

3. READING THE SCRIPTURES FOR OUR OWN PERSONAL BENEFIT—FOR OUR OWN EDIFICATION.—This is an exceedingly important exercise for a Christian. There are many ways in which a Christian may read the Scriptures, and get little practical benefit to his own soul from doing so. The minister may read and study the Scriptures for the benefit of his people, when he should read and study them for his own soul's benefit. If he read and study them for the immediate and practical benefit of his own soul, he will be best qualified to bring out things new and old for the benefit of the people. If his great concern be to read and study the Bible for his people, though he may enrich his mind with much valuable biblical knowledge, his own soul grows lean; it is not fed. Verily he has his reward. He must study the Bible as God's book to himself, and he will be in direct communication with the eternal Mind. The Sabbath-school teacher may read the Scriptures for the benefit of his class, and not for his own personal edification. Now it is right that a Sabbath-school teacher should study the wants of his class, and make himself acquainted with such views and aspects of truth, and use such anecdotes and illustrations as will interest them, but if he read not the Bible for himself his soul does not prosper. He may qualify himself for interesting children, but he could do this without losing his piety. Let him remember the relation which his human spirit sustains to the great uncreated Spirit, and that the Bible is the mind of that Spirit revealed to him, and he will read it with the desire to know what he has to say to him *personally*. Another Christian, who has a keen relish for controversy, may read the Bible in order to get arguments to refute the notions which he conceives to be erroneous. Probably such a person would not read the Bible so much if there were no erroneous notions to refute. Or, if he does not read the Scriptures for the purposes of getting arguments to overturn notions which he thinks erroneous, when he reads the Bible he allows these things to attract his mind more than passages that directly bear on his well-being and plainly teach him his duty. Such a person may become a skilled controvertialist, but he is not dealing fairly with the Word of the eternal God. He is feeding on hard bones always, when he ought, sometimes at least, to be delighting his soul in fatness. I do not say that it is wrong or unimportant to meet erroneous views of God's character and purposes, with arguments drawn from his Word. It is most important. Would tha