

Article reprinted from *CrossWay* Issue Spring 1999 No. 72

(C)opyright Church Society; material may be used for non-profit purposes provided that the source is acknowledged and the text is not altered.

THE BIBLE HAS ALL THE AUTHORITY OF ITS AUTHOR...

Revd David Phillips

- Since God has spoken to us in the Scriptures, then we must surely be prepared to listen to Him speaking. This means reading the Bible, but it also means praying that the Holy Spirit would enlighten us, helping us not only to understand but to apply the Word.
- Since in Scripture the way of salvation is clearly revealed (2 Tim 3:15) then we should turn to Scripture to learn this way in order to tell others about it. But, of course, Scripture is not itself the way, it bears witness to the Way: the Lord Jesus (Jn 5:39).
- Since the Bible is the Word of God we need to ‘Read it humbly, with a meek and lowly heart, to the intent you may glorify God, and not yourself, with knowledge of it.’ (First Homily). We are not seeking to know the Bible so we can impress others, but that we can glorify God through knowing His will.
- Humility needs to permeate our thinking as we read. The Bible both teaches truth and corrects false ideas (2 Tim 3:16), therefore reading it is not easy. If we read it humbly then gradually our pet theories will be put aside, our intellectual arrogance will subside and our minds will become renewed by God (Rom 12:2). We should expect that this will be a painful experience particularly if we are wedded to the mind set that says we cannot believe something unless we think we can prove it or explain it logically. In faith we accept the Bible as true because God has revealed it (Heb 11), recognising that honest and rigorous experience and observation will confirm rather than refute the truth.
- So too, humility is required in our living. Our behaviour as well as our thinking should be shaped by God’s teaching. His Word both rebukes ungodly behaviour and trains in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). Again this transformation will be gradual and painful as we seek to walk in step with the Spirit, resisting turning into old ways. If we listen to God we will find ourselves at odds with the world and with many in the churches who use God’s Word to support their own views.
- We should not be surprised to find in Scripture texts that are hard to understand, nor think that because we don’t understand them they are wrong. There is milk and meat, a shallow end and an unfathomable, deep end in the Word of God.
- We should be careful of trying to teach others what we do not understand plainly ourselves: it is better to admit our uncertainties than to spread our ignorance around. If there is something we do not understand we should not dismiss it but neither should we build too much on what we do not understand clearly.
- Lastly, if anyone teaches another gospel, other than what is given in the Scriptures, then we should not believe it, even if the message comes from an angel (Gal 1:18). We should confute such (Titus 1:9).

Many of these points are considered in far greater depth and far more eloquently in, *A Fruitful Exhortation to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture*, in the *First Book of Homilies*.