

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

"...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE..." ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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OLD OUTLINES & ARTICLES

By Andrew Dow

Over the course of my short time preaching, I have been blessed to receive hundreds of pages worth of bible class material, bulletin articles, and sermon outlines written by faithful gospel preachers such as W. R. Jones, John Clark, James Adams, Ray Ferris and many others. I have recently taken on a personal project to scan these materials so that they (1) are more readily accessible and (2) will take up less space in my office. While going through these old documents a few thoughts come to mind.

1. Knowing History is Important. The old adage is true, "those who do not study history are doomed to repeat it." We would be foolish not to study and learn from those who have gone before us. Paul looked back on Israel's history and said, "**these things happened as examples for us**" (1 Cor 10:6). Paul was talking about the events preserved in Scripture, but we can and should learn from events throughout history. Moses instructed the Israelites, "**Remember the days of old ... ask your father, and he will inform you, your elders, and they will tell you**" (Deut 32:7). We find positive examples in days gone by, but not all *ol' days* are *good ol' days*. Israel was also warned, "**Do not be like your fathers ... they did not listen or give heed to [God]**" (Zech 1:4). We would do well to consider what has been written before us. Good or bad, it's our history!

2. There Have Always Been Faithful Christians. I do not agree with every nuance of what I read in these documents, but what I do find in these outlines and articles is a sincere love for God and His creation. The Hebrews's author explained that **“we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken”** (Heb 12:28). From time to time it may seem that we stand alone for God, but take comfort in the fact that God always preserves a remnant of those who are faithful to Him (cf. 1 Kings 19:18).

3. We Stand On The Shoulders of Giants. This concept, probably made famous by Isaac Newton, is true when it comes to Bible study. While we should be diligent students of the Word (not blindly accepting what others say about it), we should be aware that we are not the first to read the Bible. Remember, **“That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun”** (Eccl 1:9). In your study, do not neglect to consult the thoughts of older generations. We may not always agree with their conclusions, but there is much to learn from them.

4. We Are Surrounded By a Great Cloud of Witnesses. To encourage Christians in their pursuit of Jesus, the Hebrews's author wrote, **“Since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us ... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”** (Heb 12:1). He was specifically speaking of the men and women of faith we find in the Bible that prompt us to live righteously. However, I think we can similarly speak of more recent men and women of faith. This is not to say that they are “looking down from heaven,” but that through their lives we can take encouragement in our own lives.

THE RIGHT TOOLS

By Andrew Dow

Have you ever tried to drive a nail with the backend of a screwdriver? Have you ever tried to mow the lawn with an old push-powered lawnmower? These are both things I have done with little success. It did not take long before I decided to buy a hammer and a gas-powered lawnmower. Given enough time and effort you can use these tools to accomplish the job at hand, but the right tools make difficult jobs more feasible. I imagine many of you can see this in your own hobbies and occupations as well. This is equally true when it comes to our lives as Christians.

First, we need the right tools in our Bible study.

Many people do not give the time and attention to studying God's Word because they find it difficult. Bible study is often difficult because we do not have the right tools at our disposal. You may have grown up reading the King James Version, but for many people its archaic language is difficult to understand making interpretation nearly impossible. Let me suggest that we include on our "Bible Study tool belt" several good modern translations (*e.g.*, New American Standard Bible, New King James Version, English Standard Version, New International Version). No one translation is perfect, but by consulting a number of reputable versions we can come to understand the Bible.

Second, we need the right tools in our Spiritual lives.

Scripture tells us what things we need to add to our lives: knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (2 Pet 1:5–7); joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness (Gal 5:22–23). These "tools" will prove invaluable as we strive to work

with one another and influence the world. Paul also shows us the “tools” we need as we struggle against Satan: **“take up the full armor of God ... having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”** (Eph 6:13–17).

What a difference the right tools make! Use the right tools in your Bible study so that you can use the right tools in your fight against Satan. I assure you, they will make a seemingly impossible task possible.

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON:
Should Christians
Keep the Sabbath?

PM LESSON:
Singing Night

“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)