

# **Bible Reading and Points of Emphasis**

## **By John R. Gibson**

Though I must confess I don't do it every time I read, my Bible reading is far more productive when I take a few minutes to make some notes on what I have just read. As I have written before, these notes serve as an aid to prayer, but they also help me to see themes and points of emphasis. The reading plan I use requires you to read ten chapters from different sections of Scripture and there are some disadvantages to a plan like this, but no-tice how strongly a point was made one day last week when the reading included, among others, Luke 16, 1 Timothy 6, 1 Kings 10, and Acts 11.

In Luke 16 Jesus was derided by the Pharisees after He warned that one could not serve both God and money (Luke 16:13-14). It is in this context that Jesus told the story of a man who had it all as he was dressed in the best and who daily "feasted sumptuously" (ESV), but ended up in torments in Hades.

That was followed by 1 Timothy 6 with its warnings against thinking godliness is a means of financial gain, having a love of money, and developing the arrogance financial success can bring (6:5, 10, 17). Having just seen the portrayal of one in torments, we should take more seriously the warning that the love of money can cause one to stray from the faith and be pierced with many sorrows (6:10).

1 Kings 10 tells of how Solomon became so wealthy that drinking vessels of silver were "accounted as nothing" and made "silver as common in Jerusalem as stones" (10:21, 27). The next chapter will go on to tell of Solomon's marriages and how the foreign wives turned his heart to God, but chapter 10 has laid the groundwork. A man of relatively modest means does not maintain a harem with a thousand women in it. Solomon seemed to have it all, but like the rich man of Luke 16 in the end he was missing that which is most important, viz. a heart loyal to the Lord his God.

In one day's reading, I was confronted with warnings about money and my attitude toward it in both Luke 16 and 1 Timothy 6. Then with the rich man of Luke 16 and the detailing of King Solomon's wealth, I had a vivid reminder that "one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). My culture may measure everything by \$\$\$, but that day's reading provided a strong counter to such thinking.

It was a sobering day's reading, but the last chapter of the day reminded me of the possibilities. The disciples at Antioch took that which Jesus had termed "unrighteous mammon" and put it to good use in relieving the needs of their brethren in Judea (Acts 11:27-30). Just as the rich man of Luke 16 and King Solomon provided warnings about the danger presented by the love of money, the church at Antioch was a positive example of how we can use our wealth to "do good, ...be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, [and] stor[e] up for [our]selves a good foundation for the time to come, that [we] may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:18- 19).

That day's reading provided some needed warnings and also served to encourage the proper use of those things given us by God for our enjoyment (1 Timothy 6:17) and I hope we can benefit from thinking on these things. But beyond this look at how one day's reading helped focus my attention on the way money and material things should be viewed. I hope everyone can see the benefits of going back and making a few notes on your reading, for, at least for me, it is when we start making a record of what we have written that the themes and points of emphasis stand out and get our attention.

Let's read...and write!

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## **The Fear of Falling**

### **By Mark W. White**

It's a universal human fear. Toddlers don't like falling, but they are fairly resilient when they do take a tumble. The older we get, the more afraid of falling we become. Falls result in broken bones and other disasters which make life hard and inconvenient.

The Bible teaches that we can fall spiritually. We can fall from grace, as Paul indicated to the Galatian brethren (5:4) when he wrote, "you are fallen from grace." How much more plainly did he need to say that before we understand?

Some theologians are so afraid of falling they have declared it impossible. "You can't fall from grace," you hear them say. "Once saved, always saved." "If you have it you can't lose it; if you lose it you never had it." But those statements don't make sense. We all understand by experience that if we walk or stand, it is possible to fall.

That means we must be all the more careful how and where we walk! We must steady ourselves as we are putting on our (spiritual) pants. We must avoid (spiritually) slippery places. We must not be too proud to use that (spiritual) cane or whatever aid is available to keep us from falling.

I confess that as I age, I am more afraid of falling. Those tumbles down the steps hurt me more now than when I was younger. And spiritually, I am more fearful of falling from grace today than when I first became a Christian. Maybe it is because I know what such a fall will cost me. I am trying to hold tightly to the hand of the One who can keep me from stumbling (Jude 24). There is nothing wrong with such fear. Are you afraid of falling, too?