

# On Bible Study

Horatius Bonar

(1808-1889)

Do not skim it or read it, but study it, every word of it; *study* the whole Bible,

Old Testament and New; not your favourite chapters merely, but the complete Word of God from beginning to end. Do not trouble yourself with commentators; they may be of use if kept in their place, but they are not your guides; your guide is 'the Interpreter,' the one among a thousand (Job 33:23), who will lead you into all truth, and keep you from all error.

Not that you are to read no book but the Bible. All that is *true* and *good* is worth the reading, *if you have time for it*; and all, if properly used, will help you in your study of the Scriptures. A Christian does not shut his eyes to the natural scenes of beauty spread around him. He does not cease to admire the hills, or plains, or rivers, or forests of earth, because he has learned to love the God that made him; nor does he turn away from books of science or true poetry, because he has discovered one book truer, more precious, and more poetical than all the rest together.

In so far, then, as time allows or opportunity presents, let us 'seek and search out by word concerning all things that are done under heaven.' But let the Bible be to us the book of books, the one book in all the world, whose every wisdom is truth, and whose every verse is wisdom. In studying it, be sure to take it for what it really is, the revelation of the *thoughts* of God given us in the *words* of God. Were it only the book of *divine* thoughts and *human* words, it would profit little, for we never could be sure whether the words really represented the thoughts; nay, we might be quite sure that man would fail in his words when attempting to embody divine thoughts; and that, therefore, if we have only man's words, that is, man's translation of the divine thoughts, we shall have one of the poorest and most incorrect

of all books... But, knowing that we have *divine thoughts* embodied in *divine words*, through the inspiration of an unerring translator, we sit down to the study of the heavenly volume, assured that we shall find in all its teachings the perfection of wisdom, and in its language the *most accurate expression of that wisdom* that the finite speech of man can utter.

Every word of God is as perfect as it is pure (Psalm 19:7; 12:6). Let us read and re-read the Scriptures, meditating on them day and night. They never grow old, they never lose their sap, they never run dry. Though it is right and profitable, as I have said, to read other books, if they are true and good, yet beware of reading too many. Do not let man's book thrust God's book into a corner. Do not let commentaries smother the text; nor let the true and the good shut out the truer and the better.

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