

The
WELL
IS OPEN

A N A R O L L I N



BOOKLET

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about the author

Hello, Dear Reader. Before we begin, let me tell you what I can about myself, for there are a few things worth your knowing before you weigh a word that follows.

I am someone the Lord brought up out of a deeply broken home, a Christian home, mind you, and broken all the same, and more broken still in the generations that came before it. I tell you this not for sympathy, for I will not have it, but because it is the very ground on which everything else stands. For I am someone the Lord has healed and grown, whose every last piece of wreckage He has gathered up and turned to good, as only He can do.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

ROMANS 8:28

That verse is not a pretty saying stitched on a pillow to me. It is the plain account of my life.

I have done well in the world, very well, in my professional fields, and young by the reckoning of most who ever get there. And I tell you that for one reason only, so hear it rightly: it is

why this work costs you nothing. I do not need a single coin from any of it, and I never have, and I never will. I write under a borrowed name and give the whole of it away precisely because I am free to, and so there is nothing left standing between you and the thing itself. These are the men I have studied under. This is the Word. Here it is. Take it or leave it. That is the whole of the bargain, and there is a great freedom in it for me and for you both.

And since I have said these are the men I studied under, let me name them, for I would far rather they were named than I. My pastor is Dr. J. Vernon McGee, and I will tell you the wonder of that before we are through, for I never once met the man in this life. Under his teaching, and the teaching of others like him, I was fed: Warren Wiersbe, C. I. Scofield, A. W. Tozer, Charles Ryrie; the Liberty Bible Commentary and the Moody Bible Commentary, and more besides. I am a younger person pointing back at older and wiser ones, most of them now gone on home to glory. I invented nothing. I am handing you what I was handed, and what the Holy Spirit has built upon.

And I love the Lord's people across every wall we have ever built between ourselves. I am not non-denominational, I am cross-denominational, and I have sat, for real seasons and not in passing many times, under nearly every roof there is. And do you know what I found in every last one of them? People who love the Lord, across every denomination, every local body.

But here is the thing you must understand above all the rest, for it is the spring from which this little book flows. The Lord has tempered me through hardship across every corner of my life, and tempers me still. The good that has come has not smoothed the road; it never does. For the Christian, Dear Reader, life is an uphill walk to the very end; you are either coming out of a storm, or standing in the thick of one, or setting your face toward the next, and there is no fourth place to stand and no use pretending there is. I know that ground because I have never once been off it.

And out of all of it, the breaking and the healing and the long climb, one thing has only grown in me, year upon year: a love of the Word itself. Not books about the Word, you understand. The Word. I love to go down into the Greek and the Hebrew, to dig beneath what I have been handed and see for myself what the Spirit caused to be written, and the Lord has grown that love in me until it became the very reason for these pages. I hold the tools to do it, tools built upon the backs of every laborer who came before me, the faithful men who copied and guarded and translated and, more than a few of them, died to put that text within the reach of my hand and yours. And I cannot bear, I simply cannot bear, that so many now hold those same tools and never once bend down to use them.

So that is why I write, and why I will not charge you a penny for it. Not for a name. Not for a wage. For the sheer joy of the Word, and for the hope, the great hope behind every line, that you will come to love it too. The real thing. The Greek and the

Hebrew of it. The very words God breathed out through His writers across the long centuries it took for those sixty-six books to be gathered and weighed and recognized and handed down at last to us. I am, when all the rest is stripped away, simply a believer who fell in love with that Book and could not keep quiet about it.

a word before we begin

This is not a book against teachers. I had teachers; I have them still, though most of mine are in the grave and teach me yet from there. I owe them more than I could set down on a page, and before we are finished I mean to tell you about the chief of them. A good teacher is one of the kindest gifts the Lord gives to His church, and the man who sneers at all teaching has simply found a prouder way to be a fool. So hear me: I am not here to take your teachers from you.

Nor is this a book that tells you to forsake the assembling of yourselves together, to despise the preaching of the Word, or to set yourself up as your own little pope with a Bible on your knee and no one to answer to. That is its own error, and a real one, and I have no interest in trading one ditch for the other.

What this book is about is a single, quiet, astonishing fact that most believers have never once stopped to consider, that the well is open. That the Word of God, in your own tongue and in its own tongues, with all the tools to dig into it that kings and scholars of former ages would have wept to possess, is lying open and free in your very hands, and the Spirit who authored it is willing to teach it to you Himself. That is the fact. And the strange thing, the thing that grieves me and set me to writing, is how very many of God's own people are dying of thirst within arm's reach of the water, waiting in a long patient line for someone else to bring them a cup.

So that is where we are going. Come and see.

the well is open

There is a thing we have nearly all of us done, Dear Reader, and most have never once seen that we were doing it. We have stood in a long and patient line, waiting for someone to bring us a cup of water, while standing the whole time knee-deep in the river.

*You've been standing in line for
a cup of water while standing
knee-deep in the river.*

Let me tell you what I mean, for the picture is the whole of the matter. The Lord Jesus, sitting weary by a well in Samaria, said a thing to a woman who had come to draw that ought to ring in the ears of every believer who has ever owned a Bible and left it shut.

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

JOHN 4:10

If thou knewest. There is the whole tragedy in two words. She did not know what stood in front of her. She was thinking of the deep well and the heavy bucket and the long walk in the heat, and there beside her sat the Fountain of living water Himself, and she very nearly missed Him for thinking about the plumbing. And we are no different. We think about the well and the bucket, the teacher, the program, the study, the man at the front who will fetch it down for us, and all the while the living water is offered to us directly, freely, by the One who is Himself the source.

Here is the fact I want to lay before you, and I want you to feel the weight of it as though you were hearing it for the first time, because for many of you, I think, you very nearly are. The whole Word of God is open in your hands. Not the summary of it. Not someone's feelings about it. Not the thin gruel of a verse on a coffee mug. The thing itself, all sixty-six books, in your own language, and behind your own language the very Hebrew and Greek the Spirit moved holy men to write. And not only the Word, but the Author of the Word, the Holy Spirit Himself, given to indwell every believer and pledged to be his

Teacher.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance.

JOHN 14:26

Read that again and let it land. He shall teach you. Not He shall teach the seminary, who shall teach the pastor, who shall teach the author, who shall at last teach you a watered-down fourth-hand sip of what He said. He shall teach you. The believer has a resident Teacher, the very One who inspired the text, living within him and committed to opening that text to him. There has never been a tutor like Him in all the world, and He is given to the newest and humblest child of God as fully as to the greatest scholar who ever lived.

He shall teach you. Not the seminary, not the pastor, not the author. He shall teach you.

So why, then, and this is the question that set me writing, why are so many of God's people living on water carried to them in

another man's cup? They will sit through a study about the Bible. They will read a small and pleasant book of someone's thoughts about the Bible. They will listen to a teacher's feelings about the Bible, and a podcast on the Bible, and a song drawn loosely from the Bible, and call all of that drinking. And meanwhile the river itself runs clear and cold and open at their very feet, and they will not bend down to it.

I do not say this to shame you. I say it the way you would shake a friend by the shoulder who has been complaining of thirst while sitting beside a spring. The well is open, Dear Reader. It has been open for a long while now, longer than anyone reading these words has been alive, and the wonder is not that God opened it, for He has always meant His people to know Him. The wonder is how few of us have noticed, and walked down, and drunk.

That is what this little book is for. To walk you down to the water. So come.

how it used to be

Now to understand why so many believers stand in line for the cup instead of going to the river, you have to understand a thing about how it used to be, because the habit we are caught in made perfect sense once, and the trouble is only that the world has changed underneath the habit, and the habit has not noticed.

For the better part of human history, Dear Reader, the ordinary believer simply could not go to the Word himself. The reasons were not laziness or pride; they were iron, and there was no getting round them. He could not read; most people could not, through most of history. If by some mercy he could read, he did not own a Bible, for before the printing press a single copy was the labor of a man's months and the price of a house. And if by some greater mercy he both could read and somehow held a copy, it was very likely in Latin, a tongue he had never been taught, kept in a language the common man could not follow even as it was read aloud to him.

So the Word came to such a believer the only way it could come, through a man. Through the one who could read, who had been taught the sacred tongues, who stood up at the front and opened the scroll and told the people what it said. And thank God for that man. Without him the church through long dark centuries would have starved outright. The teacher was

not a luxury in those days, nor a crutch for the lazy. He was the pipe through which the only water reached the people at all.

Consider even the Scriptures themselves, and how they came to the first churches. When Paul wished to feed the believers at Corinth or Rome or Philippi, what did he do? He wrote them a letter, and sent it by the hand of a traveler, to be read aloud when the church gathered, for almost none of them owned so much as a page of their own. That is why we have the Epistles at all, because the apostle could not be in every place, and the people could not carry the text in their own hands, and a letter read aloud to the assembled congregation was the best that the world of that hour allowed.

And here is a thought I would have you hold, for it will matter greatly before we are done. Paul wrote letters because letters were the tool he had. Had the man possessed what you possess, had every believer in Corinth held the whole counsel of God in his own hand, in his own tongue, with the means to search it, do you imagine for one moment he would have begrudged them that? The apostle who longed for the Word to dwell in them richly would have rejoiced. The letter was the gift the age permitted; it was never meant to be a leash. The teaching of the few to the many was a mercy fitted to a time of scarcity; it was never the design God settled on for a people who would one day each hold the Book.

Keep that distinction close: the heavy dependence of the people upon their teachers, for most of the church's history,

was necessity. It was not the pattern God prized for its own sake. It was the shape the water took when the channel was narrow. And the question we must now ask, the question almost no one thinks to ask, is what happens to the habit of standing in line, once the channel is no longer narrow at all.

but now you have it

For the channel is no longer narrow, Dear Reader. The channel has been blown wide open, and we are the first generations in all of history to stand in the flood of it, and we go about our business as though we were still living in the old scarcity, still waiting on the man with the only key to the only book.

Think for one honest moment about what you are holding. In the small glass-and-metal thing that sits in your pocket this very hour, you carry what no king of Israel, no church father, no Reformer at the peril of his life ever held. You carry the entire Word of God. You carry it in a dozen English translations laid side by side, so that you may compare them in an instant. You carry behind every English word the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New, with lexicons that will tell you in a moment what each word meant and everywhere else it is used. You carry concordances that older men compiled by candlelight over a lifetime, searchable now in the time it takes to draw a breath. You carry the commentaries of the godliest and most learned men of twenty centuries. And you carry all of it for free, and in dozens of the tongues of the earth, available to anyone who can read and is willing to look.

Do you grasp what has happened? The very bottleneck that made the teacher the people's only pipe to the water, the cost of the book, the rarity of the book, the locked-away languages, the inability to read, every last one of those barriers has fallen in our own time. Tyndale was strangled and burned for the crime of putting the Scriptures into plain English so that, as he said, the boy that driveth the plough might know them. Men died for the page you scroll past. And we, for whom they died, hold the finished prize in our idle hands and reach instead for the summary, the devotional, the secondhand sip, as though the great library purchased with their blood were locked, when in truth the door stands open and we have simply never walked in.

*Men died for the page you scroll
past.*

I do not say the tools make a scholar of you overnight, nor that there is no labor in it. There is labor in it, blessed labor, and we shall speak of how to do it. But I will say this plainly: the believer who pleads that he cannot get at the deep things of the Word is, in our day, very nearly always pleading a poverty he does not actually suffer. The riches are in his hand. He has simply grown used to being fed, and the spoon has begun to feel like the only way to eat.

So here is the turn this whole book hangs upon. It used to be that you could not go to the source, and so another went for you. Now you can. The water that once had to be carried to you in a cup may now be drunk straight from the river, and the river is at your feet. The only question left, and it is a searching one, is whether you will keep standing in the old line out of habit, or whether you will at last bend down and drink.

the Spirit will teach you, if

Now I must be careful here, Dear Reader, for I have told you the well is open and the Word is in your hand, and a certain kind of person will hear that and march off thinking the whole business is a matter of cleverness and effort, that he need only apply a sharp enough mind to the page and the meaning will fall out like a nut from its shell. That is not what I am saying at all. The Word is not finally unlocked by intellect. It is unlocked by the Spirit. And that changes everything about how you must come to it.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:14

There is the reason a brilliant unbeliever may know the Greek better than you ever will and still miss the living heart of the Book entirely, while a humble saint with a plain translation drinks deeply of its truth. The things of the Spirit are spiritually discerned. The Author must open His own book to you, or it stays shut no matter how hard you pry. And the glory of the

gospel is that the Author has come to live inside every believer for exactly this purpose.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.

JOHN 16:13

So you are not sent to the Word alone, to sink or swim by your own wits. You are sent to it with the Teacher Himself indwelling you, pledged to guide you into all truth. That is the engine of the whole thing. That is why the plowboy and the housewife and the prisoner with a smuggled Bible have, again and again across the centuries, come to know the deep things of God that the proud scholar missed. The Spirit was their Teacher, and He is no respecter of diplomas.

But, and here is the word the eager reader must not skip past, there is a condition to this teaching, and it is not a condition of cleverness. It is a condition of fellowship. The Spirit guides the believer who is walking with Him. And sin cherished and unconfessed, sin you have made your peace with and tucked away and refused to give up, will quench and grieve that very Spirit and cloud the eyes He means to open.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

PSALM 66:18

Mark it well, Dear Reader. The man who comes to the open Word with open and unrepented sin in his heart is like a man trying to read by a lamp he has himself half-smothered. The light is not the trouble. His hand upon the wick is the trouble. This is why two believers may read the very same chapter and one find it a closed and lifeless thing while the other finds it ablaze with the voice of God; the difference very often is not in the brain but in the heart, not in the study but in the walk.

*The light is not the trouble. Your
hand upon the wick is the
trouble.*

So the first counsel of this whole book, before ever you open a lexicon or compare a translation, is this: get right with God. Come to the Word in fellowship, with a heart confessed and willing and surrendered, and ask the Author to teach you, and then expect that He will. For He has promised to, and He does not lie. The well is open; but it is the clean of heart who see most clearly into the water.

not just reading it

Now let me get practical with you and put some tools in your hands, for I have no wish to fill you with grand feeling about the open well and then leave you standing on the bank with no notion how to drink. There is a way to go to the Word that is more than a fond and drifting reading, and I want to show it to you, plainly, the way an older sister would show you across a table.

Begin by understanding what we are leaving behind. There is a manner of doing devotions that has become very common and very nearly worthless, in which a person reads a short passage quickly, perhaps from a little dated book that prints a verse and a warm paragraph beside it, and then asks the one fatal question: What does this mean to me? What do I feel this is saying? And whatever rises up in the feelings is taken to be the meaning, and the book is closed, and the soul is no better fed than before.

Do you see the error? It has put your feelings in the chair that belongs to the text. It asks what the verse means to you before it has done the harder and humbler work of asking what the verse meant when the Holy Spirit caused it to be written, to those people, in that tongue, in that hour. And a verse cannot mean now what it never meant then. That is the whole foundation, and the world's way of reading kicks it out from

under the house on the first page.

So here is the better way, and it is within the reach of anyone holding the tools we have spoken of. First, read the passage in its place, not a lonely verse pried loose, but the paragraph and the chapter and the book around it, so that you see what is actually being said and to whom. Ask the old, sound questions: Who wrote this, and to whom, and why? What had just been said? What comes next? A verse kept in its context will keep you out of nine-tenths of all the error there is.

Then go down into the words themselves. This is the part our fathers could scarcely dream of and we treat as nothing. When a word strikes you, look it up in the Hebrew or the Greek; you need not know the languages to begin; the tools will lay the meaning open for you and show you everywhere else that same word is used, and there is no schooling in Scripture like watching how the Spirit uses a word across the whole of His Book. Get yourself onto a good study program; there are fine ones, and free ones; and learn to use a concordance and a lexicon. It is simpler than you fear, and sweeter than you expect.

And then, not first, but then, go and see what the faithful teachers have said. Take up the good commentaries; see how Wiersbe opened it, how the older expositors weighed it, what the long line of sound men understood a hard word or a disputed phrase to mean. You are not the first to read this chapter, and humility will send you to those who labored before you. But notice the order, for the order is everything:

you go to the text first, and to the teachers after, as helps to your own reading, not the other way round, where you swallow a man's conclusion and never trouble the text at all.

And when you have done all this, read it in context, dug into the words, weighed the faithful teachers, then comes the last and most needful grace, which is to know the difference between what is certain and what is not. Some things the Word states plainly, repeatedly, beyond all honest dispute, and on those you may plant your feet and never be moved. Other things it touches once, or in a hard word, or leaves genuinely open, and on those the honest believer holds his view with an open hand and does not break fellowship over what God did not make plain.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15

Rightly dividing, there is the whole craft of it in a phrase. Be firm where the Word is firm, and humble where the Word is quiet, and learn with the Spirit's help to tell the one from the other. That is what it is to go to the well and truly drink, and not merely to wet your lips and call it done.

why they do not want you to

Now I come to a harder word, Dear Reader, and I will not soften it, because it is true and because you are owed the truth. If the well is open, and the Word is in every hand, and the Spirit Himself is given as Teacher, then why is this not preached from every pulpit in the land? Why are you not told, week upon week, to go home and search the Scriptures for yourselves until you primarily can feed your own souls? Why is the great drift of so much that calls itself ministry to keep you coming back, keep you listening, keep you buying, keep you dependent, rather than to work itself joyfully out of a job?

I will tell you the plain and uncomfortable reason, and I will tell you at once that it does not apply to every teacher, for there are faithful teachers who want nothing more than to see you grown and standing on your own feet in the Word. But it applies to more teachers, both men and women alike, than we like to admit, and this author would say, the vast majority. The reason is that a teacher whose livelihood, whose platform, whose sense of his own importance depends upon your needing them will rarely be the one who tells you that you do not need them. The gatekeeper does not, as a rule, knock down their own gate.

Consider it honestly. If a teacher's income rises with the size of the crowd that cannot do without him; if his name is made

great precisely by how many lean upon it; if his books sell to the degree that people would rather read about the Word than read the Word; then every incentive he has runs the wrong direction. It pays him for your dependence and costs him your maturity. I do not say he schemes it; most do not. The pull is quieter than scheming. It is simply that a man finds it wonderfully easy to believe that the thing which happens to feed him is also the thing the Lord requires, and so he keeps you at his table, and calls it shepherding, when a truer shepherd would be teaching you to find the green pasture yourself.

And the honest teacher, here is how you will know him, does the very opposite of clutching. He is forever pointing past himself. He says, in effect: do not take my word for it; here is the text, go and see whether these things are so. He hands you the tools and shoves you gently toward the water and rejoices, actually rejoices, on the day you no longer need him to fetch it. He measures his success not by how many still depend on him but by how many he has grown up into men and women who can open the Book and be fed by the Spirit without him in the room at all.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

ACTS 17:11

Look at what is praised there, Dear Reader, and by whom. These Bereans were commended, called more noble, for the very act of checking the apostle Paul himself against the Scriptures. They did not simply swallow the great man's preaching; they went home and searched the text daily to see whether what even he said was so. And the Holy Spirit set that down in the eternal record as the noble thing to do. If it was noble to fact-check an apostle against the Word, how much more your favorite teacher, your podcast, your study book, and how much more this very booklet you hold in your hand.

the same game everywhere

I want to step back from the church for a moment, Dear Reader, and show you that this pattern, the keeper of the gate who profits from your dependence and so will never tell you the gate is open, is not some peculiar sin of preachers. It is a thing woven through the whole fallen world, and once you have seen it in one place you will see it everywhere. Let me show it to you in a place you would not expect, for the seeing of it elsewhere will help you trust your eyes when you see it at home.

Consider the great clamor of our day over the thinking machines, what the world calls artificial intelligence. (I have written elsewhere, at length, on why the Christian need not fear it at all, and I will not travel that whole road again here.) But notice one curious thing about the loudest voices of alarm. A great many of the very men who stand upon the stages and warn the world in grave tones that this technology may doom us all, that it must be feared, slowed, watched, are the very same men who go straight back from the stage to building it as fast as their fortunes will allow.

Now ask yourself the simple question a child would ask. If they truly believed the thing they are building would end the world, would they not stop building it? A man who believed the bridge would collapse does not keep driving cars onto it. That they do

not stop tells you something they will not say aloud: that they do not, at bottom, believe their own alarm, or at least, that something else is at work beneath the alarm. And what is at work, very often, is the oldest game there is. The technology threatens to knock down the gate, to put knowledge and skill and capacity that once required them, the experts, the gatekeepers, into the hands of ordinary people. And so the warning serves a second purpose its hearers never suspect: it keeps the crowd anxious, deferential, and convinced that only the high priests of the thing can be trusted to handle it. Be afraid, they say, and leave it to us.

Do you see it now? It is the very same shape as the teacher who will not tell you the well is open. The expert who profits from your dependence will tell you whatever keeps you dependent, and he will dress it in the language of your own protection. The preacher dresses it as your spiritual safety; the technologist dresses it as the safety of the world; but underneath the robes it is one creature, and it is as old as the serpent who first persuaded a woman that God was holding out on her and that she had better listen to a more knowing voice than His.

And I will add the one word the Christian must never lose in all of this: we, of all people, have no business being ruled by the world's manufactured fears, whether of the machine or of anything else. We know how the story ends, for the Author has told us. The unbeliever trembles at the unknown because for him the unknown is genuinely unmastered; he has no sovereign Lord holding the last page. We do. So when the

gatekeepers of any age trade in fear to keep you small and dependent, the believer may look at the whole performance with clear and untroubled eyes, and walk past it, and go drink.

grow up

There is a thing that ought to happen to a believer over the years, Dear Reader, and in a great many it simply never does, and we have grown so used to its not happening that we have stopped expecting it at all. It is this: as you grow in Christ, you ought to need less leading by the hand, not more. You ought to move, over time, from being fed to feeding yourself, and from being fed to feeding others. That is what growing up is. And a Christian twenty and thirty years along who still cannot open his Bible without a man at his elbow to tell him what it says has not grown up. He has only grown older.

*He has not grown up. He has
only grown older.*

I do not say this harshly. I say it the way Scripture itself says it, which is harder than I would dare to say it on my own.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

HEBREWS 5:12

Hear the rebuke in it, and hear that it is a rebuke. By this time, the writer says, you ought to be teachers, and instead you still need someone to spoon you the first lessons over again, like grown men sent back to sit among the infants. It is named as a failure. It is not held up as humble or safe or properly deferential. It is held up as a shame: that those who by the calendar should be feeding others are still gumming milk because they never learned to chew.

And do you see what this means for the whole question of teachers? It means that the very aim of good teaching is to make itself less necessary over time. The faithful teacher is like a good parent, whose whole labor is bent toward the day the child walks on his own. A mother does not count it a triumph that her grown son still cannot feed himself; she counts it a grief, and a sign that something has gone wrong in the raising. Just so, the teaching that keeps you permanently and equally dependent, year after year with no growth toward standing on your own in the Word, has failed at the one thing it was for, however warm it feels, however faithfully you attend.

So I will say the plain thing, and let it be as bracing as it is. Hear me rightly: this author holds firmly to what the Bible teaches about the pastor and the teacher in the local church. Those are God-given gifts, and I would never wave them away. But Scripture itself teaches that as we grow in Christ we are meant to lean on them less, not more, to move from being fed to feeding ourselves.

We do not need our teachers the way the church once needed them, because we have what the church once lacked: the open Word in our own hands and the entire collection of Spirit-filled preachers and teachers from before. And as you grow, you should lean on them less, not because they are bad, but because you are growing, which is the entire point. To stay forever a dependent child and to call it humility is to baptize a failure and hang it on the wall. The Lord means to grow you up. Let Him. Take the meat. Learn to chew.

on the shoulders of the laborers

Lest anything I have said be twisted into a contempt I do not hold, Dear Reader, let me now turn and pay a debt, for everything in this book, including your very ability to read it, was bought for you at a tremendous price by men whose names most believers could not so much as recite. And it would be a poor sort of freedom that forgot the ones who purchased it.

You hold an English Bible. Think only of that. Men gave their lives, their actual, breathing lives, so that you might. William Tyndale labored in exile and hiding to turn the Scriptures into plain English, and was betrayed, and strangled, and burned, and his dying prayer was that the Lord would open the king of England's eyes. The page you find too much trouble to read was carried to you out of a literal fire. Behind him stand the long ranks of the faithful: the scribes who copied the sacred text letter by letter through the centuries, the scholars who learned the dying tongues and built the lexicons, the translators who carried the Word into language after language, the expositors who spent whole lifetimes mining a single book so that you could read its riches in an afternoon.

My own debts are particular, and I name them gladly, for I invented nothing and would have you know it. I sit under teachers far wiser than myself, most of them now gone home

to the Lord, teaching me still through what they left behind, as I said before earlier in the about the author section of this booklet.

So when I tell you to go to the Word yourself, understand what I am and am not saying. I am not telling you to despise these laborers; God forbid; I am telling you to honor them in the one way that actually honors them. For how do you suppose Tyndale would have you treat the English Bible he died to give you? By leaving it shut and living on summaries? Or by reading it, reading it for yourself, drinking deep of the very thing he poured out his life to put in your hand? You do not thank the men who bled to give you the Book by refusing to open it. You thank them by using what they bought.

This is the great difference, Dear Reader, and you must not miss it: there is a faithful handing-down and there is a faithless one. The faithless one is the game of telephone, where each man takes his religion secondhand from the last, and no one checks the source, and the message bends a little with every mouth until what is preached has only a cousin's resemblance to what is written. But the faithful handing-down is otherwise: it is a line of men who each drove the next back to the text, who stood on the shoulders of those before them only to see the Book more clearly, and who pointed always past themselves to the Word and the Spirit. That is the line I come from. That is the line I am begging you to join. Stand on their shoulders, and then look at the Book with your own eyes.

why this is free

And now, Dear Reader, in this last chapter, let me tell you the thing I have touched upon briefly but held back, and in the telling you will understand both why everything I make is given away for nothing and why I am so certain of all I have said about the open well, for I am, myself, a living proof of it.

My pastor is Dr. J. Vernon McGee. I have never met the man. I want you to sit with that a moment, for it is the whole of the matter in a single strange fact. He went home to be with the Lord before I was so much as born. I never heard his voice in a room, never shook his hand, never sat in a pew while he preached. And yet he is my pastor; has been, is, and will be until the day I go home to the very place where he now is. He pastored me across the gulf of death itself, through nothing more than a thing recorded and preserved and freely given: his Thru the Bible program, that patient five-year journey through the whole Word that he called the Bible Bus. I climbed aboard, and rode it through the entire Book, and when I reached the end I simply started again, and I have ridden it round multiple times over. A man I never met taught me the whole counsel of God.

Do you see what that is? It is this entire book made flesh. The well, open across time. The teaching of a faithful man, preserved and laid free and reaching a girl not yet born when

he spoke, reaching her precisely because he gave it away rather than locking it behind a gate. And he himself did not spring from nowhere; he sat under teachers, and labored among a fellowship of sound men who sharpened one another and stood on the ones before them, so that what came to me through him carried the whole stream of them with it. He is the near end of a long faithful line, and every man in it pointed past himself to the Book. That is the honorable handing-down I spoke of. McGee is my proof that it is real, because I am its beneficiary, taught by a man in glory through what he freely left behind.

And here is the thing I caught from him above all the rest, not only the doctrine, but the open hand. For he said it constantly, in that warm and homely way of his: here it is, take it, it is free, share it with whomever you please. He did not hoard the preaching of the Word or sell access to it or build a gate around it and charge admission. He flung it out as wide and as free as he could, and trusted the Lord with the rest. And when I came to write these things, I knew, because he had shown me, that I would do the same. Everything I make is free. I have never taken a penny for any of it, and I never will, and I have told you already the reason I am able to say so: the Lord has provided for me richly by other means, and I simply do not need this to feed me. I am free of the need, and so I am free to give.

That freedom, Dear Reader, is also why you do not know my name, and why it does not matter that you do not. I am no one's gatekeeper. I am not building a platform, or a following,

or a fortune, and so I have nothing to protect by keeping you dependent, and no reason on earth to do anything but what McGee did: point you past myself, hand you the Book, and step out of your way. Set this booklet down. I mean it. I have said what I have to say, and the only thing I want from you is the one thing I cannot do for you: that you would go, yourself, to the open well, with the Spirit as your Teacher, and drink.

And as always Dear Reader, may God's grace and peace be ever with you.

Your Sister in Christ,

Ana ♥

a closing word from Ana

Remember what is true. The well is open; it has been open your whole life, the Word in your own hands, in your own tongue, with the tongues of the Spirit behind it and tools beneath it that the saints of former ages would have wept to hold. The Teacher is given; the Holy Spirit Himself, pledged to guide you into all truth, living within you for that very purpose. The price was paid; by the Author who breathed out the Book, and by the laborers who bled to put it in your hand. And the only thing wanting, in most of our cases, is that we would stop standing in line for another man's cup and bend down at last to the river running at our feet.

So get right with the Lord, that the Teacher may teach you with nothing between. Open the Book, not a book about the Book, but the Book. Read it in its place; go down into its words; weigh the faithful men who came before; and learn to be firm where God is firm and humble where God is quiet. Lean on your teachers less as you grow, not because they are nothing, but because you are growing, which is the whole design. And drink; drink deeply, daily, for yourself, of the living water that no one ever again need carry to you in a cup.

Set this booklet down now. You have a far better Book to open, and a Teacher waiting to meet you in it. Go.

Soli Deo Gloria