENMENT TO THE SOUL

In His care for us God, the Lover of mankind, grants food to the body as well as to the soul, for the Bible is a bountiful table that satiates, waters, feeds and nourishes the soul so that it would never feel any need!

St. Jacob of Serugh says: "Your light shines from the Bible like the sun, and he that wants to read the Bible will be enlightened. The word of God is full of light, hope, life and every benefit to those that hear it. God has put the Holy Bible in the world like a luminescence to light its darkness. Thus, one should enlighten one's soul by reading the Bible and walking in its path."

SIXTH: IT IS THE PASTURE OF THE SOUL AND ITS SWEET FOOD

St. Jacob of Serugh maintains: "The words of the divine Bible are pastures of power. Thus, tend to

it, O spiritual one, find pleasure, grow and live well. The gospel is a spiritual paradise within which the prophets and the apostles are like trees. Thus, pick and eat the fruit of life that is their proclamations and sweeten your mouth with their contemplations and readings. Christ is the blessed Source of Eden upon whom all the teachers of the Church's mysteries are planted. Pick and eat the delicious fruit of their branches and feed yourself with their statements and books."

St. Augustine says: "The teachings of wisdom are like honey pressed upon by mysterious secrets, like the mouth chewing on honeycomb; taste its sweetness with the mouth of the heart instead of the physical mouth."

St. Isaac, Bishop of Nineveh argues: "Some verses of the Bible have extra sweetness to the mouth (Psalms 119:103), so that one would repeat their simple words in the prayers over and over again without being satiated before moving to another verse."

SEVENTH: THE HOLY BIBLE IS THE HARBOR OF LIFE

The Holy Bible urges us to enjoy the continuously growing knowledge that does not stop at mere mental understanding but enters with us into the experience of crossing over the midst of the world's eddies in the divine harbor so that we might find exceeding peace with the continuous education.

St. Jacob of Serugh maintains: "The words of the divine Bible are the harbors of life. Rise, o special ones, from the waves and find rest in the harbors. The world is disturbed with its worries even more than the sea, for sin progresses every day within it like storms. Transgression and injustice are standing tall like waves. Hence, enter into the ship of education and save yourself. The world is dark and its lusts are traps. Thus, if you would not read the Bible, they will hunt you down. The road of the world is closed, fenced and filled with thorns. Thus, if you would not approach education you will be stung. Behold, the treasures are hidden inside the divine Bible and he who desires it will receive unlimited richness."

EIGHTH: THE HOLY BIBLE IS THE HIDDEN PEARL

Our Bible is not for mere studying; rather, it is a treasure that we ought to enjoy through our friendly conversation with our Savior, the Granter of life.

In his 14th memre on the proverb of the laborers who the proprietor of the vineyard has hired (Matthew 20:1-16), **St. Jacob of Serugh** has mentioned that the Holy Bible is like a sea with a pearl in its depth. The spiritual interpreter appears as a diver that seeks to grab it, bring it up and offer it to the merchants, who are listeners.

St. Jacob of Serugh said: "The Bible of the Son is like the sea from within which lies a pearl, hidden from the merchants. The one that interprets the Bible would seek it like a diver, penetrating its depths, and bringing the pearl with him to the surface. He would then offer it to the merchants and all who acquire it would benefit from it. The mind descends like a diver to read the Bible and then ascends with the pearl, that is, the word of life."

NINTH: THE HOLY BIBLE IS THE DOCTOR AND THE CURE FOR THE SICK SOUL

St. Jacob of Serugh realized that all things that were written previously were written for our learning and for our growth (Romans 15:4). Thus, he longed that we would enjoy the word of God as an elixir offered by the heavenly Doctor to heal our illnesses. His memres urge us to enjoy the word of the LORD and to pleasurably dive into its depths!

St. Jacob of Serugh said: "Education is dear to rational people, for it is filled with light to those who seek to see it. The life of the soul is in the divine Bible and he that lives by their words would lead a life superior of nature.... The Scriptures are the physicians of the sick soul and their words are put as fine medication. Behold, the commandments were given by the wise Physician in the Bible to function

as medication, healing wounds."

TENTH: THE HOLY BIBLE IS A GUIDE FOR MAN

St. Jacob of Serugh urges us to adhere to the Holy Bible, given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit guides the believer through the Holy Bible in his journey through this world toward eternity.

St. Jacob of Serugh has argued: "O special ones, do not listen to the Word according to my words, for the Bible is true and it will guide you, O listeners."

St. Jacob of Serugh has also maintained: "With Your Word, Your Spirit will talk through me, for I am not qualified to speak about You."

Origin says: "I do neither purport nor request that You would revive me according to my own self-righteousness, but rather according to Your provisions. In other words, revive me in the way that You want me to live by, for I too want to live."

ELEVENTH: THE HOLY BIBLE ERADICATES THE TREE OF EVIL

The written divine words have come as a cure for our human weakness. **St. John Chrysostom** maintained: "For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (2 Corinthians 2:15).

He argued that, whether in them that are saved or in them that perish, the Bible will continue its proper work, just as the light will remain light even if the weak considered it blindness.... The honey is bitter in the mouth of the sick despite its sweet nature. Likewise the Bible has a sweet taste, even if some perish for not believing in it, for It is not the reason behind their doom, but their delusion.... Many might fall or rise in the Savior, yet He will remain the Savior even if thousands have perished... for He continues to offer healing."

St. Jacob of Serugh has said: "Your education is filled with eyes of light from every side and it purifies the course of the world from sin.

"The Gospel of the Son is the ax of that tree, which He would cull and discard lest someone would eat of its fruit.

"Behold, the jagged commandments are like scythes, with which all its poisoned fruit would be culled.

"The devil supplies the fruit of death every day, so keep the commandments that you may not be harmed by its evil fruit.

"When he supplies you with this fruit of death -- adultery -- counter him with this commandment: You shall not commit adultery.

"When he tries to lure you into the love of money, which is the source of all evil, counter him with this lively teaching: I was commanded not to possess anything of this world.

"If he tried to worry you or lure you into the pleasure of gluttony, fight him back. Despise his temerity. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by the word of God that proceeds from His mouth.

"When your soul is raging with ill will, paving the way toward wrath, read this written commandment: You shall not be angry.

"When he plants inside you the vicious vice of pride, remember that every man is better than you.

"The repugnance of people pleads with you to become a murderer, so love God and your neighbor and disgrace his falsity.

"There is no time when he will not throw his burning darts at you so take unto you the shield of faith and quench them.

"Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of life, and destroy the parries of the enemy.

"Surround yourself with the fiery spear of the Cherubim, which is an awareness and fullness of all the commandments."

TWELFTH: THE HOLY BIBLE INTIMIDATES THE DEVILS AND THEIR FORCES

St. John Chrysostom says: "The voice of this man (John the Evangelist) does not disturb any of the believers, but rather it eases their troubles and nuisances. It intimidates the devils and their servants alone."

HOW TO BENEFIT FROM THE HOLY BIBLE?

1. The Holy Bible and the Purity of Life:

St. John Chrysostom says: "Indeed, we should not just request the help and support of the written word but rather lead an accordingly pure life so that we would attain the grace of the Spirit instead of the Bible. Just like the words are written with ink in the Bible, they would be recorded by the Spirit in our hearts."

2. Reading the Holy Bible with the Spirit of Hymns:

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom -- teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs -- and singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

Behold how St. Paul respects and respects the feelings of others, for as he noted, reading might be stressful and to some extent boring. Thus, he shifted their attention to the psalms... so that you would delight yourselves with the hymns and even entertain your brethren. Note that he said: "...with hymns and spiritual songs" (Col 3:16).

However, your children are now uttering the songs and the dances of the devil, for none of the cooks, the servants or the musicians know any of the psalms. It even became a subject of shame and mockery to them, and there lies the covert of all evil.

3. Mixing the Study of the Holy Bible with Prayer:

Moses used to cover his face when he spoke with the Jews, but he would lift up this veil when he spoke with God. Likewise, when we return to God, without veil we would behold the glory of the Law and the face of its Deliverer. Not just that, but we would even be the ilk of Moses.

4. Speaking the Word of God with Others:

Fr. Caesarius, Bishop of Arles has said: "The sweetness of God's word will remain in us only if we desire to plant it inside others by repeating it constantly with a flowing perfect love."