

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE WITH SPIRITUAL PROFIT.

I. If you would profit by reading, *remove those things that will hinder your profiting*. That the body may thrive, obstructions must be removed. There are three obstructions must be removed, if you will profit by Scripture.

1. Remove the love of every sin. Let a physician prescribe ever so good receipts, if the patient takes poison it will hinder the virtue and operation of the physic. The Scriptures prescribe excellent recipes, but sin lived in, poisons all. The body cannot thrive in a fever, nor can the soul under the feverish heat of lust. Plato calls the love of sin *magnus demon*, a great devil. As the rose is destroyed by the canker which breeds in it, so are the souls of men by those sins in which they indulge.

2 Take heed of those thorns which will choke the word read. These thorns our Saviour expounds to be the cares of this world. By "*cares*" is meant *covetousness*. A covetous man hath such diversity of secular employment that he can scarce find time to read, or, if he doth, what solecisms doth he commit in reading! While his eye is upon the Bible, his heart is upon the world: it is not the writings of the apostles he is so much taken up with, as the writing in his account-books, Is this man like to profit? You may as soon extract oil and syrup out of a flint, as he any real benefit out of Scripture.

3. Take heed of jesting with Scripture: this is playing with fire. Some cannot be merry unless they make bold with God; when they are sad, they bring forth Scripture as their harp to drive away the evil spirit, as that drunkard who, having emptied his cups, calls to his fellows, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." In the fear of God beware of this. King Edward IV. would not endure to have his crown jested with, but caused him to be executed who said *he would make his son heir to the crown*, meaning the sign of the crown on his tavern. Much less will God endure to have his word jested with. Eusebius relates of one who took a piece of Scripture to jest with, that God struck him with frenzy. The Lord may justly give over such persons to a *reprobate mind*. Rom. i. 28,

they will spare themselves no pains in seeking acquisition. In spiritual things as well as in temporal, the law is, that he who labours most shall gain the most. How is it that we see so many, active enough in worldly respects, bestowing little or no time or attention to the means of grace? How do we find so few comparatively enquiring after Jesus? Just because they feel not their need of him.—"They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Because, too, being wholly taken up with the things of sense they realise not spiritual truths. The friends of the paralytic being alive to his distressing condition, and fully aware of the importance of the benefit they desired to obtain, thought no trouble too great to take, to bring him to the Lord.

VI. "And when he saw their faith he said unto him, 'Man thy sins are forgiven thee.'"—Had our Saviour been, as the blinded Pharisees supposed, a mere man, this would have been indeed a blasphemous expression. None but God has power to forgive sins. "It is God that justifieth." Jesus must therefore have been God. O, how fraught with comfort is this doctrine to the believer. At the same time that he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, our Saviour is the Almighty God.

VII. "But when Jesus perceived their thoughts," &c. v. 22. Here we have another proof of the Divinity of Christ. It is God who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins. How very watchful should we be over the thoughts of our hearts, from the consideration that Jesus is cognizant of them all.

VIII. "But that ye may know," &c. Our Saviour evinces, by ocular demonstration, his power to forgive sins, by healing at a word the sick of the palsy. Thus he had higher testimony than that of John. The Father Himself bore witness to the truth of his doctrine.

Learn 1. Jesus has power to heal all diseases whether spiritual or temporal.—Matt. xxviii. 18.

2 Jesus has not only the power, but the will to heal all that come to him by faith.—2 Pet. iii. 9.

3. We should be very earnest in seeking after Christ.—Luke xiii. 24. 2 Pet. i. 10.

4. Jesus has power to forgive sins.—2 Cor. v. 10.

5. Jesus knows our secret thoughts.—Psa. cxxix. 2. Heb. iv. 13.

FIFTY THE FOUNDATION OF POLITENESS.—Let me be free from anxiety about the honour which is from men, and resign myself to the benevolence of the gospel, and I secure two capital ingredients of pleasant manners.—Chalmers.