

Reflections

reading notes

MAY 2004—*The Bible Made Easy*

A relatively new series of commentaries on the Bible is being published that makes its appeal to the “Biblically Inept.” Displayed in large print on the cover are the words, “The Bible Made Easy.” This is a polite take off of the “Dummy” series. I think I understand the purpose of this advertising.

If the purpose is to get people who may be initially intimidated by the subject to consider studying their Bible, it is a commendable one, especially where the Bible is concerned. The Bible was written to be read and understood (Ephesians 3:3, 4; Revelation 1:3). If a book addressed to the “Biblically-Inept” motivates someone to read their Bible, the publishers have accomplished their task.

But, while much of the Bible is clear to understand, there are some aspects of the Bible that will occupy the thoughts of its readers all their lives. The Bible rewards those who read it and read it again and again. There are some things taught in the Bible that resist easy assimilation and that require years of careful thinking. Even the Apostle Peter affirms that some of the things Paul wrote were difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:16).

Case in point: I taught in a school of biblical studies for thirteen years. Eight of those years I taught the New Testament book of *Romans*. I thought I had a fairly decent grasp of the Book, but it wasn't until years later, that I am persuaded I understood the real purpose of the Letter.

Paul begins the book by telling us that he was not ashamed of the Gospel. I wondered why Paul would write of “shame” in the same breath with the “Gospel.” I found no satisfactory answer to my question in commentaries or sermons on the subject. It wasn't until years later, due to other truths taught elsewhere in the Bible, that I found the answer to the question I was vexed over for so long.

I know what you are thinking. You are saying to yourself, “Steve, you're just slow.” That may be. But I'm not alone, commentators I consulted haven't nailed it on the head where Romans 1:16 is concerned.

My point is this: helps that claim to make the Bible easy can only make it “easy” to a point. Some aspects of the Bible are not easy to understand. It is the inspired word of God—and to understand it requires intellectual effort, the right attitude, and a love for truth. That, coupled with a lifetime of learning, will pay the reader rich dividends.

The fact of the matter is, everyone must eventually read the Bible itself to see if what has been made “simple” in these other sources is accurate. As one wise man once remarked, “The Bible sheds a lot of light on those commentaries.”

