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The Need of Study.

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It is a powerful and significant word which St. Paul addressed to his young assistant Timothy, when he writes to him: "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (*πρόσεχε τῇ ἀναγνώσει, τῇ παρακλήσει, τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ*). 1 Tim. 4, 13.

It seems that modern conditions are causing many of us to forget the full force of this remark. It has been said that the days of the old-fashioned pastor are numbered, and that the multitude of tasks which are being heaped on the minister in his charge are making it impossible to put that attention to work in the study which was formerly deemed essential. With board meetings and committee meetings and society meetings, and teachers' training classes and catechumen classes and a host of other labors crowding in for every minute of the time, there is simply no opportunity for a thorough and calm study of the Scriptures and of theological subject-matter such as we have, in the past, been associating with the office of a pastor. The *πολυπραγμοσύνη* of the modern minister is becoming an axiom, and the situation is assuming alarming proportions. The question is, Have we really reached the stage when a pastor must be satisfied with a mere glance at the Bible text and at the theological literature which is gotten out for his special benefit? Are we really so pressed for time that we cannot devote a certain portion of every day to the systematic study of the Scripture and of all the other material which was formerly considered essential for a pastor's labors?

One of the best among the recent studies taking up this question contains the following thoughts on the art of preaching and on the work of the minister. In the first place: It is absolutely necessary that the work of the pulpit reflect the labor of the study. Any one desiring to be a real leader of his congregation, a guide to souls seeking the right way in faith and life, a personal witness for the redemption of Jesus Christ, and a stimulating teacher of the Word of Truth, must devote enough time to systematic study so that there will be a proper proportion maintained between the

pulpit and the study. As Prof. David Smith of Belfast has it in his recent book on *The Art of Preaching*: "The efficiency of the pulpit is commensurate with the efficiency of the study."

But what is to be done? Dr. Smith rightly says that learning is good, and sanctified learning is a precious gift of God, most profitable to the Church at all times, and especially in an age like ours when knowledge is so widely increased and faith is troubled by so many perplexing problems. Study does not mean mere learning, the heaping up of a great many crude facts. Scholarship rather implies the ability to use information in applying it to the work in hand, whether that be the building of a cathedral or the construction of a sermon. It is necessary, therefore, for every preacher to cultivate the habit of study, to select definite methods of study, and to have a definite goal of study every day of his life. Dr. Smith says that "the day should be mapped out, its program fixed, and such plans allotted for each office — pastoral visitation, recreation, and, above all, that office which is the foundation of intellectual vitality — study." It may be true that the task of systematizing one's work may, from the outset, seem hopeless or at least most bewildering, but if one only makes a beginning, some time, somewhere, anywhere in fact, at the most convenient point, the way is bound to open up.

This entire discussion gains further point by counting up the number of minutes and hours which are daily lost in aimless undertakings or any *allotria* which are very secondary in the work of a pastor. The time devoted to a daily paper may, in most cases, be reduced to five minutes, or even less than that. This is true especially when one takes care to glance over the various weekly, monthly, and quarterly journals devoted to a condensation of the world's news. Then there is the matter of losing time in an effort at working. If one does not possess the time and the place habit of study, if one has not trained himself to go to work immediately upon sitting down at his desk, if one has not learned to concentrate to the exclusion of all discordant interference, he has not yet learned the essentials of study. We may, in this respect, well take a number of lessons from men like McMurry, professor of education at Columbia University, and other educators, whose rules for work are based upon the most thorough psychological studies. It will pay every pastor who has found difficulty in getting time for private study to obtain one or more books of this type and take the necessary time to read at least the important points of the presentation offered. There is bound to be a most favorable

reaction, possibly not at once, but surely in the course of weeks and months devoted to a somewhat more strenuous application.

It will pay any one who is interested in the subject of study to take up the maxims of Martin Luther on the subject of study. Here, surely, was a man who may be considered as having been fairly busy practically all the time. And yet, we are amazed at the amount of work turned out by his pen. The secret of this was found, of course, in his little saying: "*Fleissig gebetet, ist ueber die Haelfte studiert.*" The idea of having prayer underlie the entire fabric of study is fundamental for successful work. At the same time it is most interesting to find what Luther says on the subject of study. The question is quaintly put by Porta. Is it sufficient for regularly called pastors simply to preach according to postils and other books, while they do not pay much attention to Bible reading? The answer is given with the usual directness of the Reformer. He says: "There are some lazy pastors and preachers who depend upon such books and other helps so that they cannot make a sermon; they do not pray, they do not study, they do not read, they do not put their minds on the Bible, just as though they did not need to read it. Instead they use such books as calendars and definite forms to earn their daily bread and are therefore nothing but parrots and jackdaws who repeat what they have heard without any understanding. Over against this it is our own opinion and that of our theologians that they be directed to the Scriptures and prepare themselves to defend our Christian faith after our death against the devil, the world, and the flesh, for we will not always be at the head where we are now standing."

For all of us it will be well to keep in mind the excellent introduction which Dr. Luther wrote for the postil of Spangenberg. He says there: "Be vigilant! Study! Attend to your reading! Most assuredly you cannot read too much in the Scripture, and what you read you cannot understand too well, and what you have understood well you cannot teach too well, and what you teach well you cannot live too well. *Experto crede Ruperto!* It is the devil, it is the world, it is our own flesh that rage and storm against us. Therefore, dear sirs and brethren, pastors and preachers: pray, read, study, be diligent! Surely there is no time for being lazy, snoring, and sleeping in this evil time. Make use of the gift which has been entrusted to you and make known the mystery of Christ; he who will not know it, let him be ignorant, as St. Paul says."