

other than the inspiration of the book imposes upon men the obligation to find it religiously profitable. The latter is the view we regard it as teaching.

The text tells us two essential things about the Bible which it is essential for us to know, and which we regard eminently proper for us to meditate upon on such an occasion as the present. It informs in what respects and for what end the Bible is profitable to men.

In meditating upon how the Bible is useful to us as set forth in the text we in fact are led to examine with greater or less brevity, what are its essential features or qualities. The text gives the Bible's own account of its character and purpose.

I. We shall consider in the first place the account the Bible gives of its own character.

1. It is preeminently a *teaching* book. It makes wise the simple. It instructs man regarding things he must know if it would be well with him. Such a book is a necessity and not a superfluity. It contains not condiments and luxuries for the feelings or fancy, but the bread and the water of life for the well-being of the soul. The disclosures of the Bible are not Chinese lanterns to add to the lustre of a festive occasion, but lighthouses upon dangerous coasts, to guide the seaman in his voyage to the desired haven. Scriptural doctrines are not intended to furnish entertainment for curious speculation or idle fancies, but truth to make our hearts strong and noble, and our actions just and fruitful. That it is a necessity and not a luxury its own account of itself amply shows. It is to us what the sword is to the soldier, the lamp to the benighted traveller, bread and water to the famished and thirsty body. It reveals truth, and truth is always *necessary* to men. "It is profitable for doctrine." "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

Were all things one colour the eyes would be without enlightenment. Such is the condition of man by nature as regards spiritual truth. "All have gone astray." There is none righteous, as regards what God reckons righteous, not one. And to have only one colour is to have none. Hence the law of God, being unlike man's, brings the knowledge of sin. Man's thoughts are not those of God. Hence when God makes known to us his laws they enlighten the eyes. The most effective way to show that deformity is unsightly, is to place it beside beauty; and that unbelief is a weak and untrue thing or rather nothing, a nonentity, is to obtain the best description of it you can, and read it along with the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. True affirmation is "the besom of destruction" that will sweep away all refuges of lies, of false negation. The sunlight hides the stars more surely than any night of clouds. The bell ringing in the true is the sure death-knell ringing out the false.

2. The Bible, because profitable for teaching, is to sinful man in the first place profitable for rebuke. It gives such an exhibition of the character of God that it is the most powerful method of convincing sinners of the error of their ways. It gives "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God," being "the testimony of Jesus Christ," so that sinners are left without excuse, having no cloak for their sins. The Scriptures are profitable for teaching, and in consequence for reproof. Its truths alone can beget "repentance towards God." It exhibits the beauties of holiness in such a clear light that all but wilfully blind eyes must see and mourn their own moral deformity.

It is not in man who walketh to direct his own steps in the way of righteousness. The natural man, it is true, is far from perceiving this to be the case, and so far indeed that the characteristic truths of the Bible are by him regarded as foolishness. Men will pursue for years with minute and exact investigation their researches in the domain of physical science, who would regard as many weeks given to careful thought upon Scripture doctrine as an