

subtraction, multiplication, and division, and had got into "miscellaneous" a mixture of them all. Now that was all very well. But supposing the teacher had pitched him right into "miscellaneous" before he had gone through the others, what a mess he would have made of it! I hope you will all be able to study the Bible topically, but you cannot do it safely or to advantage unless you are careful to study whole books, especially the more important ones, and know not only the passages that the Concordance finds out for you, but the whole setting of them, what goes before and what comes after, and the bearing they have on the object the writer has in view.

I come back, then, to what I said before, that for those who wish to feed upon the Bible the best thing is to take first that which is simple, necessary, and substantial; and, happily, what is necessary is also simple and substantial, just as it is in our every-day food. And on this principle the first place must be given to the Gospels in the New Testament and the Psalms in the Old, though we must not, of course, neglect the biographies and histories, the letters and prophecies, of the Old and New Testaments, taking in each case the simpler parts first, and then those that are more difficult.

*Read, Mark, and Digest.*

But I wish to get my third point. The first was, be sure to keep up your appetite; the next was, choose that which agrees with you; and now I come to the third, which I may put in familiar words:—"READ, MARK, LEARN, AND INWARDLY DIGEST." *Read*, of course; but reading will not be enough, you must also *mark*. You must notice what you are reading, especially in the more familiar passages. You are exceedingly apt to let the mind slip over the familiar passages, and not get a single new thought out of them. Be sure to mark as you read. It is a good thing sometimes to mark with a pencil, but be sure you mark with your mind. And then *learn*, not necessarily the words, though that is a good thing, but the lessons. We should always keep in view the purpose of the reading, and to do this we should keep in our hearts all the while these two prayers: "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to learn?" and that other, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" "Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest." After you have finished your dinner you have not done with it; you do not leave it behind you; you carry it with you to your work, and meantime it gets turned over and over in your stomach and digestive apparatus, and gradually it passes into your life. So in the same way, after you have read your portion of Scripture, you are not to leave it behind you; you are to carry it with you to your work, turn it over and over and over in your mind, bring it close to your heart, and keep it working there, and little by little it will pass into your life. That is the true way to "learn by heart;" not simply to learn the words, that is learning by rote; but to let the substance of it pass into your heart and life, that is learning by heart. "Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest."

*The Psalms.*

This applies, of course, to every part of our reading. But now I wish to say something, very briefly, about the different parts, and first the Psalms. The Psalms are the simplest of all reading; perhaps we may speak of them as the soup in our bill of fare, easily taken, very good for invalids, and yet not to be bolted down, but to be sipped slowly, so as to get the flavor. That is the reason why it is so good to *sing* the Psalms. I was glad Mr. Moody gave out that hundredth Psalm. Do you not think that we Scotch people know what is good for us when we like to sing the Psalms occasionally, even though the version in which we sing them be rough, and rugged, and old-fashioned, like the grand old Psalms themselves? And then let me recommend you to mark your favorite Psalms. What you like best is generally best for you, that is, if you are in good health; and so it is with the Scriptures. So,

when you find something that is particularly delightful and satisfying, mark it, and come back to it again and again and again.

*The Gospels.*

Then the Gospels: these need a great deal more thinking than the Psalms in order to get the good out of them. If the Psalms are the soup, the Gospels are the main joint, and they need some carving to begin with. The division into chapters and verses is an attempt to carve; but the carvers, unfortunately, did not always know the joints, and sometimes they cut right through the bone. In this regard you will find the Revised Version very helpful by its division into paragraphs. And let me advise you to take it piece by piece, each piece of convenient size, so that you can easily manage it. A little at a time, well eaten, and thoroughly digested, is far better than a long chapter bolted down, or, as is too often the case, not taken in at all. The eye is just run over it, the heart gets no nourishment, and you could scarcely tell at twelve o'clock in the day what chapter it was that you read in the morning. I would far rather have two or three verses read, marked, learnt, and inwardly digested, than whole chapters run over in that careless kind of way.

*Two Great Lessons.*

Then, when you are reading the Gospels, let me recommend you always to look out for the two great lessons to be learnt in the life of Christ; the first of these, what God is, the second, what man ought to be. Jesus came to tell us who God is, and what He is, and how He feels towards us, and how He treats us. Always be on the look out for lessons on that subject in the life of Christ, and so when you read about the poor leper who came running up to Him and saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean," watch what He does, because whatever He does to the leper is just what God will do to you. He immediately puts forth His hand, and touches him, and says, "I will, be thou clean." Then, again, when you see the Saviour standing on the stormy lake, and lifting up His voice to the waters, and saying, "Peace! be still," and "immediately there is a great calm," that is just what the blessed Lord will do to you; when the waves of your spirit are agitated, and you in your trouble and your fear come to Him, He will speak the word and say, "Peace! be still," and there will be "a great calm." And when you see Him agonizing in the garden and dying on the cross, you see not merely a love that was felt and shown eighteen hundred years ago, but you see the love of God to you now; you see what God is, and how He feels towards you now. Always be on the look out for that lesson, as you read the Gospels, that you may learn what God is, and how He feels to you, and how He wishes to pardon, and save, and bless you.

And then do not forget the second lesson—to learn what man ought to be. The Lord Jesus has "left us an example, that we should follow His steps," and wherever it is possible for us to follow we should "come after" Him.

*Sacred History.*

A word about the history and biography. This covers a large part of the Bible, and so it must be important. We all know the importance of teaching by example, of which these histories are full. Now the study of history in the Bible will take time, and I hope you will give time to it. If you cannot get time through the week, take it on Sunday; and if you were to spend say a couple of hours in this way every Sunday, you would be astonished to find how fast you would become acquainted with the sacred history; and study it as you would any other history, so as to get a connected idea of it, and to follow and understand the whole course of events. And as you read, always be on the look out for helpful passages, and put a pencil mark beside them, and come back and back to them, so as to

get again the help you had the first time, and whatever new help you can get, for it is not one, or two, or twenty drawings that will take you to the bottom of a Bible well.

*The Epistles.*

Now a word about the Epistles. Never forget that they are letters, and that they are to be read like any other letters. You must know who the writer was, it you can, and who the person or the persons to whom the letter was written. And then, of course, you will read it straight on from beginning to end, if it is not altogether too long. If you receive a letter from a friend, even if it is a long letter, you do not read a few sentences of it to-day, and then lock it up and read a few sentences of it to-morrow and a few sentences the next day; you read it straight through to get a general idea of it, and afterwards you come back to particular passages. So should we do with the letters of the New Testament; we should read them through, especially the shorter ones, and get a general idea of them, and come back and study the particular passages.

Alongside of the Epistles in the New Testament you might perhaps put the Proverbs in the Old. These give us practical wisdom from the Old Testament point of view, as the Epistles give it from the New Testament point of view.

*The Prophecies.*

And now we come to the prophecies. They occupy a large portion of the Bible, and therefore must be important; but remember that the greater portion of the prophecies are not predictions. A great deal of prophecy is just what we call preaching, only it is most powerful preaching. Sometimes it is like a trumpet or a clarion, to rouse men from the sleep of sin, and call them to "awake to righteousness." Sometimes it is like a sweet flute or Æolian harp, to comfort and soothe the sorrowing spirit. Let us seek out that music, and delight ourselves with these heavenly strains.

As to the predictive prophecies I should like to say much, but I can only give some broad hints. In the first place let us be sure that we keep before our minds the great event to which prophecy points, the Second Coming of the Lord. Let us keep that in our minds and hearts, and always look forward to it as the goal of all our hopes. So far in general; and now in matters of detail, I have three counsels to give:—

*The Coming of the Lord.*

1. I do not go "into miscellaneous" here. Do not trust to a Concordance and a haphazard string of passages. Study the prophecies right on, and do not be quite sure about all that is in the book of Revelation till you come to it in the right order.

2. Do not study to gratify curiosity. The prophecies were not given to gratify curiosity, they were given to build us up in faith, and hope, and love, and in preparedness for the Lord's coming. And especially remember what our Lord said to His own disciples, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." Only remember that we are always to be waiting, always ready: for we "know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

*Weak and Folly of Heart.*

3. "Be not wise in your own conceits." I apply that, of course, to myself as well as to all others. I am quoting the passage, or I should have said, "Let us not be wise in our own conceits." Remember that prophecy is very difficult. Let us not be quite sure as to all the details of it until—well, the question is whether we should ever be quite sure about all the details of it. Those who have studied prophecy most thoroughly are likely to be the most modest with regard to their ability to interpret the difficult passages. If ever any of you should be disposed to insist that of course you are right,