

special preparation, I take it that the providence of God circumscribed him to be the apostle to the circumcision. He needed not to be so well educated when he came before Jews, who from their fifth year were carefully trained by their fathers and mothers in the Holy Word. So when Divine Providence needed an apostle to stand before kings and princes and propagate the Gospel in Corinth, with its luxury and splendor, in Athens with its atheism and scepticism, in Antioch with its great tides of commerce, sweeping to and fro down into Jerusalem itself, he took Saul of Tarsus—a boy that drank in the Greek literature and imagery—a boy who had sat at the feet of Rabbi Gamaliel. He took him as a finished scholar of antiquity to write fourteen out of the twenty-one doctrinal epistles of the New Testament. (Applause.) There needs to be self-denying study of the Word of God. Now, the desire for that study does not come by nature, but rather by grace. I confess with sorrow that some of the lost hours and opportunities of my Christian life have been when for a time I had entered on a period of spiritual decadence, and had lost the keen zest and relish for the study of the Word of God. My dear brother, do you want me to give you to-night a decisive test—and I can give it out of Scripture as well as confirmed by experience—as to whether you are truly in the enjoyment, profitably in the possession, of the Christian life? Then I put this test before you. Does there light up your eye, and flush your cheek, and warm your heart, the very thought of turning away from secular duty—from the business of the store—from the desk—from the domestic cares of life—to the study of God's Word? When you turn from your breakfast in the morning, and take down that well-worn Bible, do you turn to the bread from above, the bread divine, with keener relish than you take the bread that you have just given to your perishing body in order that you may sustain it? Is there a keen and ever-growing relish in your heart for the Word of God—for the study of the Word of God? If you love that word to-night, that is a sign that your Christian life is in a healthful condition. If you do not, it is a sign that, like unto the life of the speaker for a time, you have entered upon a lower plane of Christian living—upon something like a spiritual decadence. Be warned, if you do not in your heart of hearts love the study of the Bible more than the study of any of the great books of earth—more than the newspapers that reflect the current intelligence of this great world. If you love your Bible better than your newspaper or your magazine, or your choicest book or library on earth, then your condition is of a healthful kind. A man may lose this love for the study of the Bible in two ways. He may lose it by neglect; and many a jewel falls to earth through neglect. He may lose it by entering upon some secret sin—an old sin that pertained to the days before he became a Christian man; somehow it may have re-asserted itself; that old besetting sin may have tried to gain the mastery over him. Have you ever noted this: