

Scripture – Its Own Interpreter

It is not enough to know what others have thought or learned about the Bible. Everyone must in the judgment give account of **himself** to God, and each should now learn for **himself** what is truth. But in order to do effective study, the interest of the pupil must be enlisted. Especially by the one who has to deal with children and youth differing widely in disposition, training, and habits of thought, this is a matter not to be lost sight of. In teaching children the Bible, we may gain much by observing the bent of their minds, the things in which they are interested, and arousing their interest to see what the Bible says about these things. He who created us, with our various aptitudes, has in His word given something for everyone. As the pupils see that the lessons of the Bible apply to their own lives, teach them to look to it as a counselor. {Ed 188.1}

The power to discriminate between right and wrong we can possess only through individual dependence upon God. Each for **himself** is to learn from Him through His word. Our **reasoning** powers were given us for use, and God desires them to be exercised. "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18), He invites us. In reliance upon Him we may have wisdom to "refuse the evil, and choose the good." Isaiah 7:15; James 1:5. {Ed 231.1}

Now from the light given me of God, I know that as a people we have not improved our opportunities for educating and training the youth. We should teach them how to read and understand the **Scriptures**. Wherever there is a Biblical institute for ministers and people, we should, in connection with it, organize a class for the youth. Their names should be registered. All should feel the importance of the scheme of educating the youth to understand the **Scriptures**. Let the work be taken hold of in the very simplicity of the truth itself. Lead the minds of the youth from truth to truth, up higher and higher, showing them how **scripture interprets scripture**, one passage being the key to other passages. Thus the Scripture itself will be the educating power, holding the thoughts in captivity to Christ.--Letter 27a, 1892. {Ev 581.1}

Concerning the popular system of interpreting, or misinterpreting, the **Scriptures**, Wolff wrote: "The greater part of the Christian church have swerved from the plain sense of Scripture, and have turned to the phantomizing system of the Buddhists; they believe that the future happiness of mankind will consist in moving about in the air, and suppose that when they are reading Jews, they must understand Gentiles; and when they read Jerusalem, they must understand the church; and if it said earth, it means sky; and for the coming of the Lord they must understand the progress of the missionary societies; and going up to the mountain of the Lord's house, signifies a grand class-meeting of Methodists." {GC88 360.1}

The Lord has momentous truths to reveal to those who would understand the things of the Spirit. His lessons are for all, and adapted to the needs of all. While His lessons are clothed in language so simple that a child might understand them, the truth is so deep that the most learned may well be charmed, and worship the Author of matchless wisdom. Though the wisest may find abundant food for thought in His simplest utterance, the humblest may comprehend His truth, and appropriate His promises to the need of the soul. {BLJ 350.2}

When Jesus gave the injunction, "Search the **Scriptures**; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me," the priests and rulers were sitting in Moses's seat, and professing to give to the people the commands of God; but that which was so plain that the common people might clearly understand, they mystified and misinterpreted. Through false interpretation, the Jewish nation had lost the simple, practical knowledge of God and his truth. The command to search implied that they had lost something, and that they must diligently seek to discover it. The plain directions of the **Scriptures**, which had revealed the will of God, were covered up with mystery and

tradition, with false tests, false theories and commands. The **Scriptures** had been wrested to the ruin of souls, and man-made tests and injunctions had been put in the place of the plain "thus saith the Lord." Jesus said to all, Search for yourselves. **Allow no one to be brains for you, allow no one to do your thinking, your investigating, and your praying.** This is the instruction we need to take to heart today. Many of you are convinced that the precious treasure of the kingdom of God and of Jesus Christ is in the Bible which you hold in your hand. You know that no earthly treasure is attainable without painstaking effort. Why should you expect to understand the treasures of the word of God without diligently searching the **Scriptures**? {RH, September 11, 1894 par. 1}

In order that we may make no mistakes where our eternal interests are involved, the Lord has given us plain instruction as to what to receive as truth. He says, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." **We shall be in danger of being misled if we trust to ministers, or councils of men, or depend upon the interpretation that men may put upon the Scriptures.** **Whatever doctrine is brought to us, we should diligently search the Scriptures, as did the noble Bereans, to know for ourselves** whether the messenger's exposition is in harmony with the sure word of prophecy. "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." God has given us the precious endowment of reason and intellect, and we shall be held accountable for our mistakes if we do not use the mind in earnest study of the word of God. God has endowed us with capabilities whereby we may understand what is acceptable unto him. ... {ST, February 26, 1894 par. 8}

By searching the **Scriptures** we are to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. The Bible has not been given for the benefit of ministers only; it is the book for the people; it is the comfort of the poor man. **It is a great mistake for ministers to give the impression to the people that they should not read the Bible because they cannot understand its sacred teachings, and should be content with the interpretation given by those whose business it is to proclaim the word of God.** Ministers who thus educate the people are themselves in error. The Bible and the soul were made one for the other, and through the agency of the word and the Holy Spirit, God moves upon the heart. To him who receives the love of the truth, the word of God is as a light that shineth in a dark place, pointing out the path so plainly that the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein. He realizes that "the entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." {ST, August 20, 1894 par. 2}

We have a testing message for our world, and we should present the truth as it is in Jesus, and your life as hid with Christ in God. You do not present yourself, but the presence and preciousness of truth is so large, why it is so far-reaching, so deep, so broad, that self is lost sight of. It is not flowery discourses that we want, not a great flood of words that do not mean anything. Preach so that the people can catch hold of big ideas, and dig out the precious ore hid in the **Scriptures.** **The Bible is its own interpreter.** We are to hide ourselves in Jesus. It is not our education that is to do the work; let the Holy Spirit of God come to hearts. Some who do not understand the truth may be inclined to ridicule it. We know we have the arguments of truth to handle, and we shall have to meet ridicule and opposition, but can we afford to put on that armor of ridicule and sarcasm as we go to proclaim the sacred truth? We cannot afford to use these weapons. Speak out calmly and distinctly, for Christ's sake. We want our discourses mixed with faith. You want to put on the whole armor of God, and be clad with His Spirit, and have His righteousness to go before you, and the glory of the Lord to be your reward. When you go forward in this way, just so surely will the whole universe of heaven be engaged with working upon the people, that [it] will astonish you, as you had it here. Just as soon as you have the meekness and lowliness of Christ, then the Lord Jesus has His heavenly intelligences working with human agents. A Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God alone giveth the increase. {7MR 80.1}

Here is the explanation of the **olive trees**. They take of the Holy Spirit of God, and empty the holy oil out of themselves into the clean, pure, sanctified **souls that are prepared to receive it**. This is the kind of oil that the wise virgins had, oil that one could not communicate to another. Each individual must prepare his soul for himself through humbleness of mind, by wearing Christ's yoke and learning of Him. {2SAT 132.2}

It is a deplorable fact that men have connected with men, looked up to them, placed them where God should be, regarded their words and works as inspired, their interpretation of Scripture inspired, and they have become copies of men. They are dwarfed in their religious experience. They do not lead out. They are **letting other men be brains for them**, letting another man search the **Scriptures** for them, and accepting his decisions as authority; and yet that man, whom they depend on and trust in, is compassed with the same human infirmities and weaknesses, and his defects really are regarded to be virtues to be copied. The Lord wants ministers of the gospel to search the **Scriptures**. **Make no living man a channel**. Accept not the work he does as without a flaw. Do not let him do the work God has told you to do. If you do, how are you occupying a safe position? Jesus bids you come to Him, the great Teacher, and learn of Him, and you should find rest to your souls. Let no man stand between your soul and Jesus Christ, thinking that the Lord tells him that which He refuses to tell you. Give God a chance, ministering brethren, to operate on your mind. Place yourself before Him as one who wants to learn of Him. You must place yourself before the Lord in diligently searching His Word that He may communicate ideas to you. He does not design that you shall be dependent on human minds. He would have you look to Him in faith to do large things for you, not through another man, but to you. {1888 836.1}

To those to whom these fanciful interpretations are presented, I would say, "Let not these sentiments charm your senses, and lead you into paths of Satan's making. Beware, beware, of spiritualistic [SPIRITUALISM, A SYSTEM OF INTERPRETATION THAT SPIRITUALIZES THE TEACHINGS OF THE SCRIPTURES.] ideas of God. Those who entertain such ideas greatly dishonor Him. Let everyone humble His heart before God."--Manuscript 124, 1903, pp. 1-6. ("A Personal God," October 14, 1903). -125- {9MR 124.3}