

not ended. It was made to meet the wants of common men, or men less than common; it is in sympathy with them; it is formed out of material which can be shaped to their need; and its methods are within their easy reach.

You think that when you preach you must preach so as to touch the top heads in your congregation. Touch the bottom and you will be sure to touch the top. He that puts a jack-screw under the roof of a building is not going to raise the whole building; but he who puts a jack-screw under the sills of a building, and raises them up, will, I think, take up everything that is above them. And in preaching, the man who is in dead earnest, who is inflamed by divine love, and who preaches so that the lowest and poorest of his congregation understand him and are stirred by what he says, and are lifted up by the power of the truth as he presents it—does he not lift up every body else too?

#### BONDAGE AND LIBERTY IN READING.

A man starts for his business, and gets as far as the door; and his wife calls out to him, "My dear, have you forgotten prayers?" "Well," he says, "we haven't had prayers, have we? I did forget." Back he goes, and takes his Bible, and turns to the twelfth Psalm. He chooses that because it is short. Blessed be the Psalms; they are of all lengths and shapes, to meet every emergency! Having hastily gone through a perfunctory service, he starts for his business again, saying, "The devil didn't catch me to-day; I have read my Bible."

Now, how different is that from putting an amulet around a man's neck, or from worshipping an idol? You might as well look into a cook-shop window and think you are fed, as to go to your Bible in that way and think that it is of any use to you. You have *abused* it, not used it.

I lay great stress on this liberty which belongs to men, this necessity which is laid upon them, to find that in the Word of God which shall meet their case, and read it according to their personal wants. **There** are those who learn the Bible; there are thousands of humble people to whom it becomes familiar: for it is a peculiarity, I think, of the word of God, that as men run under trees and get behind rocks when storms are in the sky, as they otherwise would not, so we seek a covert in the Bible when we are in trouble, as we would not at any other time.

God's word is not a house of bondage. It is not required that a man shall every morning marshal his family, and call the roll, and grind out a ritualistic or regulation prayer, and read his Bible. God's word is a Father's house, into which you have a right to go, and speak or keep silent. You are the children of God, and this provision has been made for you; but it is not to be enforced upon you, as though you were slaves. You are to avail yourselves of it according to your need. You are free in this matter.

I suppose no person ever did or ever will read the whole Bible in his life. I know there are persons who read it by letter; I hear people say

that they make it a rule to read the whole Bible once a year; and I have no doubt that they skate over it once a year; but I do not think they do more than that, because it is not all for them.

Take for instance, a great square-built, good, honest-minded, practical Yankee, who knows the quality of matter, and who knows how to put thing and thing together, and make money out of them—take such a man and put him into Solomon's Songs, and see what he will make out of these.

Take an Oriental; take a man who was born under different skies; who is of a different stock; whose ancestors have had different associations from generation to generation; whose mind-methods are different; whose growth is more by the imagination and less by the practical reason—take such a man and he will say of the Songs of Solomon, "That is the buckle of the Bible. It is that which clasps and holds together all the other books."

And so, all the way through the Bible, there are things which men who are proud, or men who are constitutionally without wisdom, cannot understand—they are mysteries to them. There are deep things for mystics in the Bible which people who have no mysticism are unable to see. They do not see them when they look at them. In the Bible there are things for the twilight, things for the moonlight, things for the midnight, things for the day-dawn, and things for the noontide. The Bible is filled with ineffable riches for men; and it belongs to every man to select according to his need.

The different parts of the Bible are of very different values for private reading. I think there is a great deal of the Bible that is just as necessary for the race as the spelling-book; but how long is it since you sat down to read your spelling-books? You are done with them; and yet you do not disparage them, nor cry them to naught.

And there are variations in the moral value of different parts of the Bible, if men only have the interpreting necessity in them by which to discern these things.

Such is what I call *the Bible of the closet*. It is interpreted by personal necessity, and by elective affinity: but that is not all. It is an immediate source of consolation. It comforts in sorrow; it relieves in perplexity; it is a mother in the household; it is a counsellor to the mechanic, to the workman, when he asks, "Where shall I go? What shall I do? How shall I carry myself?" When men are stirred up; when they are oppressed; when they are burdened; when they are yoked, harnessed and driven by depressing moods, then they, above all other men, must have a personal Bible speaking to them, day by day. Under such circumstances the Bible becomes, not only a lamp to their feet and a light to their path, but bread for their life, medicine for their soul, and water coming to them from under the very throne of God itself.

#### THE PREACHER'S BIBLE.

This would naturally lead me to speak, though I need not, of the preacher's Bible. The Bible