TITLE: Literacy

TEXT: 2 Tim. 2:15; Ro. 10:1-4; Prov. 14:12; Ro. 1:28-32;

Phil. 1:1-9 & 3:10-14

INTRODUCTION: It is amazing to me how so many who make the claim of Christianity believe and stand up for so many UN-Godly things today.

 There are many of those who say that they are Christians who are pro choice when it comes to abortion.

 Many professing Christians will actually say that they are not against same sex marriage and that if two people love each other they should be able to get married.

 Even whole denominations have made it possible for practicing homosexuals to fill their pulpits.

 One of the problems in our public school systems, especially in many of our largest cities, it that kids are graduating from high school basically illiterate.

 Children are being moved on from grade to grade, whether they deserve to be or not, often so that the school can look better on paper and receive the federal funds offered for achievement.

 I think we see much the same thing within the Church today that may explain why so many professing Christians say they have no problem with things such as abortion and homosexuality and the like.

 Many professing Christians are simply Biblically illiterate today…

 If you say that you are a Christian and yet you are not strongly against abortion for any reason whatsoever than you are Biblically illiterate on what the Bible has to say about the subject.

 If you say that you are a Christian and yet you have no problem with same sex marriage or homosexuals preaching to you from the pulpit than you are Biblically illiterate on what the Bible has to say about the subject.

 If, as a Christian, you believe that people from all the religions of the world can be saved and go to Heaven if they are good people then you are Biblically illiterate on what the Bible has to say on the subject.

 Anytime that any of us as a Christian try to justify our bad behaviors we are showing our Biblical illiteracy…

 Pam and I went to the Iowa Renewal Project in Des Moines 2 or 3 years ago.

 A conference set up for pastors that is Biblically based teaching on Christianity in the area of our civic responsibilities.

 I have been to at least 5 of these conferences over the years and a man who is almost always among the speakers is David Barton who is a minister and the founder of Wallbuilders.

 David Barton is a walking encyclopedia on the founding fathers and the founding documents that our nation was built upon.

 A study done on the writings of the founding fathers found that 94% of all the citations found in those writings were either to the Bible, or to authors who based their conclusions on the Bible.

 Barton breaks it down as follows: 34% of the founder's quotations were taken directly from the Bible, and 60% were from authors that base their conclusions on the Bible.

 Even those thought to be the least religious of our founding Fathers such as Benjamin Franklin or Thomas Jefferson often quoted the Bible or made their conclusions on Biblical principles.

Benjamin Franklin once said this:

*”I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth:**that God governs in the affairs of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured sir, in the Sacred Writings that ‘except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it (Ps. 127:1).’*

*I firmly believe this, and I also believe that**without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builder of Babel. We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded and we ourselves shall become a reproach and bye word down to future ages. I therefore beg leave to move that, henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessing on our deliberation be held in this assembly every morning. . .and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service.”*

 Benjamin Franklin was thought to be possibly the least religious man among our Founding Fathers! Yet it is him that we find wanting prayer brought into congressional meetings….

 Jefferson once said:

 *Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever.*

 These are quotes from two men considered to be the least religious of the Founding fathers of our Republic.

 What we see from a study of our Nations Founders is that they were all very Biblically literate men.

 The Bible was a book revered! People read it, they devoured it for the great wisdom that it contained….

The Bible was so much a part of their lives that our Constitution and Bill of rights were just a result of their natural thought process that came from a biblically literate people….

**2 Timothy 2:15(KJV)**
**15Study to showthyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

Some versions say: **Be diligent to present yourself approved to God.**

 Why is it so important for us to be biblically literate, to be diligent in the study of God’s word?

Biblical literacy equals Godly character!

What is your first recollection of George Washington from your earliest school days?

 Cutting down the Cherry tree!

 When questioned about it as a child by his father how did a young George Washington reply? “I cannot tell a lie—I cut down the cherry tree.”

 This shows a biblical literacy at a young age, and it also shows Godly character….

The Bible was so much a part of our Founding Fathers lives that they didn’t have to stop and go through their concordance to look up a verse of Scripture.

 They we so Biblically literate that Scripture and Scriptural concept was just a part of their lives and that is simply how they thought—they thought biblically….

In his farewell address at the end of his presidency George Washington said this:

*“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and Citizens. …..And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds --, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”*

 I doubt that Washington had to get out his Bible when he wrote his farewell speech but he was so biblically literate that this was just the natural reflection of his deepest thoughts and beliefs….

 Some of us may know our Bibles better than others but we are all basically Biblically illiterate today compared to those who founded this great nation….

 I am not nearly as Biblically literate as I should be….

How can I make such a broad statement?

Just look at our society! Just look at the lack of Biblical principle in the lives we live!

 Things like abortion and same sex marriage being the issues that they are in America today speaks of our collective Biblical illiteracy….

 We pray, God should I do this or do that…..If we were truly Biblically literate I don’t believe we would ever have to ask Him that question—or at least very seldom ask Him that question…

 If His Word was truly alive within us, if we were immersing ourselves in His Word our lives would just be a reflection of that and our nation would look a whole lot different than it does today….

**Romans 10:1-4(NIV)**  **1Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.**  **2For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.**  **3Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.**  **4Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.**

The Israelites of Paul’s day was a lot like the Church has become in our day..

Paul says: **2For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.**

How true this seems to be in many of our churches today! We may be zealous for God, but our zeal is often not based on knowledge.

Paul may very well have been thinking of his own life when he said this….

 Before Paul came to Christ he was a very zealous man of God….

 He was so zealous for God that he was actually going around the country persecuting Christians, sometimes persecuting them unto death and imprisonment thinking he was serving God.

 It was not Paul’s Zeal that was the problem it was his knowledge (or lack of it) that was his problem.

**2For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.**

Being Zealous for God is only a good thing when it is based on knowledge—knowledge of Him, knowledge of His Word….

**3Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.**

The problem with not knowing the righteousness of God by being Biblically literate is that we have a tendency in our zeal for God to substitute our own knowledge and thus our own righteousness….

 That is how come we have Church denominations with homosexuals filling their pulpits… That is why we have some who profess they are Christians yet believe it is ok to slaughter over 1.5 million of our unborn children through legalized abortion each and every year….

 It is why some professing Christians believe that same sex marriage is ok…..

**3Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own**

(Righteousness).

If a woman is raped and becomes pregnant than I don’t feel it would be right for her to have to carry that child—so in that case I think that maybe abortion is ok…

 If two people of the same sex are in love why shouldn’t they be able to express that love the same way my wife and I do—maybe same sex marriage is not all that bad of a thing…

 If a good Muslim or a Good Hindu or a good Buddhist lives a good life and are good people who love their god than I believe they will go to Heaven when they die just like we Christians will….

**3Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God** (they) **sought to establish their own…**

The statements I just made are not Gods righteousness but our own righteousness that we have substituted because of our Biblical illiteracy…..

**Proverbs 14:12(NIV)**  **12There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.**

It may seem right to us that abortion is ok in some circumstances but in the end it will lead in death---Death for the innocent child and I believe the death of our own soul as a nation….

 We may feel that a good person of another religious belief, one who believes in a different god, will still go to Heaven but we will find that in the end it will lead to death! Their eternal death for not coming to believing in Christ Jesus as the Lord and savior of their life—and we are bearing the guilt and judgment for doing nothing to warn them because of our Biblical Illiteracy on the subject. That when Jesus says in the Word that He is the way and the truth and the life and that no one comes to the Father unless they come through me—He meant just that!

 I want to share a verse of Scripture that I think defines us collectively as a people today….

**Romans 1:28-32(NIV)**  **28Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.**  **29They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice.**

**They are gossips,** **30slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;**  **31they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.**  **32Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.**

Tragically this seems to me to describe our society, our nation today…..

Much, much more tragically I am not so sure this does not describe the Church in America as well!

Let me ask a question and consider it; ponder it in your heart for a moment…

Can we continue to do ungodly things and be or remain a Christian? Can we continue to think ungodly and be or remain a Christian?

The answer is no because it is in direct opposition to what being Christian is all about….

If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord! Lord meaning supremacy, supreme in authority, the controler!

 If we continue to do ungodly things and think ungodly thoughts, than regardless of what we might say, Jesus is not the Lord of our life and if He is not our Lord He is not our Savior….

**2For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.
3Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.**

Nor can we submit to Gods righteousness if we do not know what that righteousness is!

Then Paul goes on and says:
**4Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.**

**4Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.**

What does this mean?

Whenever a person surrenders their life to Christ Jesus and allows Him Lordship of their life they will find end or fulfillment of the law, the Lord completely removes the veil from his heart. No longer is his spiritual perception impaired.

 Now, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit he is equipped to understand Gods Word in a way never possible before—his spiritual eyes are opened….

 But we must then do our part….

And that is to: **15Study to showthyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

Billy Graham once said this:

As Christians, we have the Spirit of God in us. But ours is the responsibility to keep sin out of our lives so that the Spirit can produce His fruit in us. Become grounded in the Bible. As Christians, we have only one authority, one compass: the [*Word of God*](http://www.billygraham.org/articlepage.asp?articleid=1966). Abraham Lincoln in a letter to a friend said, "I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this Book upon reason that you can, and the balance upon faith. You will live and die a better man." Begin the day with the Book; and as the day comes to a close, let the Word speak its wisdom to your soul. Let it be the firm foundation upon which your hope is built. Let it be the Staff of Life upon which your spirit is nourished. Let it be the Sword of the Spirit which cuts away the evil of your life and fashions you in His image and likeness.

As Pastors and Church leaders it seems we often encourage our people to read your Bibles once through a year as a goal. Thinking if we do that, we will have done what God would have us to.

Why only once through a year? Why not twice through a year? Why not three times? Why not four?

 It is God’s Word to us! Shouldn’t we desire to hear from Him more rather than less?

 Could it be that the reason we don’t read Gods Word more is that it is because we know that it is how God speaks to us and we really don’t want to hear what He may have to say to us! That He may actually tell us to give up something that we do not want to, yield to Him a part of our life that we aren’t willing to give over to Him or ask us to step out and stretch our faith in ways that may be uncomfortable for us to do….

 Are we not in the word, not because we don’t understand it is how God most often communicates with us, but because we know that full well and we are just afraid of what He might reveal to us that may cost us something!

Wouldn’t you like to be able to write a letter or send an email to a friend who may need encouragement and when you just wrote what was on your heart and mind when finished you would happen to notice how much reference to God and Godly principles there were on the page…

 You didn’t think about it as you were writing or stop and look up a Scripture but it would just flow from your mind as your normal communication…..

That is the way it would be if we were truly Biblically literate people.

Our Constitution and Bill of Rights and the writing of our Founding Fathers are chuck full of Biblical principles….

 I doubt that our Founding Fathers were flipping through their Bibles as they were discussing and preparing these great American documents, but it was just the natural result of Biblically literate men.

I believe that God has a prayer for us as American Christians today…

**Philippians 1:9-11(NIV)
9And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,
10so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,
11filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.**

**9And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight..**

Knowledge and depth of insight into His Holy and inspired Word!

 Paul was a religious man, a godly man and then He came to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and

became a saved man equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit and an unquenchable appetite for Gods Word….

 Paul as an old man still had that unappeasable appetite for God….

**Philippians 3:10-14(NIV)**  **10I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,**  **11and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.
12Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.**  **13Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,**  **14I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

 I will be kind here---none of us are as Biblically literate as we should be this morning…..

 Do you, do I, have what can be described as an unappeasable, unquenchable appetite for God’s Word?

 If not --why not?

 It is how God speaks to us! Why don’t we want to hear from Him more?

 Our nation needs to see more biblically literate men and women in its ranks if we are to survive as a nation….

 The Church needs to see a whole lot more biblically literate men and women and children in its ranks if we are to fulfill our calling and commission of being the light of Christ to our world…

If we feel guilty or condemnation about our degree of biblical literacy this morning--good.  I pray it causes us to do something about it.

Just know that before this message came to you God gave it to me and my reaction was guilt, condemnation and shame for my personal degree of biblical illiteracy.

Each of us needs to know Him more... Each of us need to be more Biblically literate if we are going to be the men and women and children that God expects us to be making a real difference in our world for Him...

What will we choose to do? Continue down the path of illiteracy towards God or pick up our Bibles and Study to show ourselves approved of God, A workman who needs not be ashamed?

Prayer

 Lord Jesus, Give us a unquenchable appetite for Your Holy Word..

Not just for the sake of Biblical literacy but because of relationship and communication with You.

Give us the desire to hear You more …

May Your Word truly become bread for our souls, a bread that we yearn for greater than our favorite food to feed these physical bodies….

 May we truly become a Biblically literate people taking that knowledge and applying it to our lives allowing it to shine forth from us into our world.