

the righteous know what is acceptable: for the heart of the righteous teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. Those who are holy, being transformed by the renewing of their mind, prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God. The pleasant harmony there is between the word of God, and the disposition and relish of the sanctified, brings suitable scripture rules to their remembrance on proper occasions, and mightily helps them in judging the true meaning of these rules.

And, as piety thus prevents men from mistaking the duties, so it preserves them from prejudices against the doctrines of Christianity. The natural man, who has nothing in him but mere unrenewed nature, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. There is a certain glory and excellency in the gospel scheme of salvation, of which he has no more idea than a blind man of colours, or a deaf man of sounds. No wonder, then, that Christ crucified is to him a stumbling-block, and that, being led aside by the error of the wicked, he makes shipwreck of faith. But the saint, perceiving that so glorious a scheme as the gospel could have none but God for its author, is fortified by this consideration against the impressions which the subtle reasonings of Infidels might otherwise make upon him. Just as one, who perceives the light and brightness of the sun, would be little moved by any attempts to prove that there was nothing but darkness around him.

But, above all, inward piety assists in understanding and explaining experimental religion. These can best unveil the pangs of the new birth, and the nature of union and communion with Christ, and describe conversion, progressive sanctification, a life of faith, the struggles of the flesh and spirit, and such like subjects,

who can speak of them from their own experience. Those are best suited to speak a word in season to weary souls, who can comfort them, in their spiritual distresses, with those consolations wherewith they themselves have been comforted of God. Their experience of the influence of truths which have been most useful to their own souls, leads them to insist much upon these in their public ministrations, and determines them to know nothing in comparison of Christ, and him crucified. Whereas, on the other hand, some of the most edifying subjects are least relished by a bad man, and can scarcely be managed by him with any advantage. Will he be fit to warn his hearers of the devices of Satan, and the deceits of a desperately wicked heart, who, being quite a stranger at home, knows nothing of these matters but from uncertain report? will not the unconverted minister, when he meets with the discouragements of an awakened sinner, or the fears and distresses of a doubting deserted saint, be often at a loss how to deal with them? and is there not the highest danger, lest, on the one hand, he build up the false hopes of the self-deceiver, or, on the other hand, make sad the hearts of those whom God would not make sad? Surely, those who are animated by the Spirit, which inspired the scriptures, bid fairest for explaining them aright, and applying them to the various necessities of their hearers.

Ministers unconcerned about religion, are generally *cold and languid in their addresses to the conscience*. When urging others to repent and believe, they do but stammer about these things; and their words, not coming from the heart, are not likely to reach it. Even, when the doctrine they preach tends to rouse the secure, their way of preaching it tends to lull them asleep.* There is something unnatural in endeavour-

Erskine, John. "On the Qualifications Necessary for Teachers of Christianity." *In The Christian Pastor's Manual*. Edited by John Brown. Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1991.