

# *Bay Roberts Seventh-day Adventist Church*

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## **Are You Rich Without Knowing It?**

Forty years is a long time to exist on occasional odd jobs and charity, but for Albert it had become a way of life. When his grandmother died in 1921, leaving everything she owned to him, Albert had thought his fortune was made. The short will had read: "To Albert my grandson I bequeath my family Bible and all it contains, together with the remainder of my estate following payment of my funeral expenses and lawful debts."

It had been the "lawful debts" that had shattered Albert's dream. His grandmother had owed more than he had thought possible, and Albert found himself with a worn black Bible and \$700. In a matter of months the money was gone, and Albert had only the Bible. His grandmother had prized her Bible, but to Albert it meant little. Being extremely lazy and unwilling to work, the grandson began a life of indolence and poverty which was to continue for forty years. Then one day in 1961 Albert came across the old Bible and began idly glancing through it. To his amazement he found scattered among the pages a number of \$100 bills - fifty of them in all. He had been living like a pauper for forty years while all the time there had been money close at hand.

But Albert overlooked something of even greater value in the Bible. He never realized the precious treasure contained in the Word itself. He completely missed the peace and security God offers in the Scriptures and died some years later a miserable man at odds with the world.

Thousands of people are repeating Albert's mistake. Bibles have never been more plentiful. Almost every home has a copy. But how seldom is God's Word studied! How little we know of its tremendous power and riches!

The Bible is like no other book on earth. It has a living power to change lives, to transform misery into happiness, discouragement into hope, guilt into the joy of forgiveness. The secret of its power lies in one great fact - it is God's Word!

Peter wrote. "No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21, RSV). Paul agreed, saying, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible is not man speaking about God; it is God speaking through men - proclaiming His undying love, offering His promises, and assuring men of forgiveness and eternal life. Countless lives have been touched by the power in this Book.

Frank Novak sat in a small cell of the Washington State Penitentiary. The judge had sentenced him to twenty years for his part in a desperate crime. Frank sat in his cell looking at a New Testament given him by a prison worker. He knew very little about the Bible and even less about God. But he decided that if he read the Bible, maybe God would get him out of prison. So Frank vowed to read the New Testament completely through three times. "Surely that should satisfy God," he thought. It turned out to be

more difficult than he imagined. For one thing, Frank didn't read very well; for another thing, the only light coming into his cell was a small shaft from a high grating. He had to keep moving the book to keep it in the tiny patch of sunlight. It took him three years to fulfill his vow. At the end of that time he no longer worried so much about getting out of prison. Instead, he became a changed man. Love replaced the hate in his heart. Peace took the place of resentment and frustration, and most important he had found Jesus. The guards noticed the change in Frank. The other prisoners did too. He became an unofficial chaplain working tirelessly for other men who were in the same condition he had been in three years before. Thousands through the years listened to Frank and found the sullen bitterness draining from their hearts as they heard and saw what God had done for him. This is the power you can find in God's Word.

You may never have found yourself in prison, but you may have experienced the resentment and frustration that Frank Novak felt. And the same exhilarating transformation may come into your life as came into his though the Word of God. "There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God's Word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose rarely seen in these times" (Steps to Christ, p. 90). This is the kind of change that can come into your life through the amazing power of the Bible.

Although the Bible is available today as never before, there is a remarkable indifference toward this valuable treasure. It lies undusted and unread on the shelf. Satan once used the scarcity of God's Word to keep its truths from the people. He employed the stake, the dungeon, the rack, and fire to resist the spread of the Bible. Many lost their lives trying to gain a knowledge of this wonderful Book.

In the face of bitter persecution Wycliffe translated the Bible into English so that others could discover the truths that transform lives. And how the people appreciated God's Word in their own language! One man gave a load of hay for the privilege of reading from the Bible one hour each day! A little Welsh lass, Mary, saved for six years to be able to buy a Bible! And there is a touching story of Alice Collins who kept busy going to different groups and reciting for them the Ten Commandments and other portions of the Scriptures which she had committed to memory. The people were hungry for God's Word.

Today Satan no longer tries to hinder the knowledge of the Bible by restricting its circulation. He accomplishes the same result by causing people to neglect it. Satan doesn't mind very much if you own a Bible. He does mind terribly though if you begin to read and study it. He knows its divine power to change lives. He knows that you cannot read the Holy Scriptures without becoming more like Jesus. That is why he works so diligently to keep people from taking it seriously.

Jenny Lind, a famous concert and opera singer of the past century, gave up the stage at the summit of her successful career. One day, shortly afterward, she sat on the seashore, an open Bible in her lap. She read awhile, then gazed at the magnificent view of the sun sinking into the restless ocean. A friend stepped up behind her in the sand. Knowing that she had left the stage recently and wondering why she had dropped out when she had the world at her feet, he decided to ask her. Jenny Lind looked at him steadily as she said quietly but with meaning behind each word, "How could I do

otherwise when I realized every day I was losing my appreciation of that" (pointing to the sunset) "and my love for this" (laying her hand tenderly on the open Bible).

The Swedish Nightingale, as she was known on the opera circuit, discovered that the fame and glamour of the stage became hollow without the inner peace and security to be found in the Word of God. Perhaps you, too, have experienced the hollowness of life without God. Perhaps this poem illustrates conditions around your home:

They read the Journal and the News  
They Green Book and the Red  
They kept the serials of the month  
Securely in their head.  
They went through books both old and new,  
Best sellers, too, they thought;  
They read the jokes and studied styles;  
No item went for naught.

They read the sporting page; they knew  
each athlete by his name;  
They read of baseball, football, golf -  
Familiar with each game;  
They looked the funny paper through;  
They watched the mail to seize  
The magazine they liked the best,  
Whose columns most did please.

But in their home there was a book  
With pages never turned,  
Whose messages of truth and hope  
Were still by them unlearned -  
The Book that tells of Him who came  
To earth that we might know  
The beauty of sinless life,  
Lived here so long ago.

What pity 'tis they do not know  
This Man of Galilee,  
Who healed the lame, the blind, the deaf,  
Beside the sapphire sea!  
And still they read and laugh and cry  
O'er stories of the hour,  
And let the Book, dust covered, lie  
Unopened in its power.

It is not enough to have the Bible in the home; it must be in the heart. Just as Jesus is the Living Word (John 1: 1, 14) so He is the central figure of the Written Word. The basic core of the Bible is not so much a message as it is a Person. From beginning to end the Sacred Record unfolds the story of Jesus. In Genesis, the opening book, He appears in the promise of a deliverer from sin (Genesis 3:15); in the final chapter of Revelation He is presented as the triumphant Saviour soon to come; every chapter

between Genesis and Revelation carries the imprint of His love. The Bible is like the vast hallway of a large art museum lined with paintings of the Master - each different, yet combining to create a picture of an understanding Saviour who loved you so much He died to give you life. Would you like to see Jesus? Then study His Word. Paul tells you that by seeing Jesus in the picture gallery of the Bible you will gradually be changed to become more and more like Him.

Jenny Lind discovered that this kind of experience outweighed fame on the opera stage. It was no small price she had to pay, but she willingly gave preference to the Word of God and found her choice well worth it. Like her, you need to give preference to the Bible over anything which would keep you from studying its life-giving message about Jesus. It must have been difficult for Jenny Lind to give up her career, and it will probably not be easy for you to readjust your life program to make room for the Bible. But it will prove of immense value.

Pick up the neglected Book! You are rich, for there is hidden in it the same transforming power that has worked miracles in the lives of thousands of men and women. It is still, after hundreds of years, the proclamation of liberty from sin to those who discover its treasure of salvation. You need not take the word of someone else. You may come and see for yourself. Psalm 34:8 invites you, "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

Jesus said that the Word of God is truth, and you "shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). Free? Yes, free from the corrosive worry which hangs over you, free from the burden of unresolved guilt, free from the blindness which has kept us from seeing the sinfulness of sin and the glorious future in obedience to Christ, free to enjoy the peace and security which only Jesus offers.

Perhaps, like Albert who lived for years in poverty with a fortune in his possession, you have been existing in spiritual poverty while abundant riches have been beside you. Determine today to make the riches of Christ yours through the study of the precious Bible.