

Introductory Remarks on the Value of the Holy Scriptures.

by Thomas Reade

The Holy Scriptures are a source of light, truth, comfort, and guidance for our lives, and are essential for our spiritual growth and relationship with God.

Scripture: Psalm 19:7, Psalm 119:105, Isaiah 55:11, Luke 11:28, John 5:39, Romans 15:4, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Biblical Authority", "Spiritual Guidance"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches on the invaluable treasure of the Holy Scriptures, emphasizing its role in dispelling darkness, guiding through error, and bringing joy in times of misery. He highlights the Bible as the revelation of God's love and grace, containing heavenly blessings and guiding principles for holiness. Reade stresses the importance of seeking wisdom and direction from the Scriptures, as they have the power to convert souls, provide comfort, and equip believers for spiritual battles. He encourages embracing the Word of God with faith and simplicity, as it reveals Jesus, the source of promises, prophecies, and glories.

Transcript

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE VALUE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

PREFACE.

This little treatise has no pretensions to novelty, being on subjects which form the daily meditation of the devout Christian, and from which he derives his purest enjoyment; neither does the Author presume to vie with those, whose works on the life of Paul, have enriched the stores of Sacred Literature.

His design in publishing these thoughts on the Experience of the Apostle, is, in some feeble measure to exhibit the beauty of Evangelical Religion: by bringing into one view, the varied excellencies of Paul's character; and by unfolding those principles of faith and love, which, through the Spirit, made him so great a blessing to mankind.

Christianity is the religion of the heart. Every doctrine of the Gospel is a sacred spring of holiness. In these pages, the author has therefore endeavored to treat these mysteries of grace, not controversially, but practically: not as subjects for speculation, but as sources of peace and joy.

To the spiritual reader, no apology would be requisite, for the numerous extracts which are inserted from the writings of Paul. These form the intrinsic value of the work. They are precious Jewels, however humble may be the casket in which they are conveyed.

What language can so well describe the inward joys and griefs of the Apostle, as his own heart-felt addresses to the churches of the saints. By them he being dead yet speaks.

May He, whose Power is manifested the weakest instruments, be pleased to render this humble tribute of affection to His cause subservient to the purposes of His glory.

The author is indebted to W. H. Bathurst, for several original hymns, extracted from his collection of "Psalms and Hymns, for public and private use;" which are as spiritual to feeling, as they are beautiful in composition.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE VALUE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

"Blest is the Book whose leaves display,

Jesus the Life, the Truth, the Way;

Read it with diligence, and with prayer;

Search it, and you will find Him there."

At a period like the present, when knowledge is rapidly increasing, through the prevalence of education and the facilities of the press; when infidelity, alive to these advantages, is insinuating its poison in every form; when errors are unhappily springing up, and divisions are weakening the Christian Church- what a treasure is the Word of God.

Here we have Light, to dissipate our darkness- Truth, to guide us amid the mazes of error- Consolations, to gladden us in a world of misery.

The Bible is the Revelation of a Father's love- the Expression of Jehovah's grace to sinners- the Depository of heavenly blessings- the Charter of our highest privileges. The Bible is the religion of Protestants- the glory of our churches- the Poor Man's Friend. Every thing sublime in conception, and tender in expression, it is to be found in the Sacred Scriptures.

The Eternal Jehovah has there revealed Himself as clothed with majesty and honor; glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders; of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; in whose sight the heavens are not clean. And there, he has manifested forth his glory, as mighty to save; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.

In that blessed Volume, Mercy is seen to arrest the arm of Justice, and all the tenderness of the Father is displayed in the person of the Son. Love breathes throughout its sacred pages; for even when he declares. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,"- the severe reproof is but "the graver countenance of love." Can we then neglect the Scriptures, which contain the richest treasures, compared with which, all

else is poor indeed.

When the Creator of the world becomes an Author, his word must be as perfect as his work. The heavens declare the glory of God, and so does the Volume of his Truth. To the humble seeker after God, the Lord makes himself known as a God of grace and mercy- for the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

The Spirit no sooner applies the truth as it is in Jesus with power to the heart, than the desert is made to rejoice and to blossom as the rose; the soul is beautified with salvation, and all its powers are consecrated to the service of its Redeemer; "for 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." Hence, David, from happy experience could say, "By them is your servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward."

Before his resurrection Jesus prayed in behalf of his disciples, "Holy Father, sanctify them through your truth; your word is truth." And after his resurrection, by his own Almighty Power, he opened their understanding, to understand the Scriptures. Happy then shall we be, if, in unison with the Psalmist we can say, "O how I love your law, it is my meditation all the day. Your testimonies are my delight and my counselors. Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. Your word has quickened me."

Everything around is given to change. Sickness impairs the hue of health; adversity, the prospect of pleasant years; earthly friends may vary in their aspect towards us- at one time, bestowing the testimony of affection, at another, grieving us by a chilling slight. But in the Volume of his Truth, our heavenly Father gives the sweet assurance, that He Changes Not. His Love, his Faithfulness, his Power, are infinite. To all his adopted children his promises in Christ are yes, and in Him amen, to the glory of his grace; for Jesus is the same, yesterday, and today, and forever; having loved his own, he loved them unto the end. Blessed Truth! Consolatory declaration! How animating, how supporting to the tempted and tempest-tossed believer. O my soul, are you resting upon this immutable rock? Is the unchangeableness of Jehovah-Jesus, your sure foundation ? What can disturb your peace beneath the smiles of infinite, everlasting love? Nothing but sin, indulged in the heart, ought to trouble you. If Jesus dwells within you by his Spirit; if you are united to him, and are abiding in him by a living faith; if your guilt is removed through the merit of his blood, and the efficacy of his intercession; then fear not, for nothing can harm you; do not be afraid, for nothing shall be able to separate you from his love. He who saves you is unchangeable, none can pluck you out of his hands.

When Ishmael was dying from thirst in the wilderness of Beersheba, God opened the eyes of Hagar, and she saw a well of water, which imparted strength to her child.

We also are perishing in a thirsty land, where there is no water. God graciously opens our eyes to behold that well of salvation which he has provided for perishing sinners. With joy he enables us to draw forth its restoring water, and receiving in faith this gift of grace, our souls are quickened, renewed in holiness, and strengthened to serve God in the Gospel of his Son. O ! how can we sufficiently praise our loving Savior, for the blessings which he reveals and imparts to us in his Holy Word.

Whatever man touches he defiles, because his nature is corrupted through the fall. All that proceeds from God is holy. "Every word of God is pure." So David found it. "The word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it." It was a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path. He rejoiced in the Word of God, as one that

finds great spoil. In his estimation, it was more to be desired than gold, yes, than much fine gold; to his spiritual taste it was sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. He treasured up the Divine word in his mind, and had it ready on every occasion. "Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Through your precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way."

There is no situation in which a believer can be placed, however dark or intricate, however slippery or perilous, but in the Bible he will find appropriate guidance and adequate support. For, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The Word of God is wonderful in its operation on the heart and conscience, through the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit, being quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. "Is not my word like as a fire," says the Lord, and "like the hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" As fire hardens the clay, and melts the wax; as it consumes the dross, and purifies the gold; so does the Word of the Lord. Pharaoh was judicially hardened; David was graciously softened. The former, being left in righteous judgment to the natural working of his heart, resisted the Divine Word, and was destroyed; the latter, being deeply humbled through grace, under the pointed reproofs of the Prophet, confessed his sin with penitential sorrow, and obtained forgiveness.

Some do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God, and perish for lack of knowledge. Others, being unlearned and unstable, twist the Scriptures unto their own destruction- while others again, hold the Truth in unrighteousness, and perish in their own corruption. But in the midst of all this ignorance and perversion, "the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein." All who will not submit to the authority of God's Word, shall be broken by the power of his wrath; but, "to this man," says the Lord, "will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word."

The Word of God and prayer are the divinely appointed instruments, in the hand of the Spirit, for defeating the machinations of Satan and establishing the kingdom of righteousness in the earth- that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man. This was strikingly verified in the success of the Apostles, who, having declared- "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word," saw the immediate fruit of this devotedness to their work; for Luke informs us, that the Word of God increased, that the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Our hearts are evil; we are surrounded by temptations to evil; and the Evil One is ever on the watch to destroy us. Where then must we flee, and to whom must we look for safety? Jesus is our refuge- His love and His power can shield and save us. He is the Captain of our salvation; the mighty Conqueror over sin and death. When tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus repelled his assaults by wielding the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. To each temptation addressed to his mind, he answered, "it is written," and the Scripture thus powerfully applied, drove back the enemy, until he departed from him, foiled and vanquished.

How strengthening, how consoling is the Word of Truth. With this spiritual armory, this divine treasury, we shall be fortified for the conflict, equipped for our pilgrimage, and upheld amid the dangers of this evil world. As the traveler, in an unknown land, needs a faithful guide; as the mariner, traversing dangerous seas, requires a chart and a compass: so we need a guide and a directory while passing through this

world of peril. God has mercifully given us this help.

In his Holy Word, our loving Father has made ample provision for the needs of Zion's pilgrims; while the Spirit, shining into our hearts, enables us clearly to perceive, through his revealed truth, the consecrated way to heaven- Jesus Christ, the righteous. With what fervor then should we bless our God and Savior for all these tokens of his kindness towards us.

Are we bowed down under a sense of the guilt of sin? It is written, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

Do we dread a repulse from the mercy-seat? It is written, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out. The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Is our heart trembling, under the consciousness of utter helplessness at the sight of Satan's power? It is written, "Fear not, for I am with you; do not be dismayed; for I am your God; I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right-hand of my righteousness. My grace is sufficient for you. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Are we groaning under the workings of indwelling sin? It is written, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death; I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Do we long for faith, and love, and every grace? It is written; "He shall give you the desires of your heart. Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Whatever you shall ask in my name, believing, you shall receive."

Are we panting after the Savior's presence? It is written, "Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings. If any man loves me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Do we feel our need of spiritual wisdom and divine direction? It is written, "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and upbraids not, and it shall be given him. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths."

Are we afraid of temporal calamity? It is written, "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He shall cover you with his feathers; and under his wings shall you trust; his Truth shall be your shield and buckler. Call upon me in the time of trouble, I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."

Does the world frown upon us, and persecute us for Jesus' sake? It is written, "Hearken unto me, you that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law. Do not fear the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings. I, even I, am He that comforts you. Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be as grass, and forget the Lord your Maker. But I will tell you whom you shall fear. Fear Him who, When he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say

unto you, fear him. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven."

Do we tremble at the thought of death, and an approaching judgment? It is written, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage. The sting of death is sin; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." "These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through his name."

What a precious book must that be, which can thus provide for every trial and need of the Christian. There is no conceivable state of mind which we may be in, no circumstance in which we can be placed, no exercise of faith and patience which we may be called to endure, but in the Word of God we shall find direction, comfort, and support equal to our day. Surely then, we should daily prize this Word of Salvation, which reveals Jesus in all his fullness, the world in all its emptiness, and heaven in all its glory. There, as in a mirror, we are taught to know ourselves; and with this lamp, we are enabled to walk in safety, amid the dangers which surround our path. O that we may have grace to receive the Truth into our hearts, and to embrace it in the simplicity of faith. The doctrines and precepts, the histories and characters, the promises and threatenings, contained in the Bible, are all designed to enlighten and purify the soul.

Blessed will that period be, when every human being shall possess the Word of Life, and when every heart shall feel its regenerating power. Lord, hasten on this long-expected day; a day of peace and joy, when all mankind shall love as brethren, and unite to glorify your name. O send out your Light and your Truth, let your Word have free course and be glorified, by the conversion of the world unto you.

Jesus, who is the Light of the World, shines to us through the pages of Eternal Truth. The Bible is full of Christ. It leads our souls to him as the source of its promises, the subject of its prophecies, and the substance of its revealed glories; for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell- fullness of light, fullness of love, fullness of power, fullness of glory.

"Jesus, my Savior, in your face

The essence lives of every grace;

All things beside which charm the sight,

Are shadows filled with glowworm light.

Your beauty Lord, the enraptured eye

Which fully views it, first must die;

Then let me die, through death to know,

That joy I cannot taste below."

It has been well remarked, that "there are peculiarities belonging to Sacred History, so remote from everything seen among men, and such an unearthly character is given even to its relation of ordinary concerns, that the most superficial observer can scarcely fail to distinguish it from every human production." Its true and faithful portraiture of our own nature, its appeals to the heart of the reader, alone suffice to establish the observation. "There is a knowledge of the human heart, a master key to its subtlest recesses, which not only surpasses human penetration in its origin, but astonishes, while it terrifies the individual, whose bosom is laid open to his own inspection, and who finds himself a stranger, where he had thought himself most at home. Not a lurking passion is suffered to remain undetected in its living pictures. Motives, which we should be ashamed to avow, are dragged before our conscience in the history of another; and while his sentence is passed, we feel a personal condemnation." Thus the Bible speaks to the heart through the understanding; for these things were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Thrice happy then is the heart in which the Word of Christ dwells richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Such a heart shall be kept in perfect peace, while passing through this valley of tears. Trials may assail, and griefs may pierce its tenderest part, but all shall still be well. "Faith and hope will sustain the believer amid the swelling billows, until Jesus shall place his servant beyond the reach of sorrow."

Does the Lord of glory speak
To his creatures here below;
And may souls so frail and weak
All his gracious dealings know?
Does the blessed Bible bring,
Tidings from our heavenly King?
O with what intense desire,
Should we search that sacred book;
Here, our zeal should never tire,
Here, we should delight to look
For the rules by mercy giv'n,
To conduct our souls to heaven.
Shall not he, that humbly seeks,
All the light of truth discern?
Do we not, when Jesus speaks,
Feel our hearts within us burn?

For his soul-reviving voice
Bids the mourner to rejoice.
Lord, your teaching grace impart,
That we may not read in vain;
Write your precepts on our heart,
Make your truths and doctrines plain;
Let the message of your love
Guide us to your rest above."

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