

BROKEN BREAD

by Thomas Champness

Champness's collection of brief pastoral addresses and meditations, using vivid imagery and practical illustrations to address common spiritual needs in the Christian life. He uses metaphors like 'draining the land' to diagnose obstacles to spiritual revival in congregations.

61 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Broken Bread
1. PREFACE.
2. I. SPIRITUAL FARMING.--NO. 1. DRAINING.
3. II. LITTLE MOSES. SERVE THE CHILDREN FIRST.
4. III. SPIRITUAL FARMING.--NO. 2. PLOUGHING.
5. IV. A SHORT HOME MISSION SERMON.
6. V. THE BATTLE OF THE BEANFIELD. 2 SAMUEL, xxiii, 11, 12.
7. VI. |HIS CHAINS FELL OFF.| ACTS xii. 7.
8. VII. LEAPING AND PRAISING. ACTS iii, 8.
9. VIII. |THE LORD HATH NEED OF HIM.| MARK xi, 3.
10. IX. TWELVE BASKETS FULL OF FRAGMENTS GATHERED FROM THE MIRACLE OF CHRIST FEEDING...
11. X. SPIRITUAL FARMING.--NO. 3. CULTIVATION.
12. XI. SPIRITUAL FARMING--NO. 4. SOWING.
13. XII. |AND WE WILL--|
14. XIII. |IT IS THE KING'S CHAPEL.| AMOS vii. 13.
15. XIV. |ENCOURAGE HIM!| DEUT. i. 38.
16. XV. |WE HAVE NO MIGHT.| 2 CHRON. xx. 12.
17. XVI. |BE PERFECT.| 2 COR. XIII. 11.
18. XVII. |MAKE THIS VALLEY FULL OF DITCHES.| 2 KINGS, iii., 16.
19. XVIII. |THERE IS A SOUND OF ABUNDANCE OF RAIN.| 1 KINGS, xix. 41.
20. XIX. A CLEAN TONGUE.
21. XX. THE RED LAMP.
22. XXI. A SERMON ON THE BOAT RACE.
23. XXII. GOOD-FRIDAY.
24. XXIII. PETER THE PREACHER.
25. XXIV. |WHEN SOLOMON WAS OLD.|
26. XXV. ABRAHAM AND ISAAC. GENESIS xxii.
27. XXVI. OIL FOR LAMPS. MATTHEW xxv. 1-13.
28. XXVII. |CAST A STONE AT HER!| JOHN viii. 7.
29. XXVIII. |OFFER IT NOW UNTO THY GOVERNOR.| MALACHI i. 8.
30. XXIX. |WHAT MEAN THESE STONES?| JOSH. iv. 21.
31. XXX. |HE THAT SLEEPETH IN HARVEST IS A SON THAT CAUSETH SHAME.| PROVERBS x. 5.
32. XXXI. |THE AXE IS LAID TO THE ROOT.|
33. XXXII. JESUS AT THE WELL. A WORD TO PREACHERS.
34. XXXIII. ANSWERED PRAYER.
35. XXXIV. HOW DAVID PREVAILED.
36. XXXV. THE WAY TO PREACH TO THOSE WHO SLEEP IN SIN.

37. XXXVI. SELFISHNESS AND PRAYER. A CONTRAST.
38. XXXVII. |THE WIDOW WOMAN WAS THERE.| I KINGS xvii. 10.
39. XXXVIII. |DO MEN GATHER GRAPES OF THORNS?|
40. XXXIX. NO BALLOT-BOX.
41. XL. |WHAT CHRISTIANS MAY LEARN FROM POLITICIANS.|
42. XLI. A SERMON ON A TEXT NOT FOUND IN THE BIBLE.
43. XLIII. OPPORTUNITY: BEING THOUGHTS FOR THE NEW YEAR. ON NEW YEAR'S EVE.
44. XLIV. THE BRITISH BAYONET.
45. XLV. A SERVICE IN THE OLDEN TIME. NEHEMIAH viii.
46. XLVI. KEEP THE FIRE BURNING WHILE THE FROST LASTS!
47. XLVII. THE SOWER.
48. XLVIII. EIGHT EASTER LESSONS LEARNED AT EMMAUS. LUKE xxiv. 13-35.
49. XLIX. WORK FOR BOYS. 1 SAMUEL iii. 1.--There is work in God's house for Boys to ...
50. L. THE BROKEN OAR.
51. LI. |WHY COULD NOT WE CAST HIM OUT?|
52. LII. MANNA. EXODUS xvi. 4.
53. LIII. SMITTEN OF GOD.
54. LIV. THE FAN. MATTHEW iii. 12.
55. LV. |THE KING KISSED BARZILLAI.| 2 SAM. xix. 39.
56. LVI. |THEN THE FIRE OF THE LORD FELL.| 1 KINGS xviii. 38.
57. LVII. A PICTURE OF CONVERSION. 2 KINGS ii. 19-22.
58. LVIII. THE FIRST LIE.
59. LIX. WHAT WAS LEARNED IN GOD'S HOUSE. ISAIAH vi.
60. LX. PAUL AT SEA. ACTS xxvii. 22-25.

Broken Bread

PREFACE.

This is a book made up of fragments. The Master once said "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost." It may be that victuals will be found here that may feed those who cannot sit down to a meal. Many of the articles have appeared in Joyful News already, but, perhaps, are none the worse for that. We send out this little book in the hope that both crust and crumb will be eaten!

I. SPIRITUAL FARMING.--NO. 1. DRAINING.

If the men who farmed England in the olden time could return, few things would surprise them more than the condition of the land. Many a field now bearing good crops each year, was in "the good old times" moorland or fen. Sheep and cattle graze where once only wild birds could live. Drainage has made the change. The land, once too cold and wet to allow anything valuable to grow, has been by grips and drain pipes, made to produce food for man and beast. Is it not so on God's farm? "Ye are His husbandry," and just as the farmer knows that if he cannot have his wet land drained, his seed will be starved, or the young corn perish with the cold, so we who toil in the Lord's fields need to learn that in many places the first thing to be done is to DRAIN THE LAND. Do any of our readers complain that they cannot get an answer to their prayers for a revival, and that all the preaching and teaching seem to be wasted? Let us advise them to look under the surface. Are there not CAUSES FOR THE FAILURE? Would it not be well to try what draining the land would do? Are the most influential men cold and unresponsive to the call of the Spirit? What sort of people take the lead in the prayer meetings? Are they left to the zealous poor? Does every man of wealth and culture hurry home and leave the preacher to shift for himself? Who are the stewards? Are they men who will do their utmost to welcome strangers, or does their example tell on others so much that a visitor never has a word of welcome or a grip of the hand? What is the singing like? Is it of the colourless, tame style, whose only sign of life is the rapid gallop which kills devotion in so many places? How is the Bible read by the preacher? Does he confine himself to the narrow round which he has read so often in the ears of the people that it has lost its charm -- or does he seek out that which will be sure to interest; and does he read as if he believed it? We think our readers know some congregations in which there can be no revival until the drainer has been at work, and that which starves the seed removed. What we want is to have the question asked at the next leader's or quarterly meeting. WHAT WILL IT COST TO GET SOME DRAIN-PIPES? A GOOD SHILLING IS

BETTER THAN

A BAD SOVEREIGN.

II. LITTLE MOSES. SERVE THE CHILDREN FIRST.

The story of Moses teaches us that **LITTLE FOLKS ARE VERY HELPLESS**. There he is in that basket. He cannot care for himself. He is in the power of the king's daughter. If she liked she could have had him killed, for it was plain to be seen that he was one of the Hebrew children. When you were in your cradle how weak you were, how helpless. If your mother had not cared for you, my dear boy, you would never have troubled the tailor to measure you for your new suit. Do you ever think how much you are in your mother's debt? When you were hungry she fed you, when you were cold she warmed you, when you were sick she nursed you. And you can pay her back. Not in money, for when you are old enough to earn gold you will not be rich enough to do that; but you can reward her by obedience, by love, and by letting her know by your kindness that you do not forget what she did for you years ago. **LITTLE FOLKS ARE WATCHED BY GOD**. The crocodiles could have swallowed up the little chap at one mouthful, but they never even saw him. God steered the little bark, and brought its voyage to an end in a safe harbour. If anyone but the kind-hearted lady who became his second mother had seen him, the story of his life might have been very short. And the same God watches you, my dear child. There is an Eye which never sleeps; and in the night, when even your mother has closed her eyes, God does not shut His. Do you ever think that in the darkness the eye of God can see you just as well as in the daylight? If it had not been so, you would not have grown in your sleep, as you have done every night. There have been many dangers near to you which you never knew, but God did, and has watched over you for good all your life. Thank Him, for even your mother could not have helped you, if God had not done so. **LITTLE FOLKS MAY BECOME GREAT MEN**. That baby became one of the greatest men in Old Testament history. And how was it? He stuck to his book. We read that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." This could not have been if he had scamped his lessons, could it? Then he left the company of the wicked, though it cost him a great deal, and he chose to be one of the people of God. The boy and girl who will follow his example will do well for themselves, for the life of Moses was one of the greatest honour, and, though he had to pay the price which must be paid if we would win the smile of God, he has been rewarded. Honour has come to him that never came to anyone else; for we learn from the Book of Revelation that in heaven his name is greatest of the great, for the saints sing "The song of Moses, the servant of God," and **THE SONG OF THE LAMB**.

III. SPIRITUAL FARMING.--NO. 2. PLOUGHING.

There have been during the last few years great improvements in the construction of the plough, but no one dreams of any substitute for it. Ploughing is as necessary as sowing; that is to say, the land must be stirred and prepared for the seed. In heavenly husbandry there are some well-meaning folk who would dispense with the plough, and preach faith without repentance, but only to find that the birds of the air get most of the seed! If there is to be an abiding work there must be conviction of sin, and knowledge of guilt, and for this end there is nothing better than a plough, made of Sinai steel and wood grown on Calvary. There are some directions given in the Old Book which it will pay our ploughmen to study. One is as to the choice of the team. Don't yoke an ass with an ox (see Deut. xxii, 10). In your motive power see to it there is no mixture of vanity with duty. You will not succeed in concealing the fact. A donkey is one of the worst of animals to hide. IT WILL TALK! Let there be no stopping at home because the wind is in the east. "The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold." If the ploughman means to succeed he must count on suffering; and if the devil cannot find anyone on his side to oppose, he will raise up some imbecile Christian to do so, who by some sneer or cold criticism, will try to keep the plough idle. Instead of looking which way the wind blows, get to work. There must be no looking back. Mark the Master's words in Luke ix, 62. Keep your eye on the mark, just as the ploughman looks at the staff he has fixed as his guide. Keep looking unto Jesus. Many a preacher, who could make hell tremble for its own, has, by looking back, become respectably commonplace. So the fine promise of his youth dies ignobly, and is laid in the grave of Demas! Whether it be a bag of gold, or a fair face, or a pillow of down, thou art called to look back upon, do as the Master did -- set thy "face toward Jerusalem." Keep a good heart on it. "He that ploweth should plow in hope." What is called success does not mean reaping only. The plough is as honourable as the sickle, though they may not make a feast, or dress thy team with flowers! Whistle at the plough, and in time thou shalt be bidden to the harvest supper. John Baptist was a ploughman, and that was all; yet there are some reapers who would gladly exchange places with him, badly paid as he was. In these days too often the honour is paid to the successful evangelist, and those who ploughed and sowed are forgotten; but the time is coming when the promise shall be fulfilled -- "THE PLOUGHMAN SHALL OVERTAKE THE REAPER."

IV. A SHORT HOME MISSION SERMON.

"The Iron did swim." -- 2ND KINGS, vi, 6. DID IT? THEN SUNKEN THINGS MAY RISE. The axe had fallen into the river, to the great sorrow of the man who had used it. He was an honest man, for he mourned over the fact that it was borrowed. "It has sunk to rise no more;" and yet it swam! Why lose hope of the fallen and degraded? They are no lower down than the axe head was when at the bottom of the Jordan. "The iron did swim." How? for SUNKEN THINGS DO NOT RAISE THEMSELVES. If the axe had been let alone, it might have been at the bottom of the river now. The man who felt its loss called on a higher power than his own. He told his sorrow to one who had sympathy for him. Do we cry unto God about those who have sunk out of our reach? The lapsed masses, as we call them, were not all born so. Many of them have been Sunday scholars, and some of them church members. How do we feel about them? Does the thought of their degradation ever bring an "alas!" from our hearts? Elisha's God is nearer to us than the prophet was to the man who lost the axe. "Call on Him WHILE He is near." "The iron did swim." How was it done? SOMEBODY SHOWED IT THE WAY. An example was put before it. A stick was thrown in, and the iron imitated it. O, the power of a godly example! Let us who work among the ungodly show them the way to live. Let the churches move over the places where the degraded lie. We shall never lift them while we remain in our beautiful churches and chapels. Only this week we saw the iron made to swim, by the personal contact of ministers and well-dressed people taking hold of the street folk, and cheerily inviting them into God's house. A man may be only "a stick" when in the pulpit; but in hearty personal dealing with the degraded, he may be one who can make the iron to swim. * * * * * "LIVE IT." A good man, the other day, was advising Ministers to preach more on the doctrine of "Entire Sanctification." One of them replied, "LET US LIVE IT, THAT IS THE BEST WAY TO PREACH IT." Perhaps both were right; one thing is certain, that the way to make the doctrine more popular is, to have more of those who believe it to "live it." We might greatly increase the number of preachers, for every Christian might preach. Women as well as men, we might preach every day, for every duty would be a pulpit, and every trial an oration. No one would complain the sermons were too long; for all people are willing that you should never cease to do them good. What say you reader! Will you enter the ranks of this Ministry?

V. THE BATTLE OF THE BEANFIELD. 2 SAMUEL, xxiii, 11, 12.

What a picture is here! A field of ripe beans, just ready for the harvest, and then the leaves and pods all blood-stained or trampled down! Those Philistines liked to fight rather than to work, preferring plunder to ploughing, so they would cross the border and carry away the results of the farmer's toil. But they made a mistake in coming where Shammah lived! HE STOOD! Have not many of us to complain that the enemies of God's people still like to plunder our harvest fields? How Satan grasps at our elder scholars! He is not content with gutter-children. He likes to take our young men and women, and so we hear drunken men quote scripture, and bloated women hum psalm tunes! What shall we do? We read, "The people fled from the Philistines." Shall we leave the results of our Sunday school work in the hands of the enemy? Is it not time that we made a stand? The thing is becoming monotonous, so much so, that in some places it is thought not worth being grieved about, that the young men and women, who have passed through our schools, never attend the chapel, and are lost to us for years, if not for ever! "Soldiers of Christ arise!" If a lad enlists, and is sent to Aldershot, we soon put the chaplain on his track, and shall we not do something for those who are carried away by those sons of Anak which we call the theatre and racecourse? Would it not pay us to have a holy band of men and women to hunt up our lapsed scholars, and to fight for the harvest we sowed and have waited for so long, only to see it carried away by the Philistines? In all our large towns there are neighbourhoods where the enemy of God and man is strongly entrenched. And yet there are churches and chapels in those streets. The few who attend those places pass houses, once respectable, but now given up to vice. Homes where there was once family worship, are now, to use the words of the Wise man, "The way of hell, going down to the chambers of death." What is to be done? "There are not many members now." "There is no one to work." So it might have been said in the bean-field; the people were gone, all gone but Shammah. He stood, and God showed, then, as now, that He was prepared to stand by the minority, if it were loyal to Him, for He wrought a great, not an ordinary one, but a great victory! There are yet great victories to be won when we turn on our pursuers. Don't be carried away by bad example. We go with a multitude to do evil, when we refuse to fight for the results of past work done by ourselves or our fathers. Shammah seems to have said, "If I am to die, I will die here among the beans. Better so than pine to death for want of them." Is it not true that with the harvest of our toil they carry away our faith in God, and in His word? Much of the Bible is lost to those who flee rather than fight. A great deal of our hymn book is for "BELIEVERS FIGHTING." Those battle songs cannot be enjoyed by men who never leave the barracks. No wonder the old tunes are not sung by craven hearts. Let those of us who have left Shammah to fight alone, rejoin him, then we shall have the joy of conquest, and the gladness of those who divide the spoil. * * * * *WAITING AND READY. The other day, looking out of a train, as we stopped at a country station, I saw a row of buckets painted red, with the word FIRE on each of them. There they were, waiting to be used, if occasion required, and I noticed that each of them was filled with water. Only a humble kind of agent is a bucket, yet being full of water and near at hand, it is easy to see that in the event of fire breaking out there, it is more than likely it would be put out without doing much damage. Are we, -- Ministers, Local Preachers, Sunday School Teachers, Class-leaders, and other workers -- are we

ready for use? It is not enough that people can tell by our appearance that we are separated for service -- are we ready? It did not suffice the man in charge of that little station to have those buckets on the stand, and it is not enough that we are in the pulpit or the class-room. ARE WE FILLED? We can be filled with that which will put out the fire, and if we are not full, who is there to blame but ourselves? Those buckets might have been neglected till the hoops dropped off, and the power to hold water was gone, all because they were not kept full, and if so, they would be an apt illustration of some who have ceased to be the men they were, and only that they fill the same place, we should not dream of them being used at all.

VI. [HIS CHAINS FELL OFF.] ACTS xii. 7.

IN ANSWER TO PRAYER: -- Do you know any one tied and bound? Have you prayed for them without ceasing? Are you conscious of the enemy putting YOUR hands or feet in fetters? Are you unable to reach that purse which was at one time always within your grasp, so that now you do not give to the poor as you once did? Are your feet prevented from going on errands of mercy? Do the manacles keep you at home on Sundays, instead of walking muddy lanes to preach? If so, how do you like it? Do you not think you should cry to God? We know a godly and cultivated minister who got into Doubting Castle, some years ago. He was losing hold of God, and his duty was becoming irksome, so he cried unto the Lord in his trouble. "I let them all go to bed," said he, "and had an all-night of prayer," and his chains fell off. VERY QUIETLY. Not a single soldier was awakened. God can speak in loudest tones, as at Phillippi. He can bring His people out without anyone knowing, till they tell the tale themselves. It has often been the case, that some gentle, quiet preacher has been the instrument of deliverance to the Lord's chosen ones. There has been a revolution in nature. What a blessed change! How the chains of winter have fallen off, and that surly east-wind jailer been dismissed without noise or clamour. When free, Peter went to tell those who had prayed him out. He found them in a state of great surprise. How good of God not to limit our success in prayer by our faith, or the want of it. In this also He does "exceeding abundantly." Still they did not fail, depend on it, to praise the Lord. Herod soon found it out, and was abashed. He would not dare to meet a Christian in the street, for the smile on the believer's face would say, "His chains fell off." Do not let us who can pray be ever discouraged. We can touch the heart of God, so let us sing -- "The Lion of Judah shall break every chain,

And give us the victory again and again." ISAIAH I. I. -- Feed an ass once, and he will know the place again. Feed a sinner all his life, and you only make him more capable of rebellion (verses 2 and 3.) II. -- There are no wounds smart like those given by God's rod (verses 6 and 8.) III. -- Sin manufactures dunces so stupid, that even God's rod cannot mend them (verse 5.) IV. -- Religion without piety sickens God (v.11, 14.) There are folk in church and chapel more hateful to God than those in the public-house. V. -- Sin is dirt (verse 16.) VI. -- God can bleach even crimson-dyed hands (v.18.)VII. -- Those who are strong to sin shall burn in a fire hotter than their lusts, and more quenchless than their hatred to goodness (verses 28 and 31.)

VII. LEAPING AND PRAISING. ACTS iii, 8.

Little did the lame man's friends think that this was the last time they should ever carry their dear one to the spot where he begged his bread. Perhaps you have offered your last prayer to-day for some one's salvation. He may come home to say, "Carry me no more, but let me walk with you to heaven." No one could blame the poor fellow for being excited. He had never walked before, and the delight he felt made him use his new found strength. You see he has dropped his crutches. Anyone could light the fire with them now, he needed them not. Reader, do you still use spiritual crutches? Why not look for the fulfilment of the prophet's words, "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart." HE ENTERED WITH THEM. He could not have been persuaded to leave them; indeed, we read of him further on standing with the apostles when they were brought before the magistrates. It is a good sign when men stay with those who were made a blessing to them. If Methodism had with her to-day all she has lifted from poverty and degradation, she would need neither testimonials nor benefactors.

VIII. |THE LORD HATH NEED OF HIM.| MARK xi, 3.

What! of an Ass? Yes, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world." He gets renown to Himself by "using things which are despised." Let us never despair of the most foolish of men, if he become the servant of Jesus. It is said of the great John Hunt, that when a young man, he gave no promise of the talents he shewed in the work of the Ministry. We have spoken with one who knew him before his conversion, who made us smile as he described his gait and style of life. Yet this ungainly ploughboy became a man whom to know was to admire. It was in Christ's hands, though, he improved so greatly. DOES THE LORD REALLY NEED AN ASS? Yes. The Scriptures foretold that Jesus should come "riding upon an ass." Is it not beautiful to think of the poor despised Ass fulfilling so grand a prophecy? "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth." We may help that on. Will the young men and women who read this bear in mind that no one ever used this ass till Jesus did? Why should He not be the first to use you? "What!" say you. "Do you compare us to an ass?" Well, if we do, the Bible is before us. "Man be born like a wild ass's colt." And, if you have not remembered the claims God has upon you, the poor ass has the best of it, for the Lord says "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his Master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Have you noticed that unconverted men and women are pictured in Exodus xiii.13, where you see a young ass with his neck broken? The Lord needs you that He may redeem you from your fate, and that you may be spared to bear his yoke. Is not the best way to elevate men, to let the Lord have the use of them? However coarse and mean we are by nature, He can refine and elevate us. And any part of our life that is in danger of baseness may be lifted to beauty and blessing by putting it under the Christ. What a change came over this animal in one short day! An ass in the morning, but the THRONE OF GOD before the sun went down! * * * * * IN THE WILDERNESS SHALL WATERS BREAK OUT. Is not that good news for you? After being so long without a revival, would it not be welcome? Welcome you say -- welcome as water in a desert. Yes, and that is just what is promised. A revival in THE MOST UNLIKELY PLACE IN THE CIRCUIT, where even the raciest of preachers seems to be dull, and where there is a monotony which would shame a prison. Yes, there, right there, look out for the water, not stagnant, but water that "breaks out." "Then shall the lame man leap as the hart" that finds the stream it needs, and the "dumb shall sing," for this living water shall quench his thirst, and loosen his dried-up tongue. When shall it be? Young local preacher, why not when thou preachest the next time? Look for it to the throne of God and the Lamb. -- Rev. xxii., 1.

IX. TWELVE BASKETS FULL OF FRAGMENTS GATHERED FROM THE MIRACLE OF CHRIST FEEDING THE MULTITUDE.

1. -- MAN NEEDS HELP. "They have nothing to eat." (Mark vi.36.) 2. -- GOD IS BETTER THAN GOOD MEN. "Send them away," said the disciples. (Mark vi.36.) "They need not depart," the Lord replied. (Matt. xiv.16.) 3. -- MINISTERS SHOULD ALWAYS BE ON THE LOOK-OUT FOR THE CHILDREN, THEY GIVE HELP AS WELL AS TROUBLE. Andrew said, "There is a lad here." (John vi.9.) 4. -- YOUTH CAN GIVE TO JESUS WHAT NO ONE ELSE POSSESSES. "There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves." (John vi.9.) 5. -- UNBELIEF WOULD FAIN CRAMP THE LOVE OF JESUS. "What are they among so many." (John vi.9.) 6. -- "ORDER IS HEAVEN'S FIRST LAW." The crowd must sit down in companies of fifty before Jesus would feed them. "He commanded them to make them all sit down by companies." (Mark vi.39.) 7. -- CHRIST WOULD NOT HAVE US EAT WITHOUT ASKING A BLESSING. "Looking up to heaven he blessed." (Matt. xiv.19.) 8. -- CHRIST'S HANDS CAN DO NO MORE THAN OURS. It was His touch that multiplied the loaves. If the disciples had kept the one basket, there would have been many faint by the way. Faith is the truest economy. (Matt xiv.19.) 9. -- THE USE OF THE CHURCH IS TO PASS IT ON. "Gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." (Matt. xiv.19.) 10. -- EAT WHAT GOD SENDS. You cannot be saved by knowing the doctrine any more than looking at bread will satisfy hunger. "They did all eat, and were filled." (Matt. xiv.20.) 11. -- WHEN GOD IS THE HOST THERE WILL BE PLENTY FOR EVERYBODY. "As much as they would." (John vi.11.) "Enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore." 12. -- OMNIPOTENCE DISLIKES WASTE. "Gather up the fragments." (John vi.12.) "And they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full." (Matt. xiv.20.) A basketful for each apostle.

WAIT HERE FOR THIRD-CLASS.Passengers on the London "Underground" have often seen the sign-boards, telling the travellers where to wait for the class they mean to travel in. And there is sure to be a large group near one -- the notice for third- class passengers. It is so in the road to heaven. Forgetting that the Master has paid first-class fare for us, too many ride third, meaning, when they get to the station where tickets are collected, to change into the first, for all want to die happy. Live holy. Be first-class Christians, and then God will see to it that you die so as to bring honour to Him.

X. SPIRITUAL FARMING.--NO. 3. CULTIVATION.

We have already called the attention of our readers to the subject of ploughing, but we feel we have not pressed upon them with the force it deserves, the necessity of what the Bible calls "breaking up the fallow ground." What the plough and spade do for the land we must have done for the minds of those who sit in Methodist pews. Unsaved men and women must be compelled to look the truth in the face. Farmers know that so long as the land is hard and cloddy, the seed has no chance to get the nourishment by which it lives; besides by turning it over, the plough exposes that which has been hidden to the light of day, and it is by turning it up that it gets the benefit of the atmosphere. The nitrogen contained in the air is filled with that which the growing seed requires to find in the land, if it is to do well for the worker. Have we not thirty-fold crops where we ought to have hundredfold, for want of better ploughs? The heathen who spoke of preaching as "turning the world upside down" hit on the truth; and those of us who fail to turn up the soil are not likely to reap all we might do. The other day we heard an intelligent man tell the story of his conversion. He was awakened under the preaching of Mr. Robinson Watson. He said, "I never used to listen to sermons, I sat in the corner of the pew and thought of business, or any machine I was planning, and did not hear a word, but Mr. Robinson compelled me to think and act." Does not this man represent many? Are these people to be allowed to come and go, without, in some way or other, being compelled to listen? Let every one of us, from the top to the bottom of the Plan, say, God helping me, I will break up the ground. Indifference shall become difficult. Some of us can remember listening to men whom we feared when they opened the hymn book, for if they began the service with one of the hymns in "Exhorting sinners to return to God," we knew there would be difficulty in getting to sleep, either in the pew then, or in bed, hours afterwards. Perhaps the greatest want of the church to-day is men who can, by handling the Bible like a gardener does his spade, cause it to be said "The sinners in Zion are afraid, tearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites." BETTER FEED A

FAT PIG

THAN A PUBLICAN.

XI. SPIRITUAL FARMING--NO. 4. SOWING.

Those of us who live in the country are reminded, as we see the springing corn, that some one has been at work -- the blade comes from the buried seed. Honest work has been done before there can be seen the appearance of good. Let those of us who work for the great harvest, be MINDFUL OF WHAT WE SOW. Let us have nothing in the seed-basket that cannot be termed what Jesus called "The word of the kingdom." There will be no difficulty in obtaining that. Farmers don't stint the sower, and God will not withhold seed from His labourers. Let the youthful preacher be encouraged, for just as you have seen the sower fill his basket from the sack, so there is, in the Bible, enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore. Sow BIBLE IDEAS: -- "Put the Bible into them, my brother," said an earnest Scotch divine to us many years ago, and there is nothing grows as well, or yields as much, as the Bible, used as seed. People may tell you that they want something else, something more attractive and pleasing. Yes, but they won't say so in the time of harvest. You may plant your field with flower-seeds, sow tulips, marigolds, mignonette, &c., those will look very well in June and July, but how about September? The very people that asked for them in spring will curse you for them in autumn. BIBLE IDEAS ABOUT GOD: -- His love of righteousness, His hatred of evil; His love of man, but His dislike to sin; His delight in benevolence, but His determined hostility to wrong-doing. We need to show not only God's pity for sinners, but His inflexible justice, which did not spare His well-beloved Son, when He bore our sins. BIBLE IDEAS ABOUT CONDUCT: -- Never mind being called legal, if you can back your preaching by the Bible. Put the truth into the people about honesty, industry, and self-denial. Let others spend their time in talking of the angels with bright wings of gold; let us teach men how God means them to live in this world. Those of us who wish to learn how to sow, should study Jesus and Paul. They are examples of what sowers should be. BIBLE IDEAS ABOUT REPENTANCE: -- "These things teach and exhort." One secret of the want of lasting success, is that we do not preach repentance. Men need to have right ideas on this subject. Those who have not repented cannot believe unto righteousness; they can believe unto feeling, but not to right doing! It is not a question so much of tears, as of turning away from sin. The greatest of penitents said, "I turned my feet unto thy testimonies." BIBLE IDEAS ABOUT JESUS: -- That He died for us according to the scriptures. When the Master wished to take away the sadness from His disciples, as they walked to Emmaus, "He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself." This is what we must do. Put the truth, as it is in Jesus, into the hearts of the people. Let us show from the word of God, that "By His stripes we are healed." Nothing gives abiding peace like the thought, Christ has died for my sins. This will lead to loving Jesus, with the kind of affection which will not be tempted to grieve Him by doing that which is evil. Let us see to it that we get the seed in. IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO GET IT ON THE LAND, WE MUST PUT IT IN. No preacher has done his work thoroughly who does not use the harrow. There are some so-called teachers, who don't know what the gospel harrow is. This is why the catechism is not taught. The ancient plan of catechising in the church ought to be more general than it is. Why should we not hide the word of God in the hearts of our hearers, by causing them to think over what we have said? We may not be able to get them formally to answer questions, but we may make them think. Some preaching is like

raking with the teeth upwards. It may be easier and more speedy, but it is not so likely to hide the seed. It is a good practice for those who have been listened to by others, to talk to themselves after the sermon or lesson is over, and to say, Soul, what hast thou done to-day? How many Bible truths hast thou put into the hearts of the people? DIDST THOU PUT THEM IN? If thou didst, never fear but thou shalt see harvest some day. His word does not return void. This is not true of thy word, or of anyone else's, but "the word of the Lord abideth for ever!"

XII. |AND WE WILL--|

The prophet Micah was struck with the energy and devotion of the heathen to their gods. He saw the grip these idols had of their votaries, how no expense was spared, no sacrifice withheld, for the sake of a filthy lie embodied in a stone or golden image. While he listened to the songs of the heathen, his heart warmed as he thought of the greatness of Jehovah, and so he cried out -- "All people will walk every one in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." -- Micah iv.5. Why should we not serve Jehovah with the same intensity that the heathen shew in their worship? Why should not holiness to the Lord be as enthusiastic and powerful in the lives of Christians as sin formerly was? Why should not men be as much moved by the indwelling Spirit, as they were when full of drink? For instance, you may see, when a man is half drunk, how his pocket is opened; he will stand treat all round; every one in the room may have whatever he likes to order, "Give it a name!" says the drink-inspired heart. Now, we ask, why should not those who are under the power of the Holy Ghost go to some poor widows and "stand treat all round," by taking the fatherless children to some shop where their poor naked feet shall be well shod? Shall we not have a shout over the perseverance and patient continuance of the converts? See the worshippers of the race horse, as, whipped and spurred, the winner draws out from the ruck and passes the post first! How the mad votaries of the gambling idol make the air ring with their cries! And shall not we be as interested as we see men and women contend successfully for "the prize?" Is not the cant sometimes on the side of those who are so anxious for what they call decorum? Let us like Micah, say, "WE WILL," too. How hard it is to win the heathen over to leave their false gods! And shall we not walk for ever and ever in Jehovah's name? Why should not Satan and all who help him regard efforts to make apostates as a forlorn hope? O for a strong grip of God! Do some of our readers feel their weakness, and tremble lest they should go back to the assemblies of the heathen? Let us remind them of the promise -- "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in His name." (Zech. x.12.) Most of those who serve the devil mean to forsake him before they die. They are self-deceived in many cases, and die as they live. Let us determine that "for ever and ever" shall be our motto. "Signed for life," as the teetotaler sometimes says. "This God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death." We need a guide all the way, till we come to the other side of Jordan. After then, no possibility of falling or loss; but though we shall need no guide, we shall delight in the Lord for ever. When this paper comes into the hands of our readers, the CONFERENCE will have begun its Sittings. Let every Methodist, from Dan to Beersheba, say, "We will sustain the new President with our prayers, as we did the man of God who went before him." And the Lord whom our fathers served shall rejoice in the energy and patient continuance of His people. He shall not complain that we worked harder and sacrificed more for the Gods we served before, than we do for Him; but the heathen shall see signs of the greatness of Jehovah in the enthusiasm and perseverance of His people. "AS LONG AS HE LIVETH HE SHALL BE LENT TO THE LORD." Two things are worthy of notice here. First, Hannah brought her son to God's house and left him there to minister. In this she kept the vow she had made (see verse 11). If all promises made in days of trouble were kept as this woman kept hers, there would be some wondrous changes. We must not suppose that

Hannah did not feel the removal of her beloved son from her own home, but she made the sacrifice, and God honoured her to all time by recording her gratitude in the Book of books, and made her son a national blessing. SAMUEL STAYED WHERE HIS MOTHER PUT HIM. He began to be a minister when a child, and he continued to be so to the end of his life. Few lives have been so honourable and honoured as his was. But it would not have been so if he had not continued to serve the God of his mother. Are there not some of our readers who are tempted to leave the Bible and Sunday school, and to turn their backs on the religion of their parents? Remember that to turn your back on the God of your mother is to hoard up dishonour and misery for yourself and those dear to you, for what Hannah sang is yet true, "THE PILLARS OF THE EARTH ARE THE LORD'S."

XIII. |IT IS THE KING'S CHAPEL.| AMOS vii. 13.

"Go somewhere else and preach, you ignorant peasant! What do you come here for, spoiling our enjoyment, and keeping us awake at nights? Don't you know this is no common conventicle? It is the place where the king says his prayers! Away with you, or we will take off your head!" So said Amaziah, the priest, and so says many a one to-day. Cannot you let us rest in the enjoyment of our sins? You seem to forget that our god is made of GOLD! We are not common pot-house people! Preach against drunkenness, if you like; that is a sin which increases the rates! Preach against prostitution, for we are afraid our sons will be entrapped some of these days. Preach against love of dress, or anything else that costs money, for we have to pay sadly too much to tailors and milliners for our children and wife; but let us alone, for our god is GOLD. Now, Amos, what do you say to that? Won't you go home to Tekoa, and spend the rest of your time looking after the cattle? "Nay, verily, but till I die, I will make Jeroboam howl with rage and vexation of spirit, for he follows the sins of the man who made Israel to sin." It is the work of the preacher to bring hell within sight of those, who, by their selfish love of gold, make others to sin. Let the king know that I will make him feel as though his crown was red hot. His honours shall burn him, and his food shall scorch his tongue. It is in the king's chapel where I will preach as I never preach anywhere else, for it is Jeroboam against whom I am sent. O! Amos, lift up thy voice with strength against these worshippers of golden calves! Remember thy spiritual ancestry. Forget not the prophet that came from Judah many a year ago. How he testified against that golden god, and how Jeroboam's arm was paralyzed when he would have had the prophet slain. Why are we so mealy-mouthed in denouncing these golden-idol men? Is not the worship of money the hidden nourisher of public sin? Could the gin-palace exist but for the worship of Mammon? Could those streets of bad houses in London and other large towns flaunt their shame, were it not for high rents? They pay well! As sure as there is a God in heaven, shall these, who make money out of the sin of others, gnash their teeth in endless torment. Amos! He is in thy congregation! Do not preach to him of Heaven! but HELL! Thou art not talking to the prodigal son, but to those who have got his portion in their iron safe! Let them feel that hell is moved to meet them, and that they are listening to one who has the Word of the Lord in his lips, which is -- PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD! And you who would stop Amos -- Hear ye the Word of the Lord! There is an heritage of shame waiting for you. Amaziah! wouldest thou send the rough-tongued prophet away? "Thy wife shall be an harlot, and thou shalt die." Shame while thou dost live, and a dishonoured grave, for this is the portion of those who would hinder faithful preachers from speaking the Word of the Lord to the men who are setting up GOLD FOR GOD.

XIV. |ENCOURAGE HIM!| DEUT. i. 38.

"Encourage" who? Why, your new Minister. He will need it. No one but God knows how much some men suffer in leaving old friends and going among strangers. One of our most popular preachers told us that when he goes into a new circuit, he feels like a tree that has been transplanted, and for a time seems nearer death than life. And it is more than likely the man who has just come to your place is feeling acutely the separation from old friends, and the strangeness of everything around him. Do not be surprised, then, if he is not as friendly at first, as the man was who has gone away. "ENCOURAGE HIM!" for there will be plenty to do the other thing. The enemy of souls, when he is not able to turn back God's soldier, will do all he can to wound him, and if he can hire some fool of a Christian to do it, all the better for his purpose. It will be easy to discourage by quarrels, jealousy and fault-finding. In fact, it requires so little mental ability to find fault, there is no difficulty in finding someone to do that, but don't let it be you. Someone else will see to it that the new Minister has not too easy a time of it. But do you try your utmost to make him feel that he has come where all he does will be appreciated, and that he will never need to go out of his own circuit to find those who will love him for his works' sake, till they know him well enough to love him for his own. "ENCOURAGE HIM," -- by being at the services regularly, and in time, and especially at the Prayer-Meeting. Stay to the Sunday night one, and go to the one held in the week. What a comfort for the Minister to see the vestry filled when he gets to the Weekly Prayer-Meeting! and when you are there, or on your knees at home, pray for him; for if Paul needed the prayers of the Church, much more do the Preachers to-day. "ENCOURAGE HIM!" by taking the advice he gives you when he is in the pulpit. A doctor would feel it if his medicine was treated as many sermons are. What would the medical man think if he saw the bottle of physic poured down the sink, or left in the bottle untasted, till there was a cupboard full of bottles? He would not feel like preparing any more. How a preacher is encouraged to make fresh sermons, when he sees that his last was taken into the heart and life of some of his hearers. "ENCOURAGE HIM!" by letting him know of anyone who has received good from his preaching or visits. You need not be afraid of making him proud. He has had enough of the other kind, or, as we sometimes say, he is sure to have "a stone in the other pocket." We remember visiting one of our sick class-leaders one Monday, who said, "Who was the young man who preached here last night?" "Why, that was the new Minister!" "Well, you must tell him a woman was converted." It will "ENCOURAGE HIM," and James says, "If one convert him, LET HIM KNOW!"

XV. [WE HAVE NO MIGHT.] 2 CHRON. xx. 12.

YET WE NEED IT VERY MUCH. We are in great weakness, and we need power, for there is a great multitude come against us. It is not the wisest policy to ignore the strength of our enemy. Jehoshaphat did not. It is well for us to know the strength of our foes, but let it not lead us to despair. Who shall number the host of the foes against whom we must fight? They come to rob us of our inheritance, and if we submit, we shall be enslaved. WE have no might, but WE KNOW WHO HAS. The pious king said (verse 6), "In Thine hand is there not power and might, Art not Thou God?" Is there more than one God? Some Christians talk as though the Lord had been obliged to give up some of His power to Bradlaugh & Co. Where is the sign of a divided kingship? Could all the host of God's foes have prevented the earthquakes? Do they know when the next will take place? It is still true that God "shaketh the earth and the pillars thereof tremble" (Job ix.6) "This awful God is ours,

Our Father and our love." WE KNOW HOW TO GET MIGHT, FOR WE CAN PRAY. Jehoshaphat did not first of all review his troops, he called a meeting for prayer. The nation fasted and prayed, and the king led the devotions of his people. What a prayer! Have you noticed the four questions he puts to his God? And with what pathos he says "Our eyes are upon Thee!" Shall not the people of God imitate Judah? "They gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord." Why should we not make this the motto of our weekly prayer meetings -- TO ASK HELP. Not only the men, but the women and children came to the meeting. Would not the mothers and the little ones pray? They knew that their foes would carry them away captive, if God did not help. Would it not be well to encourage our children to cry to the Lord? Would He not hear them, think you? Promise of the needed help soon came. The Holy Ghost fell upon one of the sons of Asaph, and he soon told his message: -- "THE BATTLE IS NOT YOURS, BUT GOD'S." He always makes His people's cause His own, when they trust Him. Shall we not live so that our lives shall become part of the divine estate? So that we cannot be hurt without its injuring the Lord of heaven? "The Lord will be with you on the morrow." Is some preacher reading this on the Saturday night? It may be some young Minister, or Local Preacher, who is fearing for his reputation, or for the ark of God. Brother, read over with care this address of the Levite, v.15-17. Then, like the godly monarch, shew others how to praise the Lord. It is well to notice that the people, led by their ministers, stood up to praise the Lord, and on the next day, before the victory, they praised the Lord. What a scene it must have been! How the angels would keep time with their harps, as the choir sang the anthem, "Praise the Lord! for His mercy endureth for ever." THEY NEEDED NOT TO FIGHT. The Lord did that. He sent His hosts, and all that Judah needed to do was to gather the spoil. When shall we spoil our foes? When shall we loot the devil? How one's fingers itch to take his goods! The time is coming when we shall gather the wealth and power he now possesses, when the hosts of darkness shall come against the people of God only to be slain; and when there shall be no difficulty in raising money for good objects, for the devil's coffers shall be at our service. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the same week the great multitude came against the Lord's inheritance, there were more precious jewels than could be carried away, and the place where the foe was encamped came to

be called "THE VALLEY OF BLESSING." POVERTY IS HARD,
BUT IT MAKES
A GOOD GRINDSTONE.

XVI. |BE PERFECT.| 2 COR. XIII. 11.

Why not? What possible objection can there be to perfect Christianity? You like perfection in other things. You like your watch to keep "perfect time." If you are measured for a coat, you like "a perfect fit." You like other people to be perfect in their actions, so far as you are concerned. You wish your children to obey you; your wife to love you without ever wavering; those who owe you money to pay up twenty shillings to the pound; your servants to do their work according to order; in a word, if you served God as you wish everybody to serve you, you would be a perfect man. Is that so? Then why object to "Christian Perfection?" You say, "I DON'T BELIEVE IN SINLESS PERFECTION." Well, we wish to be practical and to do you good, and so we will take lower ground. Do you believe that it is possible for God to make you a very much better man than you are? O yes! Then why not allow Him to have His own way? Is this not the reason why some men are not striving after "Perfection?" They like to be as they are. Going forward means suffering, self-denial, a struggle, -- "There are giants in the land." Some other time we will try to encourage those who are really anxious to possess the good land, by shewing that Joshua and Caleb were right in saying of the sons of Anak, "They are bread for us." "The bigger they are the more there is for us to eat;" but just now, we are anxious to shew these non-believers in perfection, that, till they are all God is prepared to make them, they must not say a word against our doctrine. May you not be speaking against God's power to heal, to make whole? Is it not a reflection on the Divine Workman, to say that he cannot restore man to be so that He can say once more, "It is very good?" It behoves us to speak with bated breath here, but we may venture to say that the grace which made an Enoch, can make a nineteenth century saint, so lovely in his character, that all men shall say, "This is God's own work, and is like all things which come from His hand." "BUT MANY OF THESE WHO PROFESS TO HAVE OBTAINED THIS BLESSING ARE SO MANIFESTLY MISTAKEN." Yes, we agree with you there. Before long we shall have something to say to those who believe in "Christian Perfection," but we are dealing now with those who do not. We think that those who are "perfect," will often be the last to profess it. Any way, they will have very little to say about themselves, though their mouths will be filled with the praise of God, who has done great things for them. We almost always suspect those who have too much to say, and wish we could make them to see how their loud talk and small deeds tell against the doctrine. One proof that a man is not perfect, is his censoriousness concerning those who do not see things as he does, or call them by the same name. But of these we will speak at another time. What we are now concerned about is that we should strive to be all that God has promised to make us, and thus become living expositions of the ability of the Lord to answer Paul's petition: -- "I PRAY GOD, YOUR WHOLE SPIRIT AND SOUL AND BODY BE PRESERVED BLAMELESS."

XVII. |MAKE THIS VALLEY FULL OF DITCHES.| 2 KINGS, iii., 16.

What for? To receive that without which they must perish. We read in verse 9 "There was no water." Application was made to the prophet Elisha, who declared that there should soon be plenty, but that the army must at once make channels for it to flow in. This was done, and during the offering of the morning sacrifice, water came in abundance, and filled the ditches. Let us be ready for great blessing. We need an outpouring of the Spirit, but are we ready for it? Would not a great revival surprise many Christians? In London, Messrs. Moody and Sankey will soon begin their work, and the Christians of that city should be on the look-out for great results. Doubtless there are committee meetings, and much organization is going on, but the work must not be left to organizations. Let every Christian in London make a ditch to bring the living water to his own home. We hope to hear that in Liverpool, where Mr. Hughes is so soon to begin work, and in the places where the other connexional evangelists are preaching, the gospel channels will be dug by Methodists' hands. All three of these devoted men wish that our people should prepare the way, and thus have the stream of blessing flow to their hearts and homes. The District Missionaries also are needing help. Let us make it easier work for them, by opening the way. We know digging means work, and some Christians are so very respectable, they would feel insulted if God asked them to become one of His navvies. On the other hand, there are thousands of our people who would be glad to help if only some one would show them the way. But what is laid upon our hearts most of all is, that something more should be done to assist Circuit Ministers and Local Preachers to evangelize. If nothing is effected besides what is done by the men set apart as evangelists, we shall have a large portion of the country unwatered. "Make the valley full of ditches." Let every Methodist feel, that till every impediment is taken out of the way, and every thing done to help on a revival in his own circuit, and in his own chapel, his work is not finished. If each does his best, there will soon be a flowing of water. Do we hear some say, "There are so many among us who will not dig?" Just so, and therefore some of us must dig night and day. Get the spade called "Prayer," and keep it bright. Let the prayer meeting become A GANG OF EXCAVATORS! Let us not be satisfied till we are sure that, when the revival comes, we shall be ready. Let our Class-leaders make enquiry how many of their members are praying and working for a revival. Let everything be done to make our ordinary services very attractive. Let our Choirs, and those who have charge of the musical part of the services, do their part to make the singing pleasant and lively. It is a grievous thing to note how slovenly this part of the service is in some places. For instance, in many chapels where they have a chant-book, the run is on three or four. It is a symptom of inertness when STELLA is sung as though it were the only 6-8's tune. Will someone see to it, that a ditch is dug to every singing pew in Methodism? We repeat the question. Are we ready for an outpouring of the Spirit? Have we all the channels cleaned out which our fathers dug, and are we digging fresh ones? Do we look as if a revival would be welcomed? Does the enemy know that he may expect an attack, or is he chuckling over our rusty spades and swords? A WORD TO PARENTS. Brother Moses Welsby was speaking with me at some Open-air Meetings at Radcliffe, the other day, and he told of seeing a lad being taken to prison, and as he was going his father called out, "Keep thy spirits up, lad, it will soon be over," but the lad replied, "I SHOULD

NOT BE GOING NOW IF YOU HAD SHEWED ME A BETTER EXAMPLE." What sort of a model are you? Can your children copy you with safety? Are your actions what you would like to see over again in your boys and girls? Perhaps some who read this are in danger of being driven from God at the last day. If so, shall you be chained to your children, and will your punishment be all the greater because they say, "WE SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN IN HELL IF YOU HAD SET US A BETTER EXAMPLE?"

XVIII. |THERE IS A SOUND OF ABUNDANCE OF RAIN.| 1 KINGS, xix.

41.

So said the man of God. Rain was much needed, for famine stared them in the face. Even Ahab himself had walked many weary miles to seek grass for his horses; other men's cattle had perished, and if the drought had continued, everything would have died. Still, it was not Ahab who heard the sound of the rain. There was no sign of it. The heavens were as brass, the sky was without a cloud, everything was burned up with dry heat, and yet, said Elijah, "There is a sound of abundance of rain." It is so in the spiritual world. There are those who know of a coming Revival long before there is any sign. They have felt their prayers being answered, and have heard the cry of the penitent sinner, though, as yet, he seems to be as hard and careless as ever. "So AHAB WENT UP TO EAT AND TO DRINK." Not so Elijah, he went up to the top of Carmel. The man of God "CAST HIMSELF DOWN ON THE EARTH, AND PUT HIS FACE BETWEEN HIS KNEES." Those who would procure blessings must not expect to win them at the table of luxury and ease, but by climbing the hill of difficulty, and in the humbling of self. If we would bring the blessing down, we must be prepared to say, "No," to our own likings, and to refuse that which would gratify flesh and blood. If we would prevail in prayer, we must be alone with God. The priests who fed at Jezebel's table could not bring rain, or they would have saved themselves from the sword of Elijah. We need not to look toward the sea till we have bowed before the Lord, then we may expect some sign of the coming Revival. We must not be discouraged if the servant tells us "THERE IS NOTHING!" Masters see more than servants can, or they would not be masters. "Go again seven times," as though he said "Do not interrupt me with thy 'Nothings!'" Come and tell me when there is "Something;" and the seventh time he saw the "little cloud." Some of us have looked from the hill, over the sea, in a far off tropical land, and have seen that same little cloud many a time, as it spread all over the sky, and soon there was rain enough to stop the traveller. AND SO SHALL IT BE IN METHODISM ERE LONG. If we mistake not, last Sunday's work among our young people is the result of many earnest prayers, and the sign of coming prosperity. Some will be ready to say "It is nothing to make a stir about. They were only children." "A little cloud!" Only the size of a man's hand. Yes, but what man? "The man Christ Jesus." "Ahab, get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." We shall not be surprised to hear of Revivals like some we have known, which turned other meetings into soul-converting agencies. Tea Meetings, and Missionary Meetings, where the people have come in crowds, not to applaud eloquence, but to ask -- "What must we do to be saved?" We expect news of this sort, and that, ere long. May the hand of the Lord be on Elijah, then shall he run before Ahab, and prayer shall be mightier than the power which moves those who eat and drink!

XIX. A CLEAN TONGUE.

One of the first things the doctor does when he comes to see you, is to ask to look at your tongue, and one glance will tell him how much difficulty he has to contend with. If the tongue is foul, he knows that there is inward mischief, and he must lose no time in cleansing that of which the tongue is but an indicator. As we pass along our streets our ears are assailed with language of the most horrid description. If one needed any information as to the state of public morals, the foul-mouthed men and boys, aye, and we regret to say, too often, women and girls, would tell of the state of heart into which many thousands of our country people have been corrupted. And in many cases, this has become habitual, and what might be termed natural. Can nothing be done? Is the name of the Divine Being and that of our Saviour to be profaned constantly without any check? If so, it will grow worse and worse, until we may expect national sin to bring down national punishment, and we shall have to say, "Because of swearing the land mourneth." Those who have charge of the education of our children might help, by constantly speaking against bad language, and by punishing those who continue to offend. Parents, also, should check the slightest tendency in this direction. We have heard of a good woman, who, overhearing one of her boys using what she called "dirty words," took him to the sink, and washed out his mouth, not sparing the soap! Sometimes when we have heard men defiling their tongues with filthy talk, we have wished their mothers had served them the same. Nor is this offence against God and good taste always confined to the ignorant. There are those who have been well taught -- men of ability, and some who make a profession of religion, who indulge in unseemly language, and delight in stories which are termed "smutty." We know how farmers dislike the "smut" in their wheat, how an otherwise good crop will be lowered in value, because the black grain will, when ground, darken the flour. Is it not so with these men of unclean lips? The filthy allusions and improper stories which pollute their conversation make their life infectious, and their companionship dangerous. Let us reprove them, or at least avoid them, as we would the plague. If we would keep a clean tongue, we must pray "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" This can be done, and the Lord, who has told us that He will not admit into His heaven that which worketh abomination, will gladly cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His holy Spirit, then shall our tongue glorify Him continually. Should this fall into the hands of one of those whose foul tongue shews that his heart is corrupt, we would ask him how he would like to have his conversation reported by a short-hand writer, and printed in the "Standard," or "Daily News," with his name attached? But is it not a fact, that his words are being taken down, and when the books are opened before an assembled universe at the last day, will not his soul tremble, as he finds that God has listened all the time, and the language used years ago, is to control his destiny, for He who will come to be our Judge has said to the swearer and filthy speaker -- "BY THY WORD THOU SHALT BE CONDEMNED." A WORD TO FATHERS. Have you ever thought how it is that in the prayer we call our Lord's, God is spoken of as Father? Do you not see that your child calls you by one of the names -- the Christ-chosen name of the Devine Being? Is there not a sermon in that to everyone of us who has children of his own? Perhaps you have never given the matter a thought that for some of the early years of you children you may be giving them a caricature of God in your ungodly conduct. Let us lay this to heart, and

strive, by God-like actions, to teach our little ones what God is like. By long suffering and gentleness towards ignorance and weakness; -- by stern denunciation, in life as well as word, of everything that is mean and deceitful; -- by delighting in mercy, and readiness to give to those who need, to our children, "Our Father," may become a stepping stone to the knowledge of God.

XX. THE RED LAMP.

Travelling by express train the other day, we found that we were stopped a long distance from the station where we were timed to stop, and looking out of the window, saw a red light ahead. That accounted for it, we knew there was something in the way. The driver knew what he was about, and though anxious to go on, did not move until the red light was changed to white. Some of those who read this paper are living in sin. To such, the Bible speaks out in plain terms, and, like the Red Light, would stop them. "THE END OF THESE THINGS IS DEATH." You cannot go any further without danger. Why run the risk? That Red Lamp seems to say, "If you will come on, you will be slain." What should we think of any one who urged the driver to go on, in spite of the warning? Would you not call him "fool" and "madman?" Just so, and you will do well to call those who urge you to despise the warnings of the Bible, by the same names. We should not think much of the wisdom of any one who said of the Red Lamp, "Why take any notice of that old-fashioned thing? We have outgrown these childish ideas!" Would not your reply be, "Danger is danger, and safety is safety!" We have not outgrown death and the grave, and it is still true, in spite of the march of science, that a train coming into collision with another means suffering to those who are in it. Sin is yet sin, and we cannot break the Commandments of God without having to suffer. And as for the Bible being old-fashioned, we feel, that which kept our fathers from hell shall keep their sons also. Here is one of the Red Lamps of the Bible, which young men would do well to consider -- "HER HOUSE IS THE WAY TO HELL!" Young man, there is the Red Light! Stop! Do not go one step further! There are plenty of fools to tell you that "THIS IS SEEING LIFE." The Bible says -- "The dead are there, and her guests are in the depths of hell." If everything had to be called by its right name, just as sign-boards tell us what is to be procured within, like "Furniture Dealer," "Boot and Shoe Maker," fancy the sign-board that would have to be put over the house of the "strange woman." Here is a suitable inscription, which we take from the Bible. -- Prov. ii.19: -- "NONE THAT GO UNTO HER RETURN AGAIN." This is putting a Red Lamp over her door, is it not? Will you heed the warning? Or do you mean to be one of those of whom the Bible speaks, "AND THOU SHALT MOURN AT THE LAST, WHEN THY FLESH AND THY BODY ARE CONSUMED, AND SAY, 'HOW HAVE I HATED INSTRUCTION AND MY HEART DESPISED REPROOF?'"

XXI. A SERMON ON THE BOAT RACE.

In finding illustrations for our teaching at the river-side, we shall be in good company, for that manly preacher, Paul, had seen wrestlers and race-runners. It is true that then, athletics had not been disgraced by betting; and it is only of very late years that the struggle on the Thames has been polluted by gamblers. There are not a few who read our paper, who will be on the lookout to know as soon as possible, whether DARK OR LIGHT BLUE has won. For ourselves we care not, but we are anxious to make use of the contest as a parable, before the race is forgotten. If you would row as to obtain, you must mind certain things, and these are pictures of what we must do, would we gain the heavenly prize. I. -- WE MUST KEEP THE BODY UNDER. So thought Paul. -- See 1st Cor. ix, 25 and 27. Those sixteen young fellows who will pull the oars in the race, have, for months, been undergoing strict physical training. This means abstinence from all that could be said to weaken the frame, or lower the action of the heart. There are only certain things they may eat and drink. They must have the right amount of sleep, and no more. Exercise of the most bracing kind they must take every day, and eschew every practice that could weaken the nerves or muscles in the slightest degree. And he that would win the heavenly race must say "No," to self, and "flee youthful lusts," and "endure hardness." He whose soul can be mastered by his body has lost the bridle, and cannot wonder if he lose the prize. II. -- WE MUST SECURE A GOOD START. Just before the Starter gives the word to go, the men paddle till the cord which the coxswain holds at arm's length is tight, and every man has his oar ready for the dash into the water and away. To lose time at the start is to find that a chance has been thrown away. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." "They that seek Me early shall find Me." He who would be a first-class Christian, must begin betimes. Time lost is lee-way, that cannot be recovered, strive as we like. III. -- WE MUST BE WELL STEERED. In the picture parable you can see who is steering. Don't let him come aboard you! Proverbs iii.6, tells you whom to trust with the tiller ropes. "HE SHALL DIRECT THY PATHS." If young men would only let the Bible "coach them," they would be saved from many a blunder and defeat. It is important to have, as steersman, one who knows the currents, and just when to alter the course. The youngster who steers the University boat has been up and down the river many a time, till he has learned everything he needs to know. Let me ask you, "Who steers?" If SELF-WILL does, you are undone. IV. -- NEVER CEASE STRIVING TILL YOU HAVE WON. Your adversary will not. He will pursue you till you have gained the prize. "He who to the end endures," is the saved man. It is very instructive to note how many backsliders there are among professors of mature age. The most grievous cases of falling away are not from the ranks of young disciples, but from those who ought to have been safe examples for them! If you have lived to be grey-headed, remember your silver hair may make a fool's cap yet! There are other lessons, but they will keep till another year. We will end our Sermon with some lines of Charles Wesley's, not known to all our readers: -- "But did the great apostle fear

He should not to the end endure,

Should not hold out, and persevere,

And make his own election sure?
Could Paul believe it possible,
When all his toils and griefs were past,
Himself should of salvation fail,
And die a reprobate at last?" "Who then art thou that dar'st reject
The sacred terms, the humbling awe,
As absolutely saved, -- elect, --
And free from an abolished law?
DOST THOU NO SELF-DENIAL NEED,
NO WATCH, OR ABSTINENCE SEVERE;
In one short moment perfected!
An angel -- an immortal here?"

XXII. GOOD-FRIDAY.

One wonders how it came to have that name! We cannot help feeling, that if other titles were as well-deserved, it would be a blessing to the world. For instance, if Nobleman, Gentleman, Reverend, &c., were as descriptive as this day's name, there would be many happier people than there are. No wonder that it should be called "Good," for it helps us to look back to the time when the best action the world has known, or can know, was done. We gaze upon the Cross, and we thank God for His unspeakable gift. One knows not which to admire the most: the Love that could smite the Well-beloved, or the Love that could, for the sake of enemies, bear the blow? How do our readers mean to spend the day? We have no right to bind any man's conscience, and seek to have others do as we do, except they are led in the same direction, and yet we wonder how those who observe the day at all, can allow themselves to spend it in dissipation. We are no admirer of those who make the day one of sadness and gloom. IT IS GOOD-FRIDAY, and we cannot understand how men can allow themselves to act as though it were Bad Friday, as though they could hear the hammer nailing Christ to the cross. A high churchman's conscience is a wonderful thing, and in nothing is it so surprising as this, that it can allow itself to act as though Jesus were slain and in His tomb! Has not the Lord Himself spoken? Let us listen to Him who speaks in rebuke to those who would darken our homes and places of worship, and cheat themselves into a sentimentality which again sees the corpse of Jesus laid in Joseph's grave. "I AM HE THAT LIVETH AND WAS DEAD, AND BEHOLD I AM ALIVE FOR EVERMORE." It cannot be pleasing to Jesus to be spoken of as though He was once more in the hands of His enemies. While we regret that so many people in our country should make this day one of rioting and extravagance, we are sure that it is in some degree a reaction from the usages of those who would have us spend the day in sorrow. That which is unreal must in time become unsatisfactory, and those who would compel us to live over again the sorrows of Calvary, may drive us to football, or that which is worse! Let men once think that the church has turned actor, and they will say, "No, we will go to the theatre, for there the acting is better done." EVERY DAY we should visit in spirit the cross of Jesus, for every day we need the merit of the atonement, and the stimulus of that example of self-forgetfulness. Let us turn away from the so-called realism which would hang the world in black, and, at the same time let us avoid those who would make this a day of revelry. There is a middle path, one upon which Christ smiles, and a path we can tread any day, and thus make it GOOD -- we mean the PATHWAY OF SELF-SACRIFICE. For the joy of blessing others, let us be willing to endure shame or pain. There is always pleasure to be earned by those who are willing to pay the price, -- the pleasure of unselfishness, -- but this cannot be tasted except by those who seek their highest joy in the wellbeing of others. Our risen and glorified Lord tastes this joy every day, Good-Friday not excepted, and we think it will lead us to spend the day according to His will, if we seek for ourselves all the blessings He purchased with His blood, and none more earnestly than that sanctifying Spirit who will help us to follow His blessed example, and, by caring others, MAKE EVERY GOOD. THE CROWN CANNOT BE

INDEPENDENT

OF THE SPADE!

XXIII. PETER THE PREACHER.

Yes! the Preacher! for it is in this way he has earned the right to be remembered. Perhaps his sermon at Pentecost was more remarkable in its results than any sermon has been since. The question arises in the minds of thinking men, "Is there any reason why preaching now should be less effective than it was when men first began to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ?" One thing is certain, human nature has not improved, and hell is as great a fact now as then. God's love for men has not decreased. He is still interested in the human race, and the promise, as Peter put it, is "to all that are afar off." -- Acts ii.39. "WHY, THEN, DO WE NOT SEE THE SAME RESULTS? We do in kind, but not in number. Why not in both? Is not the answer to be found in Acts i.14? "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." Is not the Church of to-day weak in the knee? Do we pray as the men and women did who waited for the promise of the Father in the upper room? Peter would pray. He had all the instinct of a preacher, and would feel his heart bound at the thought that he was to be a witness of God's readiness to pardon. His prayer would differ from many others. How he would plead for the power that would crown him with the diadem of a preacher! There was a time when he had prayed -- "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." Now, his cry would be -- "Come to me, let not my sins cause Thee to stay, but come quickly." There are many of us who feel we need to cry to Peter's Saviour and Lord, for we have allowed doubts to hide His face, or self-indulgence to fence Him about. Let every preacher who reads these words unite with us in pleading for a Pentecost that shall renew our commission, and make all men to know that a risen Saviour is our King, and a promised Comforter our portion, WHAT A BLOW TO SOCINIANISM, BOTH OF IDEA AND WORD, WOULD A 'SECOND PENTECOST' BECOME! We do not here mean to dwell on the example shewn to the Church by the accord in prayer, the many pleading, so differently, and yet in harmony; we are writing now for preachers, knowing that hundreds of workers will read every line we write, and we are thus led to enquire further -- HOW FAR PETER'S SERMON IS LIKE THE SERMONS WE PREACH? Some who have read it, as it is printed, have said, "We should not have invited such a preacher to our circuit:" but such people forget that the accompaniments of preaching cannot be printed. Who can write down the spiritual atmosphere? Who can reproduce the tone of voice in which Peter spoke? How can he describe what some of us have felt -- the unction -- the never-to-be-forgotten emotions of the soul? Depend upon it, these were present in a remarkable manner. But beside all this, there are the Bible facts. Peter knew his Bible and could quote it. How familiar he must have been with the Old Testament! Could he have found, in any part of the book, passages more telling and more suitable? If we knew our Bible better, we should not need to do as the manner of some is, round off common-place ideas of our own, with pretty poetry of someone else's! Then, the preacher was not afraid to tell the congregation what sins they had committed. Many of them were what is called "good sort of people, went to place of worship, and paid their way," &c. But it was true, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Let us who preach, cry to God to give us His Spirit, that we may tell those who hear us of their sins. How are they to be convinced of sins, if they are not told of them? Nor was Peter satisfied with the good feeling, or even with seeing the people moved. It was not enough for him that his

hearers were pricked in the heart, he would have them do more. Would he not have said to many of those who have gone into the inquiry-room, "I am not satisfied that you are in earnest. You want God to save you in your sins." Repentance is impossible to those who are not conscious of guiltiness. And, without repentance, faith holds the cup of water to one who was never thirsty. Do you wonder that it is loathsome? He might drink if it were not so pure, BUT IT TAKES THIRST TO RELISH WATER! This is a tempting subject, we could say much more, but we will only add, that the last word in the chapter, which tells of "Peter the Preacher," gives the result of such sermons as his -- "SAVED!"

XXIV. |WHEN SOLOMON WAS OLD. |

"It came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other Gods." 1 KINGS xi.4. Who could have predicted that this would come to pass? And yet it is often so, for it is still true that NO AMOUNT OF KNOWLEDGE WILL SAVE FROM BACKSLIDING THOSE WHO REFUSE TO LISTEN TO GOD. We learn from verse 10 that God had taken pains to save Solomon from idolatry, (see 1 Kings vi.12, and xi.6). But what good is it for even God to try to save a man who will have his own way? And yet one would have thought that a man who knew what Solomon knew, would have not bowed down to gods of wood and stone! It is not always at our weakest place we fail! It is well for us to be aware of this. Who would have expected Moses to fail in his temper, or Elijah in his courage? Solomon must have hated himself when he bowed before these graven images, and must have looked with loathing on those filthy idols before whom he was prostrate, and yet he went on in his evil way. How the priests who offered the idolatrous sacrifices would rejoice in their illustrious pervert! Will any of us ever give the foes of God cause for exultation? Do not tell me that you are too well instructed! Are you wiser than Solomon? "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom. Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." -- Jer. ix, 23-24. You are safe only as you are willing to be led by the word of God. WHAT IS THE BIBLE TO YOU? Is it a lamp to your feet? Not merely a lantern to keep you out of the mire, but a treasure like that miner's lamp; a light by which he is not only guided, but able to walk in the shadow of death. All around him is the gas that would slay him, and yet by that lamp he walks to the place of safety! This is what the Bible must be to you, or it is nothing. Mind you, it is not enough for you to know the Bible. We have heard drunken men quote it with correctness, but it had not saved them from the demon which haunted them. It is an instructive thought that the man who wrote some of the Bible, who is spoken of in the pulpit as "The Wise Man," the author of the Book of Proverbs, was led away into sin and eternal disgrace. In fact, it matters not what we know, if we are not led of the Spirit we shall come to grief. The more deeply a ship is laden, if she gets aground, the more likely she is to become a wreck. It takes the wisest of men to make the fool Solomon became. Perhaps the most serious aspect of this story is, that it was not while the king was young, but when grey-headed, that he wandered from God, and this leads me to say that THE WORST CASES OF BACKSLIDING ARE AMONG THOSE WHO ARE NO LONGER YOUNG. We should not have been surprised if Solomon had been led away by youthful passion or indiscretion, but we are shocked to find that it was when he ought to have been venerable that he became vicious -- "When Solomon was old." We should have expected history would have told us of the power he exerted over the people; how the nation saw in his silver locks the crown of glory he had spoken of in his book. It would have seemed natural to have read of great gatherings of the people of different nations, listening to his wondrously wise words. Instead of this, the news spread far and wide that the wise king had stooped to folly of the worst degree. My brothers! what sort of old men shall we make? If we are allowed to remain among our fellows, shall we live the life that shall make men thank God for our length of days, or will they wish we had died in our youthful prime? There are men whose youth was like the mountain stream, which cheered everything it touched. Born among the mountains, and wedding other brooks and streamlets, uniting them in a river,

clear and lovely, along whose banks children loved to play. But later on, as it became broad and deep, taking in pollution and garbage, until the clear and joyous river is changed into a great sewer, filling the air with noxious smells, and defiling the face of nature with its liquid blackness. Such is life to some men -- Solomon was one, perhaps the worst. One is ready to ask -- Can this be the man to whom God spake in large promise? Is this he whose prayer brought into the temple the manifested presence of the Almighty? Can it be possible that this hoary idolater had been the favourite of Jehovah? Alas! it is only too true. More than once we have known men whose prayers could bring heaven to earth, and lift earth to heaven, but who have lived too long, and ere they fell into a dishonoured grave, brought shame to the cross of Jesus, and gave the enemies of God food for laughter. Let those among us who are no longer young, see to it that we are not among those who fall more deeply into sin than it is possible for young disciples to do. What should we think if Westminster Abbey became a gin-palace? If all around its gates lewd men and dishonoured women stood and cracked their filthy jokes; if from its lovely choir the drunkard's song was heard? Verily, you say, "It is nigh to blasphemy to imagine such a thing. We had rather that it had been burned to ashes when the fire of London destroyed St. Paul's. Would that it had reached far enough West to destroy the ancient pile rather than it should be so polluted!" Aye, aye, you are right, and yet to see a man who, in his youth was a Christian, but in his old age has become an apostate, is a more sorrowful sight still. Alas! that it should be so common. How did it come about? What scheme of hell led to this? What combination of men and fiends accomplished this tragedy? It was love -- affection, infatuation, for that which ought not to have been loved, "King Solomon loved many strange women, besides the daughter of Pharaoh," as the margin puts it. And this leads me to say that A MAN'S FEMALE FRIENDS FRAME HIS FORTUNES. Solomon began wrong; he allowed his affection to fasten itself on a stranger -- an Egyptian. It is a question worth considering, whether we preachers say enough to the people on this question of matrimony. A man's marriage is sure to tell on his history. He can never be the same again he was before. He may wed one who shall help him to be good, whose voice shall be like church bells calling him to prayer. Or he may fasten himself to one, who, like Jezebel, shall stir up her husband to deeds of shame and cruelty. Sometimes we have felt, when we have seen some marriages, that it would have been a fitting thing if a hearse had been among the carriages, for there lay DEAD HOPE on its way to a grave from which there could be no resurrection! Young man! what woman is it you like the best? Who is her god? Fashion? Pleasure? What is the name of the deity she worships? If it is anyone rather than Jehovah, beware! Before you die, she shall turn you as Solomon was turned. What is that you say? You are not such a fool! Well, that remains to be seen. Are you one of those who trust in his own heart? If so, remember what he is called. See Prov. xxviii.26. Is not the helm of your life in her hands now? Would you love her as you do, if she had not the reins of your soul in her grasp? If Solomon had known all that was to follow when he first looked on the daughter of Pharaoh, he would have died before he would have made her his bride. Let not this sad story be in any way a prophecy of your future. There are plenty of women whom to know is to be elevated, and whom to wed would be to foretaste the companionship of heaven. Wives are often the architects and the husbands the builders. See to it, that the woman you love does not make you lay out the foundation of a jail. She may tell you it is a palace, but neither of you have yet seen the elevation. She only draws the ground-plan. There is yet another scene in this tragedy. Solomon, by his folly, lost his son's estate. God said, "I will surely rend the kingdom from thee." Rehoboam was the poorer for his father's sin. OUR CHILDREN BECOME THE HEIRS OF OUR CRIMES. Some

other day, it may be, we will take the story of the son. Let it suffice to-day that we learn the lesson the Bible would teach us. Solomon's sun went down in a cloud. It is a disputed question whether Solomon repented in time to save his soul. There ought to have been no question as to whether he was in heaven or no. As it is, we don't know that David has one of his children with him, except the baby boy who died despite his father's fasting and prayer. Surely no one more than David will need to have that promise fulfilled -- "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." It may be that David has needed to be comforted, because the builder of the temple is among those who died in idolatry. Let every father among us bear in mind, that when we neglect prayer, or give up devotion, because we want the time for seeking gold or any other idol, we are mortgaging our children's future. Giving up religious exercises is like cutting down the trees on an estate, the next heir will know the want of them. No man can be said to be a good father, who, for the sake of any worldly good, impoverishes the souls of his offspring. "Turned away his heart after other gods," means turning away the kingdom of Israel. Sin cannot be separated from sorrow, and this is as true to-day as it was in the days of Solomon.

XXV. ABRAHAM AND ISAAC. GENESIS xxii.

1. -- "After these things." What things? See verse 33 in preceding chapter. After Abraham had given himself to prayer. It often happens that grace is given for grace. God prepares his own for trial and suffering by revealing Himself. "GOD DID TEMPT." -- Like a workman who is conscious the work is well done, fears not the scrutiny which waits his labour. When the smith has put good work into the iron cable, he does not then fear the strain of the test put upon it, and God knew what He had done to Abraham in the grove at Beersheba. If we have a Beersheba, we need not fear Moriah. 2. -- "Isaac, whom thou lovest." God has a right to the best. He does not ask us to do what He has not done Himself. "He gave his only begotten Son." 3. "Rose up early." Abraham was prompt. Where there is a task to be performed, lose no time. Work does not grow easier by delay. Do not fritter away strength in trifles; begin at once upon the duties which call for instant obedience. We do not read that Abraham asked Sarah's advice, the command was plain. She might not have been willing. Never ask advice from those whom God does not trust. "CLEAVE THE WOOD." -- He did not act as some do, take no pains in preparation. The Holy Ghost is not to act as brains in an empty skull. Get ready, then go. Some would have climbed the hill, and then, because there was no one near from whom they could borrow an axe to cut the wood, would have come back with an excuse, and in so doing picture not a few who fail, because they are not able to sing -- "READY for all Thy perfect will,

My acts of faith and love repeat." 5. -- Abide ye here with the Ass." The young men would have hindered Abraham from binding his son on the altar. Whatever would interfere with prayer, when we retire for that purpose, or with sacrifice, when we make the effort, should be left behind. Leave hinderers with the ass, they will be in congenial society! 6, 7, 8, 9. -- "The Knife," "The Fire," "The Wood."Where is the lamb? Isaac's words would pierce his father's heart. How came it the young man yielded? Was there a struggle? Did Abraham bind him by force? There is no indication in the story of any resistance. Do the words of Jesus cast any light, "Abraham saw My day, and was glad?" Received him in a figure" (Heb. xi.19.) Did father and son see what was to occur in the distance?10. -- "Took the knife to slay his son."God tries us to the full. His tests are no shams. Before the Hall-mark is put on the metal, the acid proves it genuine.11 and 12. -- "Lay not thine hand on the lad."No one spoke to God when it pleased Him to bruise His Well-beloved.13. -- "A ram caught in a thicket."God cleaves His wood, He is ready, always prepared.14. -- "Call the name of that place,THE LORD WILL PROVIDE."What would he have called it before his deliverance? Let us not be too quick to name events. It may be we shall want to alter if we do.15-18. -- "OBEYED."Obedience is the joyful mother of children, -- children that are born to bless. He who can always obey will find every step leads to a throne. -- Rev. iii.21.These are a few lessons which I shall not do more than name:I. -- GOD'S FRIENDSHIP DOES NOT EXCLUDE TRIAL.The man who is called the friend of God was told to slay his son.II. -- GREAT JOYS CONTAIN GREAT SORROWS.The name of this son was Laughter. The more we enjoy a Gift of God, the more we shall feel it when we are called to part. Hold joys with a slack hand.III. -- IN GREAT EXTREMITIES LOOK FOR GREAT DELIVERANCES.The ram is in the thicket all the time.IV. -- GREAT TRIALS

WILL YIELD SWEET MEMORIES. None of Abraham's journeys cost him so many tears as this, and none were so pleasant to recall. PERHAPS CALVARY IS THE SWEETEST SPOT ON EARTH TO GOD.

XXVI. OIL FOR LAMPS. MATTHEW xxv. 1-13.

God's kingdom is imperfect as yet, for it is not said to be like five, but ten virgins. It is worthy of our careful thought that it is to be made perfect by contraction, not expansion. The King is to say "Depart!" as well as "Come!" We do not attempt anything like exposition of this solemn and yet charming parable, but rather to notice some of the most easily perceived truths it discovers. I. -- A Light is better than a Lamp. All the ten took their lamps. Very likely there was variety in the shape and material of the lamp, but only five of them had lamps that kept alight, for some of them had no means of replenishment. For anything we know, the lamps of the foolish were as good as the others, may-be better, but the flame and not the frame is the important matter. We cannot have the power without the form. Grace must have the human material, but we may have the human without the Divine. Our Bibles, our Prayers, our Hymns, all these are channels of grace, as the lamp and the wick are essential to the flame, but the lamp may not be lighted, or it may have gone out! It is not a question of John Keble, or General Booth, but is the singing from the heart? The "Amen" may be shouted or intoned, but if not real, it is worse than smouldering wick. II. -- We may as well be without oil as not have enough to endure to the end. All ten lamps were at one time burning. In the margin of verse 10, we read, "Our lamps are going out." What a lesson to the backslider! You once were a burning and a shining light, but you did not seek grace to help in time of need, and your lamp is gone out. Better never have made a profession if there be not grace to sustain the flame. Aye, and perhaps you, with a lamp which has gone out, you have been a preacher, or a teacher, and have, before now, enforced this very lesson on your hearers. If there is a sight in this world over which angels might weep, it is a preacher without a light. Better go to hell from a race-course than a pulpit! III. -- The gates or the palace may be shut while we are calling on the oil seller. "While they went to buy, the Bridegroom came." There is an old saying, that "praying breath was never wasted." But this parable does not teach that lesson. There are not a few who think they can atone for the sins of a long life by crying with their dying breath, "Lord, have mercy on me!" But the truth is, there may be the fear of punishment without any penitence, and cries for dread of hell may not be the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart. Let us not put off our repentance too long, or while we are sending for the minister to instruct us, death may claim us for his prey. Or while we are saying to the teacher of religion, "What must I do to escape hell?" the fetters may be fastened on our soul. The palace-gate may swing to before we can make the oil-man hear. IV. -- That which lets the five wise in to the palace, keeps out the five foolish. "The door was shut." The five were in, and then came the other five, to find the gate closed. Then they begin to cry "Open to us!" but in vain. The door makes all the difference. If you enter, it is by the door; if you are shut out, it is the door that closes against you. "I am the door," said Jesus, and it is yet true. "No man cometh to the Father but by Me." Yes, Jesus is the True and Living way, and the only one. But if we are lost, it will be the aspect of Jesus which will slay our last hope. It is the wrath of the Lamb which is so dreadful. Have you ever thought of it, my brother, that Christ is to be Life or Death to thee? If he does not shut thee into heaven, He will shut thee out. Shall you ever be one of the group which cry, as their last prayer, "Lord! Lord! open to us!" DO NOT BE ONE OF THOSE

WHO PRAY LIKE ABEL

AND

LIVE LIKE CAIN.

XXVII. |CAST A STONE AT HER!| JOHN viii. 7.

Cast a stone at whom? At a woman! Why not at a man? THERE WAS A MAN, WHY NOT STONE HIM? Just so, but then the Scribes and Pharisees did not bring him. It is so easy to punish the woman, and yet it is not proved that she was worse than her paramour. But is it not the way of the world to make the woman bear all the shame and all the suffering? We say, "She is a fallen woman;" and yet we speak of a man who breaks the seventh commandment as one who is "sowing his wild oats!" Why is he not called a fallen man? If a woman falls, we put her outside our sympathies and our regard, and we may be right in so doing. But at the same time we don't put the man outside. He can come into our drawing-rooms. He may dine at the same table with our daughters. If we saw them speak to the woman, we should cry out with loathing, "Come away from her!" but WE DON'T CRY OUT WHEN THEY LAUGH AT THE JOKES OF A MAN WHO HAS FALLEN! Why is this? "Cast a stone at her!" Who shall stone her? "He that is without sin, let him be the first to pick up a stone." Now, then, reader, why don't you throw a stone? Nay, but I have no right, say you, I am not without sin. Is this to be the rule, none are to punish the fallen but those who have never tripped? Why, this would silence many who are very ready to speak against these unhappy sisters. We make no apologies for the crimes of those who have yielded to temptation, but we do ask, is there room for our rebukes when we are not without sin? Perhaps this book may be read by our sisters who have gone astray. To such, we say, in the words of Jesus, (verse 11.) "SIN NO MORE!" You are not obliged to do so. No one is. There is always a way made for those who truly repent. Call upon Jesus, the Friend of sinners, and He will open a door of hope for you. To persevere in sin, is only to ruin soul and body too. Perhaps you have parents living, who long to see you, and who would be glad to take you to their hearts. Give them the joy of having you near them once more. Is it not in your power to answer their prayer -- "O GOD! GIVE ME MY DAUGHTER ONCE MORE!" If you are absolutely friendless, so far as earth is concerned, you have your Heavenly Father. He is always within call, and He has said, in His word, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." On the other hand, there is the "Father of lies." He who tempted the first woman, and led her astray, and taught her to lead the man wrong. This evil one is whispering in your ear -- "There is no hope." "It is too late." "Better have a short life and a merry one." HEED HIM NOT, SISTER! He is a liar! He means thy destruction! God calls, and calls thee to pardon and peace. Obey Him, and hope shall spring again, and LIGHT RETURN TO THY POOR HEART.

XXVIII. [OFFER IT NOW UNTO THY GOVERNOR.] MALACHI i. 8.

We beg to suggest to those who want a new text that will strike and stick, that they should look through MALACHI'S book. There are plenty of texts like splinters therein. The words that head this article are part of an appeal to the people on the question of right service. The prophet was indignant with his country people, who wished to combine prayer with parsimony, and worship with worldly policy. He complained that they dare not offer to their superiors what they sent as a sacrifice to God. Might not some Christians be asked the same questions? Would the "Governor" accept the present God was supposed to be glad to get? Who would think of trying to get into the good graces of any one by sending a spavined horse, or a cow with foot-and-mouth-disease, as a present? In the matter of prayer, for instance. Take a congregation supposed to be asking God to pardon their sins, and to give them all the blessings their souls and bodies need. Mind you, they are people who say they believe that "he that believeth not is condemned" already; that "the wages of sin is death," and yet, listen how they pray! We will suppose the man in the pulpit is in earnest and means all he says. Look around, what do you see? Scores of people who dare not sit in the presence even of the Squire, to say nothing of the Queen, but there they sit, as though that was the proper position for prayer! One of them is taking the pattern of a new dress, or the trimming of a bonnet; while another is wondering, not whether there will be an answer to the prayer, but whether the man who is leading the worship will keep on much longer, and ask for something else, for already he has been praying ten minutes! Supposing a petition is to be drawn up to the Queen, asking for a pardon for one of the family, who for his crime, is under sentence of death; what thought would be given to it? Even the very paper, pens, and ink, would have to be of the best quality. But hear yonder father praying for his children's conversion. His son is old enough to have rejected the gospel, and is condemned already; but how listless the prayer! "Offer it to thy Governor." Would the Queen be expected to deign to notice such a petition? Is it any wonder such prayers are unanswered? Look into this vestry! There is a meeting for prayer. It is held with great regularity, so that it is well known that a number of persons meet at a certain hour to ask blessings from One who has said "Knock and the door shall be opened." Considering that this is the case, one would have expected the room would be too small; but no, there is never a large meeting. You see it is only a prayer-meeting. If the Rev. Timothy Flowerpot was going to preach, there would be a crowd, for he is popular, and he says things which are supposed to be very superior to the Bible; besides his prayers are eloquent, very different to what are usually sent to the throne of grace. He is very sensitive, though, in the matter of congregations, he will not go a second time where there is only a handful of people. His work is to speak to large audiences, and he would be very much offended if the vestry were prepared for his service. "Offer it to thy Governor." If the Reverend Gentleman would not accept the congregation that meets for an audience with God, can it be expected that the Lord of heaven will be well pleased with those who care not to come when prayer is made? We shall be glad if these plain words cause some of our readers to look at the sacrifice before they offer it, and ask, would this kind of thing be acceptable to man? If not good enough for my equal, will my Superior look with favour on it? Listen once more to the rough, but sensible words of the Hebrew prophet: -- "IF YE OFFER THE BLIND FOR SACRIFICE,

IS IT NOT EVIL?

AND IF YE OFFER THE LAME AND SICK,

IS IT NOT EVIL?

OFFER IT NOW UNTO THY GOVERNOR; WILL HE BE

PLEASED WITH THEE, OR ACCEPT THY PERSON?

SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS." FAITH MAKES THE GRAVE

A CRADLE.

XXIX. [WHAT MEAN THESE STONES?] JOSH. iv. 21.

[Preached at a Sunday School Anniversary.] This is a children's question. God does not wish the boy to be snubbed when he wants to know. There is a kind of curiosity which is like the scent in a hound -- a Divine instinct -- and must not be checked, for that is waste. If you chill your child when he comes to ask, you may break the link which binds him to you, and never be able to weld it again. There will be a time come when you will long to have the lad come to your side, but it will be too late. "When your children shall ask their fathers . . . Then ye shall let your children know" (21-22.) OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMANDMENTS WILL CAUSE OUR

CHILDREN TO ASK QUESTIONS WHICH WILL BE A

BLESSING TO THEIR LIFE. This is very different to what is called "questionable conduct." We don't want your son to say "I cannot understand how my father makes his ledger square with the Bible;" or the girl to say, "How does mother make this love of display harmonise with the class-meeting?" No, no! this is not it; but, "What mean these stones?" As the little girl said to her sister, "What is it makes mother's face shine so after she has been in her chamber so long?" That mother had been praying to her Father which seeth in secret, and He had rewarded her openly. If we live lives of cheerful obedience, the children will say, "What is the Sacrament? What do you do at the Class-meeting? &c. Why cannot I go with you?" These stones are very suggestive. There are sermons in them. Some lessons which will occur to every one; others that need to be thought over again and again. For instance, there are twelve, A STONE FOR EACH TRIBE. They all came out of the bed of Jordan, and yet, there are no two alike! Judah's is not like Napthali's, and yet both came from the same place, and are in the same heap. We are not alike, though we be the children of the same Father. You and I are very different, yet it is "Our Father." Yours as much as mine. John Bunyan knew this, for he makes his pilgrim band to consist of very great contrasts. Mr. Valiant for-the-truth, as well as Mr. Despondency. And they all get across the stream. It has been a favourite dream, in all ages, to have a church of one pattern. Uniformity, that is, all of one shape. God does not make the trees which bear the same kind of fruit of one shape. You can make artificial flowers by the shipload, all one tint, but the bees won't come round your ship when you unload it! In a town where I have preached many a time, there is a place of worship at each end. As you come from the railway station, there is one which begins the town -- a Baptist Chapel, plain and convenient, but right on the street, with the busy traffic all round; while at the other end of the town there is a church with a spire that makes you look up and think it is an anthem in stone! All around are old-fashioned houses, with gardens filled with flowers, and green lawns, while beyond there is a real country lane, with May in the hedges, and the music of larks and blackbirds. What a contrast! Yet if the ark of God were in danger, there would be brave hearts come from both places to die for the truth. No! let us have done with this wish to have all the same. It will become monotony. Go down into the Jordan and fetch your stone! Aye, aye, and one will pick the heaviest, one that will make his knees totter; and another will choose the squarest, and yet another the smoothest, but each man lays his in the heap, and it is well done! "What mean these stones?" WHY, THAT IT IS SAFE TO GO WHERE THE ARK GOES. That chest is the sign of God's

presence. There is the blood on the mercy-seat, and there are the angels of gold looking at that spot of blood. All the time the ark stood still in the bed of the river, the people could pass in safety. There are many Jordans for some of us to pass, but we need not to fear if God is there. There is the Jordan of POVERTY. It is a deep stream, and the water runs fast: yes, but if the ark goes first, thou shalt not be overcome. Does Providence call on thee to go down in the world? Never fear! the Ark is there. "I will never leave thee." We are thinking now of a friend of ours, not sainted, but saintly, who has seen great reverses of fortune, yet her life has been a psalm. She reminds me of a robin, for, like him, her song has been sweeter than ever in the dark days. You may have to cross the river of PERSECUTION, but the Ark is there. When the three brave men preferred the furnace to idolatry, they found the Son of Man in the flames waiting for them, and so shall you. And when it comes to the Jordan of DEATH, we shall know the Ark has gone on before. Some of you lame ones will step it out bravely when you see the Ark. Don't you remember, that good old "Ready to Halt" left his crutches on the bank? It was because he could see the Ark in the bed of the river. Do not these stones teach that GOD HONOURS FAITH? Brave Levites! Who can help admiring them, to carry that Ark right into the stream; for the waters were not divided till their feet dipped in the water (ver.15.) God had not promised aught else. This is what is needed -- what Jabez Bunting was wont to call "Obstinate faith," that the PROMISE sees and "looks to that alone." You can fancy how the people would watch these holy men march on, and some of the by-standers would be saying, "You would not catch me running the risk. Why, man, the ark will be carried away?" Not so, "the priests stood firm on dry ground." We must not overlook the fact that Faith on our part helps God to carry out His plans. "Come up to the help of the Lord." The Ark had staves for the shoulders. Even the Ark did not move of itself, it was carried. When God is the architect, men are the masons and labourers. Faith assists God. It can stop the mouth of lions and quench the violence of fire. It yet honours God, and God honours it. O for this faith that will go on, leaving God to fulfil His promise when He sees fit! Fellow- Levites, let us shoulder our load, and do not let us look as if we were carrying God's coffin. It is the Ark of the living God. Sing as you march towards the flood. These stones we can see, remind us of other stones we cannot see (verse 9.) "And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the Ark of the Covenant stood, and they are there unto this day." Will these stones ever be found? More unlikely things have happened. Any way, they serve us as a lesson. There are things unseen as real as things we look on every day. ORDINANCES ARE SIGNS AS WELL AS REMEMBRANCERS. What do you call that piece of wood there? Why, the communion rail, to be sure. Communion? what does that mean? It is only a piece of wood, and yet it makes us think of Him Who, the same night that He was betrayed, took bread, saying, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Kneeling at that rail, we may, by faith, take hold of the Man who died for us. Rightly used, the Lord's Supper may be manna -- angels' food. What is this day? The Sabbath. The Rest Day. The toils of life are o'er for a little time. Ah! this is another of the stones we see, which tell of stones we cannot see. There is a Sabbath that has no week-day; there is a world where there is no toil, no anxiety, no tears! "O, long expected day begin!" What do you call that sweet noise? Music? And what is that but another of these stones we can see, which tell of others we see not as yet. Dr. Watts said of sacred music -- "Thus, Lord, while we remember Thee,

We, blest and pious grow;

By hymns of praise we learn to be

Triumphant here below."While I hear those children's voices I seem to catch the sweeter strains of my children in heaven, singing their joy. Those deep, manly bass voices remind me of the psalms up yonder -- like the sound of many waters. Why, the very crape some of you wear reminds me of some who sat by your side, and who are now clad in garments "whiter than snow."

XXX. |HE THAT SLEEPETH IN HARVEST IS A SON THAT CAUSETH SHAME.| PROVERBS x. 5.

We shall always be in debt to Solomon for these wise sayings, and for the pains he took to have them preserved. The words which head this form a picture. It is harvest-time, and the old folks have been depending on their able-bodied son getting in all their corn, but they are doomed to disappointment. He sleeps when he should work. When others are toiling he is snoring, and his corn rots in the field because he does not carry it while he has fine weather. How ashamed his father is! Other men have got their corn well housed, but his is still where it grew, because the son he has reared is lazy and self-indulgent. One feels that no language is too strong for this indolent young man. But what has this to do with us? some will ask. We reply -- Is not this the harvest time of the church, when the days are closing and the nights lengthening? Have we not been used to hear of special efforts being made for the rescue of perishing souls, and ingathering of those who are in danger of dying unready? ARE YOU ASLEEP IN HARVEST? Let every Methodist who reads this ask -- What am I doing? Am I sleeping or harvesting? What am I doing to gather in the ripe corn? If I am indolent I shall cause shame to the people who count me one of themselves. If we sleep now that we should work, at the March Quarterly Meeting our place will be down in numbers, and as there are others of the same indolent sort, our circuit will be down at the District Meeting, and perhaps the District be down, and there will be the shame among the churches if Methodism is down. Other churches are used to look to us to shew them how to do the reaping. O, let us be up and doing! How shall we dare to meet our Lord if we sleep when we should sweat? How shall we bear it, if the members of other religious societies tell us that our bad example corrupted them? What will be our shame, if we find that those who expected us to gather them in accuse us of slothfulness, and destroying their souls by our neglect? CAN WE EXPECT TO KEEP OUR CHILDREN, IF THEY SEE

OUR FARM POINTED OUT AS THE FIELD OF

THE SLUGGARD? Will not very shame drive them from their own home to find one among those whom we once taught the way to reap? We wish that we could do with all drowsy Methodists what Jonah's captain did with him. We should dearly like to give them a good shake and say, "Awake, O sleeper!" We think of towns and villages, where, not very long ago, there was the song of the reaper, but now, alas! he has gone fast asleep. Shame will be the inheritance of those who are drowsy when they ought to be at work. Why have contempt poured on thee, when glory is to be won by work? Grasp the sickle and go out among the standing corn, or the rust on thy reaping hook shall eat into thy soul for ever!

XXXI. |THE AXE IS LAID TO THE ROOT. |

"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." If we want to preach, it will be wise for us to study the examples of preaching given in the Bible. John was filled with the Holy Ghost, and therefore taught of God: and it is easy to see that the man's nature was allowed full play. The Holy Ghost does not destroy character, but uses it, and these words of the Baptist are natural to him. Rugged strength is in every figure of the speech he uses. But I am not preaching to preachers, but to sinners, as John was, and in using the great Baptist's words, I would have you to visit THE DEVIL'S ORCHARD. This is not the only time in the Bible when wicked men are compared to trees. There is a notable example in Nebuchadnezzar, who, in his dream, saw a tree great and high, and saw an angel come down from heaven, look at it and then cry out -- "HEW DOWN THE TREE!" But in his case it was not said, "Cast it into the fire," but leave the stump with a band of iron and brass. You will remember this dream was fulfilled, and the king of Babylon lost his reason, and became like a beast, but the tree was allowed to grow again. Not so with these: John is speaking about the trees to be burned. But we may be asked -- What are the trees in the devil's orchard? They are men and women whose lives are wrong. You may see what Paul says in the letter he wrote to the Christians in Galatia -- Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envy, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like. NOW, DOES THIS LIST INCLUDE YOU? Well, you say, I am not a murderer. But are you envious? Do you grieve because someone more worthy than you is enjoying something you would like? Do you not see that is like what the devil felt when he saw Adam in Paradise? You can, by envy, soon become a destroyer. You say you are not an Adulterer, but are you lascivious? Do you like to think of unclean things? Do you delight in filthy pictures or "bawdy" songs? If so, you are fitting yourself for the fire where the Sodomites are. You say you are not as bad as some; perhaps you have not been growing as long as they have. Hatred and Variance are the trees on which the devil grafts Murders. Do you notice the last words in that sentence of Paul's -- "AND SUCH LIKE." If not a Drunkard or a Reveller, yet going in that direction; having a liking for evil companions and Sunday pleasuring. Am I looking on some of the saplings which Satan means to graft before next year? Christmas and New Year will soon be here. The dance and the ball-room are the places where REVELLERS BECOME FORNICATORS AND ADULTERERS! Are you a tree in the devil's orchard? If so, you may see your future in the words "Cast into the fire!" In the crowds of people who listened to John, there were numbers of religious folk. Some of them were teachers. All the devil's trees don't grow on his estate, therefore I want you now to look at THE DEVIL'S TREES WHICH GROW IN GOD'S ORCHARD. JUDAS was one. He had the advantage of Christ's friendship, and might have become one of the first missionaries, but he was covetous. DEMAS was the companion of PAUL, and might have been another SILAS, but he "loved this present world." ANANIAS and SAPPHIRA were growing side by side among the beautiful trees in the early church, but they were selfish and deceitful, and after telling a lie, they were both cut down and cast into the fire. You notice it does not say every tree in the devil's orchard shall be cut down, but "every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit." How is it with you?

Judgment has begun at the house of God. What are you? What is the product of your life? Is your influence beneficial? Does the result of your life shew that you are born of God? A HOLY LIFE IS THE ONLY WAY TO ESCAPE

THE FIRE OF HELL. Do not say you do no harm; that is not enough, you are to bear fruit unto holiness. Your life must be profitable to God, or you cannot escape the axe. A man does not plant apple trees to look at, but to gather fruit from. Have you paid God for all He has expended on you? Remember you are British, you live where there are Bibles, Ministers, Sunday Schools. Public opinion is on the side of right. It is easier to be good here than anywhere else in the world. The husbandman will not be satisfied with leaves or blossoms, there must be FRUIT OR FIRE! "The axe is laid to the root of the trees." Yes, you will do well to consider that there is a power of destruction which may be called into action any moment. Look, then, at GOD'S WOODMAN. It is his duty to remove the trees when the time comes. Mark you, he does not cut all down. The trees which bear good fruit he transplants to grow for ever in THE PARADISE OF GOD. Yes, death differs in his action, and those of us who live a holy life need not to dread him. He is rough, but he means well by us, and though we may feel it when he pulls us up by the roots, it is to grow in better soil, and under fairer skies. You, though, who bear evil fruit, YOU DO WELL TO FEAR DEATH. Keep good friends with the doctor, so that you may have no difficulty in getting him day or night, but remember that he is useless when the woodman aims a blow at the root. THE WISEST AND MOST SKILFUL OF MEDICAL MEN

CANNOT TAKE THE AXE OUT OF DEATH'S HAND! There will be no escape when the woodman gets his orders. Mark you, the axe is at the root this time. He has lopped off some of the branches. I see in the graveyard, headstones with names of infants low down, and space left for the father's and mother's names. Yes, he will come for you next. What will you do then? THE TREE IS HELPLESS, IT CANNOT GET AWAY FROM THE AXE! Blow upon blow descends, there is no help for it, and so it will be with you. What is it that your heart says, -- "I will send for praying people?" Yes, and if they come, what then? Perhaps God will hear, and say to the woodman, "Put up thy axe for another year or two. Let us see if he will keep his word and bear fruit." One wonders at the forbearance of God! There are some in this place, who, when in affliction, sent for the godly, and promised if only they were spared, they would bear good fruit. But alas! they are worse than ever now. Let such hardened sinners remember where the axe lies. The woodman can pick it up any moment, and it will be useless to pray then. Can you not hear the step of the feller of trees? He is on his way with orders which brook no delay, thy hour is at hand, and thou shalt fall, to be cast into the fire! I look around, and ask the question -- "WHO AMONG US SHALL DWELL WITH THE DEVOURING

FIRE? WHO AMONG US SHALL DWELL WITH

EVERLASTING BURNINGS?" Dare you look at the fire? Come, be a man, and see thy future. The tree is in the blazing pit. It cannot get out of the fire, any more than it could escape the axe. Did you ever think of the illustration of the text -- WOOD TO FIRE. What more natural? It is true, it might have been somewhere else, but it will burn as though it were made for the fire. Mark you, it is unquenchable! Who can extinguish that which God lights? You hear men say, "God is too good to burn men in hell." That is not the way to put it. The fire will go out when there is no fuel. MEN WHO SIN, BURN THEMSELVES. That drunkard, for instance. They say of him, "He has a spark in

his inside." What the poor wretch suffers when he cannot get strong drink! How he begs and prays for a penny to get a gill of beer. Now don't blame God for that! It is his own doing. Suppose now, God lets that man have his own way, and die a drunkard, and he wakes up in hell with that thirst, and no drink, not a drop, and never will be! And is the drunkard the worst of men? Is he worse than the man who grows rich on the other man's poverty? I would as soon have the drunkard's hell, as the eternity of those who took his money, and sold him that which is burning away his life and chances of salvation. Do you see that wicked seducer, and those who dishonour their parents; and those who keep back that which they have in plenty, when they might feed the hungry and clothe the naked? "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Now what are you going to do? It is not the axe which is touching you now. It is the hand of Jesus, the hand which has been scorched with the fire of God's anger to save us. Christ suffered (the just for the unjust) to bring us to God. Do not tire Him out, for if he calls for the axe, there is no hope. Justice may call, and when the woodman answers and takes up his axe, prayer may cause the axe to fall from his hand; but when Mercy says, "Cut it down," all the men in the world may cry, but nothing can save him from the fire. NONE CAN STAND BEFORE THE WRATH OF THE LAMB?WHEN FILIAL LOVE PICKS

UP THE OAR,

THE ALL-WISE FATHER PUTS

HIS HAND ON THE HELM!

XXXII. JESUS AT THE WELL. A WORD TO PREACHERS.

Jesus Christ travelled three years in a very poor circuit. There were no stewards to provide for His wants, and at times, we are told, He had not where to lay His head. But all the three years He was a perfect example to us, whether we are Locals or Itinerants, and, perhaps, never more than when talking to the woman at the well of Samaria. From His conduct there we may learn -- I. -- Never be daunted by a small congregation. It is very nice to have a crowd, but then that is not the lot of us all, and we must not keep our best sermons for large audiences. It may be that the few are able to appreciate our best efforts. Jesus Christ said some of His best things to individuals. John iii.16 was not said to a crowd, but to one. Indeed, if we were to take out of the gospels what Jesus said to small audiences, we should rob them of their choicest portions. So, if, when we get to the chapel we find that there are more pews than people, let us preach to those who are there. Why grumble at the few who have come, perhaps a long way? Let us feed these with the choicest of the wheat. It may be an historic time for anything you know. There may be someone there whom your sermon may lead to Jesus, and who himself may become a preacher. II. -- Interest your Audience. How skilfully Jesus went to work to lay hold of this giddy woman! He spoke of what to a native of the East must have been a surprise, and a delightful idea. He goes on to tell of being delivered from that plague of those hot climates, thirst, and excites her wonder by speaking of a well of water springing up in a man! To our younger brethren, let us say that it is not easy to succeed if we do not make what we say interesting. We do not love sensationalism, but we do love savouriness. Let all your sermons be seasoned with salt. Not a few of us fail because we forget to make what we say savoury. Let us excite the imagination of those who listen to us, and then we may pour into the attentive ear that which will be of solid benefit. How shopkeepers strive to strike the eye of the passengers by skilfully dressing their windows, so as to catch the attention! Shall it be said that they take more pains to sell their goods than we do to get the gospel into the hearts of our hearers! III. -- Make your hearers conscious of the supernatural. "Sir," said the woman, "I perceive thou art a prophet." And this we can all do. We can every one be on such terms with heaven as to make those who listen to us know that we hold commerce with the skies. We may not be eloquent or learned, but we may be prayerful and impassioned. Preaching is unlike all other kinds of speaking. We have no business in the pulpit except when under the direct influence of the Holy Ghost. We knew a man who, for some years of his ministry, was dull and unpractical, but there came upon him a baptism of power, and then we heard his preaching described as "white heat." Why should not this be in every one of us? It is not possible for us to be alike, nor is it desirable, but we may all make our hearers say, "This man comes from God. His prayers and his preaching convince us that he is owned by the God of Elijah." IV. -- Set your converts to work. We read "The woman then left her waterpot, and went into the city," and soon there was a crowd round the Saviour. It is not said that Jesus told her to do so, but she had heard words that were like fire in her bones. She had been convinced of sin, and knew that God had spoken to her. Is not this the way to fill our chapels? Say things that wake up the conscience, and alarm the sinner, and he must tell about it. Or shew the cross so plainly that the anxious one finds the Lord, and is able to rejoice, and very soon there will be an unpaid agency at work. Of course it will not obtain to the same extent in

every case. We are among those who have to mourn that our preaching is not as effective as it ought to be, but we are taking our own physic, and can testify that since we have acted on the lines we have laid down, God has been pleased to give us greater power over our congregations, and we have seen greater results follow the preaching, poor as it is. FOR PREACHERS WHO MAKE THE

PEOPLE THINK. THE GRINDSTONE IS THE MOST
USEFUL TOOL IN THE
CARPENTER'S SHOP.

XXXIII. ANSWERED PRAYER.

"And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah." -- 1 KINGS xvii.22. Yes, and He will hear your voice if you are as much in earnest as he was! Why should not God hear the voice of William, or Robert, Sarah or Edith? He is no respecter of persons. Is it not written over the door of mercy, "Knock, and it shall be opened?" Aye, and the knocker is so low a child's hand may reach it. St. James tells us that Elijah was "a man of like passions." He was a human being like you and me, but he had faith in God. Why should we not believe in God as much as the prophet did? Is He not God yet? Have any of these sceptics removed Him from His throne? If He is still there, let us come with boldness as Elijah did. This was not the first time God had heard the voice of His servant, and answered his prayer, and there is no reason why we should not have repeated and continuous replies in answer to our requests. Had Elijah the same wealth of promise we have? JESUS CHRIST has spoken since those times, and has said things which ought to fill us with hopefulness whenever we pray. What wonderful words of cheer He said in those last few days of His life, such as "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Look up the references to that verse, and you will feel you must kneel down and ask for something. But is there not suggested by that word "Ask," the secret of so much failure? Do we ask? How often, in what is called prayer, there is little or no supplication? We are to make our requests known. Listen to Elijah: "Lord, let this child's soul come into him again." Why should we not pray in the same direct style? Our prayers would not weary others by their length, if, before we knelt down, we thought WHAT IS NEEDED, AND NEEDED NOW. What a scene when the child began to breathe again! and when the anxious mother was summoned to receive her boy from the dead. "Now," said she, "I know thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth." When the church fights its battles on its knees, it prevails. Only let us, who say we believe in God, put our faith into petition, and obtain answers, then Infidelity will hide its head. Mr. Finney tells that when he first began to attend a place of worship, it was as an honest inquirer after truth. The members of the church noticed his coming to the prayer meetings with regularity, and presently it occurred to them that the young man might be anxious about his soul. Accordingly they asked him if he would like them to pray for him. He somewhat roughly declined, for, said he, "You don't get any answers to your prayers for yourselves. You have been for months praying to be revived, and you are not any better." Perhaps he was right, though rude. We may have in our midst those who would believe the Bible if they saw that we had only to ask to receive. Let every father bear this in mind when he leads the devotions of his family. Nothing is so likely to save our children from infidelity as their knowing that we receive when we ask, and that our knock brings an open door. If only the family altar were the meeting place between God and man, Atheists might sneer and chatter, but they would never be able to cause our children to listen, for would not they say, "I know my father is a man of God, and the word of the Lord in his mouth is true." Reader, is the family altar at your house a bridge from earth to heaven, or is it a sham, and a helper to those who say, Prayer is an exploded superstition? **PREACH REPENTANCE.** Is there any truth in the allegation that we do not preach Repentance as much as we ought to do? There is a soft sort of preaching abroad which we Methodists should abhor, namely, a gospel which has no dread of hell in it. We do not say that we should spend much time

in proving the eternity of punishment, but certainly the thought of the fate of the impenitent should be in solution in the preacher's mind, and then, like the bitter herbs eaten with the Paschal Lamb, penitence will make the gospel relishing. We have little doubt that THE DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS IS AND MUST BE, TASTELESS TO THOSE WHO DO NOT SORROW FOR SIN. Those who preach repentance are in good company. He who fails here does not tread in the steps of Jesus, who said, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Is human nature any better now than it was then, that we should cease to say to the people what Christ said? Depend upon it, He knew what to preach. None of the New Testament preachers said as much about hell as He did, and yet, forsooth! we are told that such preaching is coarse, and behind the age. When the age is astray, the farther we are behind it the better for us. It is sickening to hear men talk as though they were more refined than was the Son of God! Such preaching is like raking the garden with the teeth upwards. You may as well have no rake at all, if you do not use the teeth.

XXXIV. HOW DAVID PREVAILED.

"So David prevailed over the Philistine!" -- 1 SAMUEL xvii.50. Yes, he did, but he would not have done so if he had remained as quiet as the other Israelites. David was one of those who could not be easy so long as the enemies of his country were in the ascendant. To see a Philistine strutting about, defying the armies of the living God, was more than he could bear. Is not this the spirit which should animate Christians to-day? It is not one GOLIATH merely, there are many. DRUNKENNESS, PROFANITY, SUPERSTITION, INFIDELITY, and a host of others are not only defying us, but destroying us. Is it not true that the armies of the alien are robbing our families and churches, plundering us of the results of years of toil? Think, in one department alone, how we are spoiled. We refer to the Sabbath school. What a small percentage of those who pass through our schools become stable members of the church! What crowds of our children become the slaves of sin! How long do we mean to bear it? When shall we, like David, say, "THY SERVANT WILL GO AND FIGHT WITH THIS PHILISTINE?" We read that "David hasted, and ran towards the army to meet the Philistine." He was aggressive. There is a great deal to be said in favour of what is called "working on the old lines," but DAVID DESPISED THE OLD LINES. His countrymen had remained too long there; he would dare and do, therefore ran into the lines of the Philistines. Is it not too true that we stay in our entrenchments too long? Why should we not carry the war into the enemy's country? WESLEY and his fellow-labourers would not have had the success they had, if they had not, like David, run towards the enemy. It was time, for the sake of his country's prestige, that he ran with his face towards the foe. Shall we not imitate him, and dare something for God? Saul's army had too often showed their backs to the enemy. When a man runs towards his foe, he looks bigger every stride, while if he runs away, he looks less, and becomes more contemptible the more active he is! David prevailed over the Philistine with very simple weapons, but THEY WERE HIS OWN. If he had gone in Saul's armour, he might have perished. He was no match for the giant if it came to a sword fight. The long reach of the giant's arm would have ended the conflict very soon. On the contrary, the sling gave David an immense advantage. He could strike a blow, and be out of Goliath's reach. Have we not known some men more mighty, and more often victorious when they were plain and unlettered, than they were after years of culture? How is it? Perhaps because they, knowing their ignorance, were more earnest in prayer. We know that some of us feel, when we have preached; -- That was a good sermon, the arguments were irresistible, the illustrations were beautiful, and so the people ought to have yielded, but they did not! Did they? If the pictures of this event we often see are to describe the future of Christianity, we shall have to be as daring as though God did not fight the battle, and as trustful as though we had never driven the alien army back. When COURAGE is united to HUMILITY, the Philistine may get measured for his coffin (leaving out the head), and the damsels of Israel have their timbrels tuned, for there will be a procession goodly to look upon! BURNING THE BOOKS AT EPHESUS. This was one of the results of faithful preaching. Paul had declared the whole counsel of God, both in powerful addresses and in visiting from door to door. Miracles were wrought, but what seems to have impressed the writer of this account most of all, was not the healing of the sick, or the casting out of devils, but men parting with that which was worth so much money. "THEY BROUGHT THEIR

BOOKS TOGETHER, AND BURNED THEM BEFORE ALL MEN; AND THEY COUNTED THE PRICE OF THEM, AND FOUND IT FIFTY THOUSAND PIECES OF SILVER. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed!" Has our religion been costly to us? Have we given up anything? These converts gave up their money-making sins publicly; and their public and costly repentance was made a great blessing. We wish every Christian who is engaged in any business that has made money for him at the expense of another's morals, would see it his duty to make a bonfire of it! We have no doubt there are numbers of Christians whose consciences now and then give them a goutlike twinge. We do not doubt their religion because they do not obey their consciences; but we do say the word of God cannot grow mightily, it is stunted, and in consequence they are religious dwarfs, when they might have been giants in righteousness and holy influence.

XXXV. THE WAY TO PREACH TO THOSE WHO SLEEP IN SIN.

"Nathan said to David, Thou art the Man!" But this was not the first thing he said. He approached the subject very carefully. David would not have allowed anyone to bring that subject home to him without resenting it. It is more than likely that very few were in the secret. Crafty Joab was not the man to let that story get out. It gave him power over the king all the time it was his secret, so that he could put pressure on David whenever he liked. We read, "The Lord sent Nathan unto David." If we would know how to deal with our congregations, we must have the Lord's commission. MEN MAY BE ON THE CIRCUIT PLAN, AND GOD LEAVE THEM WITHOUT APPOINTMENTS! Let us never set off to preach without a message from God to the people, then we shall make folks say, what a plain Yorkshire Methodist said of Stoner, "Yon David's varry thick with the Almighty." If the Lord send us, He will teach us how to talk, and most likely He will take us off the pulpit track. Some of us have given up the old "three-decker" style of preaching, feeling that it is as useless as last year's almanack. Our hearers often knew what was coming, they heard the heads of the discourse, and began to see the end before we got there, wrapping themselves in a habit of indifference which shielded them from the convictions we had hoped to produce. What "CALIFORNIAN TAYLOR" calls "Surprise Power," ought to be in every discourse. David had no idea what the prophet meant to do before he had ended his story, and we should wait upon God until He has given us, not only the subject of our sermons, but the skill we need to TAKE THE SINNER EITHER BY STORM OR HOLY SUBTILTY. The charming story with which Nathan began his address is instructive to those who wish to succeed as preachers. How interested the King became as he heard of the rich man's greed and the poor man's loss, until he was so stirred that he threatened the death of the tyrant! May not we preachers learn something here, that is, to interest our hearers, in order that we may profit them? Do we sufficiently care for this matter? Would it not be well, in the preparation of our addresses and sermons, to make sure that we are so interesting that our hearers cannot fail but listen? We should not be content with soundness of faith, or truthfulness of doctrine, but be so interesting as to command the attention of our audience. It is a question whether any man, who cannot make the people listen, should not be content to take his place in a pew. It is better to be able to heat or light the chapel well, than to wear out the patience of a congregation by prosy preaching, and it will be more to our eternal advantage to have been AN INDUSTRIOUS CHAPEL-KEEPER THAN A DULL PREACHER! Nathan brought David to a stand. The royal hearer fell before the faithful preacher. He confessed his sin and deeply repented. Well might the prophet rejoice over his illustrious convert. It was indeed success to hear the king acknowledge his fault. We do not read that he praised the sermon, but he condemned himself. It is a small reward to hear it said that we have preached a beautiful sermon, but it is delightful to learn that a sinner has been convinced of his guilt and danger. Let all of us who preach, determine that we will not call that service a success which either allowed our hearers to be drowsy, or won their applause, without causing a saint to be cheered on his pilgrimage, or an enemy of God to lay down his weapons and sue for peace. OLD FASHIONED DOCTRINE.

JEREMIAH, viii.21 to ix.16. I. -- He who is loyal to God is the truest patriot. -- ch. viii., v.21, ch. ix., v.10. Jeremiah's distress disfigured him, and he felt that tears were not sufficient to mark his sorrow for his country. Sinners against God should never profess to be politicians; they are unworthy to be classed on either side. II. -- Idolatry is the mother of all other sins. Count up the different crimes these Jewish idol-worshippers were guilty of -- as lying, slander, adultery, &c. He who breaks the first commandment has pulled down the fence, and can easily break the others. What an argument for Missions!!!!. -- If God acts consistently, He must punish sin. -- ch. ix., v.9, 10, 15, 16. Hell is as necessary as Heaven to a perfect God. Queen Victoria could not be safe in her palace but for prisons, where felons are bound! He who fears to preach future punishment is either an ignorant man or a coward.

XXXVI. SELFISHNESS AND PRAYER. A CONTRAST.

"So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees." -- 1 KINGS xviii.42. WHAT A CONTRAST! And yet, both men were perfectly consistent. It is in each case what you would expect, and yet how differently it might have been. What a different story it would have been if only Ahab had listened to the teaching of God! How often we see men having chances of turning round and beginning a new life; failing to do this, they seem to become the worse for the lesson of Providence and the advice of those who warn them! Has it ever been so with you? Can you remember a time when God stopped you, and made you think, thus giving you a chance of reformation? Wretched Ahab! he had just seen which is Master. How contemptible Baal seemed now! The heavenly fire, which leaped in answer to Elijah's prayer, disdained to notice the victims on the altar of the idol, while the blood of the false priests dyed the waters of the brook Kishon, a sacrifice to their own wickedness and deception. One would have thought Ahab's good sense would have prevailed, and that he would have said, "Elijah, I will go with thee, and on Carmel's top will unite with thee in prayer." Alas for the history that might have been! But some of you will say, "Did not Elijah say to Ahab, 'Get thee up, eat and drink?'" Yes, he did. A few hours before, he had said, "If Baal, follow him." Does not God allow us to be tempted continually? Did He not, in His wisdom and goodness, place the tree which bare forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden? Does He not say, by natural appetites and propensities, enjoy yourself? There was nothing wrong in eating, but if Ahab had but DENIED HIMSELF AND GONE WITH ELIJAH TO PRAY, the rest of his life would have been different, he might have been converted then. How often it happens that we hear a powerful sermon, perhaps on the first Sunday night of a Mission, but we have something to attend to on Monday, something that might be left without injury, or it may be a party or a concert, and so we do not go to the meeting next night. If we had done so, our whole life might have been changed! Eat and drink! One wonders it did not choke him, for were not his subjects starving? The famine was sore in the land; men and women pined, children died of hunger, cattle and sheep perished in the fields, but all this, what had it to do with the king? He was hungry, and would eat and would be jolly, never mind about the poor people! Remember, my hearers, you cannot turn your back on God and be the same man you have been. Each time you say "No," to God's grace, you become less fit for His kingdom. If men could but see their souls -- IF SOME OF YOU COULD HAVE A MIRROR THAT WOULD SHEW YOUR SOUL, You would look as though you had seen a ghost! We have portraits of ourselves years ago, and we look at them and wonder at the change. Could you have a portrait of what you were, spiritually, ten years since, it would spoil your enjoyment. Beware, then, of eating and drinking when others are at prayer. It is better to be good than to be happy. Do right, though it may mean tears, for the smiles of selfishness are sores in the future. Look at the other man now. He climbs the hill. There is nothing to be won from heaven by laziness. Climb to thy crown! Never mind the steepness and ruggedness of the way. God's kings toil and sweat before their coronation. How Elijah would laugh in his heart as he thought of the boon he was about to bring down on his country! PAST VICTORIES ENCOURAGED HIM. He had prayed that it might not rain, and for many months the heavens had been cloudless. Day by day

the sun had scorched and burned on, as though there was to be no more verdure, the trees are but the skeletons of their former selves, and the ground is cracked, and gapes for drink. Ah! it is soon to alter! The God who has answered by fire is about to speak in the shower, and all nature is to put on a new suit of green at the bidding of prayer. Why should not the church of God climb the hill to bring down on the earth a shower of blessing? God had said to Elijah, "I send rain upon the earth," and therefore the man of God said, "I will call upon the name of the Lord." Have we no promise? What do these words mean -- "WHATSOEVER YE ASK IN MY NAME, THAT WILL I DO?" Find the reference to these words, and then look on them as a legacy. We may receive whenever we apply. Why, then, do we hang down our heads? Let us climb Carmel, shouting as we go, "Hallelujah! The Lord reigneth!" Baal has not succeeded to the throne! Christ is there! But see, the man of God casts himself down on the ground. PAST SUCCESS HAS HUMBLLED HIM. It is well when it is so. We always tremble when we see a church elated over its success. A year or two ago, we Methodists saw a great ingathering of souls, and because we had harvest we have let our plough rust. Is there any wonder that we fear a decrease? It is sure to follow elation, and then we shall be told, "There is always a reaction after so much excitement." That is a text from the devil's bible. On the same hill top where Elijah won the fight, he falls down, to pray, with his face between his knees, and so is most humbled when most triumphant. And now his servant is sent to look for the sign of success. Mark you, he sends him to LOOK IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, "Toward the sea." Do not go towards the dry land if you want rain, or in other words, if you want success in soul-saving, look not for it from those who get up entertainments and seek to make money by gambling in bazaars. Do not expect conversions from mere eloquence or rhetoric. Large congregations do not always mean abiding success. Beautiful chapels are not always remarkable for attracting those who need a Saviour. Look at the place from whence Wesley, Whitfield, and the others who were to win souls derived their power. DO NOT LET FAITH BE CHILLED BY WAITING! If you wait upon the Lord you have a right to be of good courage. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me, saith the Lord." If our trust is in the Lord, we can afford to wait. The longer He keeps us waiting, the more He will give us. Never mind if the servant says, "There is nothing." It is not the Master's voice. Go again. Don't talk to me of nothing! Go again! Leave me to pray in peace till there is something to praise God for. I CAN PRAISE HIM FOR THE SMALLEST SIGN. Only "a man's hand," sayest thou? but what Man? It is the same Hand that wrote on the wall the sentence of Belshazzar. It is the Hand of which David sang "Thou openest Thine Hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." We who look for Jesus remember that when He left us He did not clench His fist at the world that had treated Him so ill. "He lifted up his hands and blessed them." He has not closed them yet, but sends blessings on even the rebellious. Faith sees in the open hand of Jesus the promise of great gifts for those who wait upon Him. We read, directly, "the heaven was black, and there was a great rain." If we pass over a few years we see the end of these men, the end so far as this world is concerned. They both ride in chariots. He who rose up to eat and drink, rides disguised, but is not able to deceive the winged messengers of death. The murderer is found out, and dies in his chariot. GOES TO HELL IN HIS CHARIOT! So perish those who prefer to eat when others starve, though they might unite with those who bring blessings on the perishing! A year afterwards, the man who prayed walks along the road; there is one by his side who watches him with eager glance, and now comes the chariot of heaven. GOD SENDS HIS CARRIAGE TO MEET the man who climbed the hill to pray, and soon he is parted from his young friend; but see! his mantle falls. Which of us will pick it up and wear it? Elijah's

garment will fit any of us, and will always be new if we pray. It grows threadbare and shabby when worn by those who prefer the table to the altar, and love the pleasures of the world better than the companionship of angels. My brothers, shall we not become mighty in prayer? This is a talent all have received, put it out to interest at once. Lose no time in its use. Satan will gladly lend you a napkin, but then he will have your soul as the pledge. To cease to pray is to drift towards hell. Is there not a need for crying mightily to God? Can we look around our congregations and not feel that it is high time we went up the hill to cry to God for the rain that means revival? Let us each ask the question, Am I most like the man who lived to gratify his desires, or the man who lived to pray for others? WITH WHOM SHALL I SPEND MY ETERNITY, WITH ELIJAH OF AHAB? If the angels see us on our face, crying for rain, they will know that some day they will have to meet us and take us home in the chariot of fire. If they see that we are those who eat and drink when they should pray, they will know that our possessions, like Ahab's chariot, will become a hearse, and that we are riding to hell in that which we have chosen for comfort.

XXXVII. [THE WIDOW WOMAN WAS THERE.] I KINGS xvii. 10.

Of course she was. All God's trains meet at the junction. They don't have to wait for one another. Elijah had left Cherith because the brook had dried up, and his first request shewed that he was in need of water. The poor widow seems to have been relieved that water was all the prophet asked, but he called to her to fetch a bit of bread as well. This broke her down. "Ah, Master, we have not so much as a cake. I have only a handful of meal, and I had come out to gather some sticks that I might bake a little cake for me and the lad, and then we shall have to die of hunger!" "Never fear, God has sent me, and with His servant there shall come a blessing. MAKE ME A CAKE FIRST, and then make for thyself, and God will keep on supplying our wants." The woman did so, and never wanted. If she had gone on the principle of TAKE CARE OF NUMBER ONE, she would soon have been in her grave, and the lad too, but the way to live is to care for others. "He that loseth his life shall save it." While we are writing this, we are thinking of the great number who all through these bad times have fed the Preachers and their horses. God will see to it that they do not lose by their unselfishness. Some will read this who are just on the point of leaving a place where God has cared for them, but they do not see their way in the future. Are you going on God's errand? That is, are you in the path of duty? Then never fear. Ravens can wait at table as well as any tailed-coated white-cravatted serving man. And widows with only a handful of meal, can keep open house for God's servants. My God shall supply all your need, and the less there is in the barrel, the more room for God's hand! "IT IS THE BLOOD THAT SAVES."

EXODUS xii. The Israelites were not saved because they were children of Abraham, but because they followed the plan of salvation. Even Moses "kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood," or there would have been a dead man in the house. If you and I are saved, it must be by the blood of the Lamb. The father who put the blood on his door posts was not ashamed to own his need of Divine protection, or that he trusted the word of God. There is a false sentimentality that is abroad to-day, which would make us ashamed to speak of the atonement. We are told that it is sickening to hear of such terms as "The Blood of Jesus." WHAT IS THE STANDARD OF TASTE? We know of nothing higher than the word of God, and he whose fine feelings are shocked by Bible language, would find heaven not sufficiently aesthetic. May not such be said to count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing? When the destroyer is abroad, we shall be safe who hide behind the blood. We rejoice in the blood of sprinkling, when we believe there is wrath for the sinner. The giving God the lie, when He declares He will punish His enemies, fits the mouth of him who is too refined to speak of the precious blood of Jesus.

XXXVIII. |DO MEN GATHER GRAPES OF THORNS?|

This question was asked by a man who knew more than any one else, and he knew very well what the answer would be. We should suspect a man of insanity who looked for grapes on a thorn bush. And yet we see numbers of both men and women looking for happiness and comfort in the Public House, and judging from their appearance afterwards, we feel sure they went for grapes and found festering thorns! It was our duty, some time ago, to be part of a deputation to support a memorial to the Magistrates at what is called "The Brewster Sessions." There was a number of Ministers and others who represent the Temperance movement, with some ladies like-minded, and we took our places in the same court where the publicans and their friends were. Some of these had come to transfer licenses, others to seek to have in-beershops, and power to sell other kinds of drink. The Magistrates, however, refused both of the applications for new licenses, nor did we wonder, when we saw those who were waiting to be punished or pardoned, as the case might be. In the gallery were a number of the friends of those who were waiting to have their names called upon, and then to appear in the dock. Besides these, were the usual loafers, many of whom have found, or will find work for the police, after going to seek grapes where thorns grow: and then others, like the writer, who were on the lookout for a profitable way to spend an hour or two. It was a most instructive time, and one wonders how it is that long-headed Englishmen can, after seeing the results of visiting the publichouse, ever be persuaded that grapes are to be got there without trouble. The mistake many good people make is looking on drinking as a failing, and not as a crime. It must be a sin for any one to make himself eligible for doing all sorts of mischief and wrong, as men do who take, as they say, "a sup of drink." It is this sup of drink that gives them the impetus towards cruelty and lust, and we must insist upon it that for a man to prepare himself for wickedness is a sin against himself and his God. If this be so, the social element in drinking makes it all the more dangerous. Men and women drink often because it is considered a kind and hospitable thing to offer it, and an ungenerous and churlish thing to refuse it. What is this but calling a thorn a vine? While we were in the court, several cases came before the Magistrates -- "Drunk and Disorderly," varied by obscenity and quarrelling. One woman told the Bench that she had been teetotal for five and a half years, till she came into the town to pay a debt, and then she had a glass, "and it will be twenty years before I have any more." "Ah!" said "His Worship," "LISTEN TO NO FRIEND THAT WANTS YOU TO TAKE DRINK." Another poor wretch was "Drunk and Incapable." She told the Magistrates that she had come to get a situation, that her box was at the station. She had evidently seen better days. The Chairman said how sorry he was to see a woman like her, evidently a superior person, in such a case, and she gladly promised to be a better woman, but she had been more than once to the thorn for grapes, and we fear will go again. There was a young fellow brought up for drunkenness and obscenity, whose fine was paid by his mother. She looked a decent but poor woman, and one could not but wonder what she had parted with to raise the money, to keep what one of the Magistrates called a blackguard, out of prison. But what will not a mother's love do! These are a few of the cases which made us wonder that in our town we have so many places, licensed by the same Magistrates, to sell that which fits men and women to appear in the court to be punished. We wonder how long it will take to make the

English people see that so long as we allow drinking shops to abound, there will be a necessity for police and lock-ups, and that it is as easy to gather grapes of thorns as to expect peace and quietness and facilities for drinking to exist together? GOD'S ANGER IS A FIRE THAT

IS AS DIFFICULT

TO STOP AS TO START.

XXXIX. NO BALLOT-BOX.

We see that certain politicians are busy trying to convince those who have any fear upon the matter, that it is easy for them to vote in such a way that no one can possibly find out for which side they have given in their vote. It is positively secret voting. Very likely this is as it should be, still it is a sad disgrace that such a thing should be at all necessary, and does not speak well for human nature. Why should it not be possible for men to vote openly? Because some who have done so have had to suffer loss. Is not this a blot upon our civilization, to say nothing of our Christianity? But while it may be right that men should have the chance of voting secretly in Parliamentary matters, whether they be Conservatives or Liberals, we contend there should be no ballot-box for the election in which men settle whether Jesus or Satan should govern the world. There are sadly too many, who are like Joseph of Arimathaea, disciples, but secretly for fear. WE WANT NO SECRET VOTES. Say right out which side you are for. If this were the case, there would be a large number of absentees from public worship next Sabbath; whole pews would be empty because there is not one of the usual tenants who loves God, and yet they dare not say openly, I am for the Devil. On the other hand, if some were to say what is in their hearts, they would have to leave the dinner-tables where filthy jokes are bandied about, there being no women present. And in some workshops and mills, men and women would have to speak out at the cost of ridicule and scorn. Yes, speak out, when they hear that which is opposed to truth and purity made the subject of daily conversation. "STAND UP, STAND UP FOR JESUS!" we often sing in our meetings, and yet some who sing these words are craven in the presence of the foe. We should do well to take the advice of the same song when it says, "LET COURAGE RISE WITH DANGER," We should think that man unfit for a soldier's life who was not ready to unfurl his country's flag, and let it be known for whom he is fighting. What is the position of those who read this paper? Do you, in your heart, believe that Jesus has the right to reign? Then shew it! Lose no time to put on Christ! Let all men see that you believe in the righteousness of our cause. Do not hide the love you have for Jesus. Let not your chance of being honourably wounded pass by. In heaven, should you reach it, there will be no opportunity of suffering for Him who loved you to the death. GIVE YOUR VOTE IN PUBLIC, then, when we have won the election, you will not have to regret that you came out too late to be of use.

XL. [WHAT CHRISTIANS MAY LEARN FROM POLITICIANS.]

Many a time, during an election, we have wished that we could see the church of God as much in earnest to send men to heaven as they are to send those they vote for to Parliament. It must strike some of the ungodly, when they have Christian men at them day and night CANVASSING, not taking No as an answer, but doing their utmost to win them -- How is it that this Christian, who knows that I never attend a place of worship, has not shown one-hundredth part of this zeal to get me to go to chapel or to begin to pray? Is he not likely to think; -- after all, he does not believe his Bible, or he could not be as careless about my soul as he is? Men of business have no time to seek the souls of the lost; that is parson's work; that must be left to Sunday; -- and yet, we have seen, during the election, keen, clever business men, up and down stairs, calling on their neighbours, and making sure that they have given their vote on the right side, and this in addition to many a visit paid since the candidates were selected, and the time drew nigh for getting them returned. How freely they bear ridicule! Men who would blush to talk of religion do not hesitate to be sneered at for the sake of their party, wearing their colour and priding themselves on their opinions. We have nothing to say against this. Men ought to have the courage of their opinions, but why not own up and play the man for Jesus Christ? We should like to know what the election has cost for PRINTING. Many thousands of pounds have been spent, and spent freely, without a grudge, for placards and cartoons. Any man who had a new idea in the shape of a striking advertisement could have it adopted by his party, regardless of cost. All this, too, we don't object to, but we say that if any of us Evangelists wanted to spend a small proportion of this amount in trying to get men and women to come to God's house during a Mission, there would be a tremendous outcry against his EXTRAVAGANCE! One interesting feature in this matter is the large number of PRIVATE CARRIAGES used to convey voters to the poll. It was very amusing to see some of the men riding in state, in the custody of the owner of the carriage! It was good to tell they had not been used to it, and felt that they were on their good behaviour. What struck some of us was the readiness of ladies and gentlemen to lend their vehicles for this purpose. We can have no possible objection to this, but we wonder what would be said to us if we counselled them to send their carriages to bring the aged and feeble to the house of God? We should be told that we had no idea of the fitness of things. This would be true if heaven were less than earth, and politics of more importance than religion. It is a queer world, and we wonder sometimes if the time will ever come when men shall believe their Bibles as much as their newspapers? As we have seen during the last few days, professing Christians of the most apathetic order, going half wild about Whigs and Tories, we have said to ourselves, WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMETH, SHALL HE FIND FAITH ON THE EARTH? DON'T FLATTER THE DEVIL!

ACTS, xvii. We read that the Apostle "was grieved" to hear this possessed woman speaking favourably of him and his companion. He could not bear for it to be even suspected that his mission was tolerated by the devil. Her masters made money by her wrongdoing, and he would not have their patronage. He and Silas were happier in the cell, sore and hungry as they were, than in listening to the praise given by the evil one! It is better to have frowns than favour from

those who are opposed to truth and righteousness. Let Evangelists and such like, BEWARE OF THE FAVOUR OF THE WICKED. Do not seek the smiles of those who live by wrong doing. We shall never cast out the devil while conniving at his crimes. It is not by popularity that we win our greatest victories. Paul had no converts he prized more than those who formed the Church in the town where he had been in jail. Let those of us who love an easy and painless life think of his words -- "IF WE SUFFER WE SHALL ALSO REIGN WITH HIM."

XLI. A SERMON ON A TEXT NOT FOUND IN THE BIBLE.

MR. JUSTICE GROVES. -- "Men go into the Public-house respectable, and come out felons." My text, as you see, my dear readers, is not taken from the Bible. It does not, however, contradict the Scriptures, but is in harmony with some, such as "WOE UNTO HIM THAT GIVETH HIS NEIGHBOUR DRINK." Habakkuk ii.15; "WOE UNTO THEM THAT RISE UP EARLY IN THE MORNING, THAT THEY MAY FOLLOW STRONG DRINK." -- Isaiah v.11. "TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES LEST AT ANY TIME YOUR HEARTS BE OVERCHARGED WITH SURFEITING AND DRUNKENNESS." -- Luke xxi.34. "BE NOT AMONG WINEBIBBERS." -- Proverbs xxiii.20. THE STATEMENT OF THE TEXT IS LIKELY TO BE TRUE, as it was spoken by an English Judge, and given as the result of long observation, and of hearing evidence given upon oath. What is more likely to be true than a declaration from the Bench? and as such it deserves the attention of every one of us. Let us then consider (I.) -- IF THIS STATEMENT BE TRUE, THE PUBLIC-HOUSE SHOULD BE AVOIDED. We are quite willing to allow that a certain amount of enjoyment can be obtained in these places. Once acquire the taste, and drink gives pleasure to the palate, and produces, in a very short time, a kind of joy. Men who are in business difficulties can forget their creditors. Those who have lost friends by death can forget the ties of affection. Scolding wives are left at home, and a smiling face receives the money spent, for the landlady is real good to those who have the coin. But on the other hand, are not these drinkers paying too dear for their gladness? Is it not a kind of delirium that shuts out the facts of the case? Will not the creditor call for his money? Will you not wake up to greater loneliness than ever? Will you have taken the edge off the woman's tongue by spending the money she needs for the family? Are you not buying temporary insanity at so much a glass? Are you not running a fearful risk of becoming a criminal? I know of a little beershop where murders have been hatched, and that in a quiet rural village! Do not men go primed with drink to rob and slay? Do not wife-beaters get their inspiration at the public-house? Is not gambling fostered in the bar parlour? Do you tell me that you are not likely to become a thief, or a murderer? So others have said whom we have known, once as decent and quiet as you. Besides, if you keep out of the hands of the police, you will have to take your trial some day for robbing God, and for soul murder! In the public-house you learn to do all this. (II.) -- IF THIS STATEMENT BE TRUE, ALL PATRIOTS SHOULD OPPOSE THE PUBLIC-HOUSE. How can a man love his country, who supports that which is increasing taxation and demoralising his countrymen? Should we allow any nation under the sun to do us the harm one public-house will do? Is it not true that nearly all the police are needed by those who frequent the Public-house? Is it not this devil's academy that costs the nation so much more than we spend in education? Would not many of the prisons have to be pulled down if we could stop the drinking habits of our people? Answer me these questions, and tell me how you can call yourself a patriot, and yet help to keep these places going? (III.) -- IF THIS STATEMENT BE TRUE, WE MUST CLOSE THE PUBLIC-HOUSES. Can it be tolerated that such places should remain open? Are felons to be manufactured, and men get rich by the process? We must shut the places up, even though we ruin places like Burton-on-Trent, and compel rich brewers to sell their carriages. Nothing is so likely to pay off the National Debt as to cause publicans and brewers to enlarge the

list of bankrupts. They cannot live but by the nation's loss, and sorrow. A brewer's dray, as it leaves the yard, carries with it increase to the taxation, and hunger and nakedness for little children! While we do not lose sight of the importance of legislation, and while we push the questions of Sunday Closing, Local Option, &c., to the utmost extent, it will pay us still better to close the public-house through making the frequenter of such places see the sin of it. If there are no customers, there will be soon a closing of their doors. We call upon all Grocers, Butchers, Tailors, Cabinet Makers, and all decent tradespeople, to see, that would they have a return of prosperity, they must have the stream of cash which goes into the publican's till turned towards their doors. Money spent in manufacturing felons would look well spent on Clothes, Provisions, and Furniture. Besides churches and chapels would be crowded as the jails were emptied, and heaven would gain what hell would lose by the closing of Breweries, Distilleries, and Public-houses.XLII. GOOD-WILL TO MEN.That is one of the messages brought to us by Christmas time, and this is linked to "glory to God." You cannot glorify God more than by publishing good-will to one another. There is a special need for this just now. Political feeling has risen so high that friends, and even families, have been estranged. Let not another sun go down upon your wrath. Now is the time to prove that you are a Christian, by giving Jesus the pleasure of knowing that His birthday was the burial day of strife.Which side shall be the first to move? Doubtless the noblest; the one who has most of God in him will hurry to say, "Come, now, let us reason together." We need not to say that common-place religion cannot afford to do this. Those who live on old manna cannot rise to such dignity as to be the first to seek the friendship of those who think themselves aggrieved. On the other hand, "HE THAT HUMBLETH HIMSELF SHALL BE EXALTED." Heaven has always been the first to seek reconciliation, and those who are heavenly-minded shew it by making haste to be friendly.If you have been the injured one, you have the best chance of succeeding in healing the wound. It is God, sending a message of peace, that wins over His foes.HE DOES NOT WAIT FOR US TO MOVE FIRST.Who asked Him to offer His Son? If you take the first step, you will be treading in the footprints of Jesus. He has shown us how to love our enemies, and to do good to them that despitefully use us. It is true that you would have to make a sacrifice, to be the first to hold out the white flag. Yes, and you can afford to do it, if you are the one in the right. It is the man who is in the wrong who is the easiest offended, and the last to yield.Whether we are Conservatives or Liberals, we are Englishmen, and cannot afford to be divided. Whether we want the Church to be Disestablished or not, we are Christians. Let us be friends once more, and try to think the best we can of each other. Whether our side has won or not, we are certain that Right will prevail in the long run. We can afford to wait, if we are on God's side, for He wins by losing.THE LOSS OF HIS SON WAS HIS GREATEST GAIN.If you can rise to this, how you will enjoy singing -- "Hark! the herald angels sing --

Glory to our new-born King!

Peace on earth and mercy mild,

God and sinners reconciled."Is there not wondrous common sense, as well as beauty, in the saying of St. John -- "BELOVED, IF GOD SO LOVED US, WE OUGHT

ALSO TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.One would have thought it would have been -- we ought to love Him. But then we remember further on, John says,"HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER, WHOM HE

HATH SEEN, HOW CAN HE LOVE GOD WHOM

HE HATH NOT SEEN?"It is well sometimes to ask ourselves the question, "How will this matter look in heaven?" "What shall we think of ourselves a hundred years to come? How small all these matters of offence will seem in the light of eternity! We should not like to die without being at peace with all men. The way to secure this is to live at peace, and if there is anything between us and our brethren, let us treat one another as we wish God to treat us.GOOD-WILL TO MEN!"A FELLOW-FEELING MAKES US WONDROUS KIND."

A WORD TO THE AGED WHO ARE ABLE TO HELP OTHERS.This is quite true, and we wish there was more of this fellow-feeling. It is likely this will be read by some aged man or woman who has many comforts, and is assisted to bear the infirmities peculiar to old age in a way poor men and women cannot enjoy. If you are wealthy, or have enough for your wants, should you not have a fellow-feeling for those who are poor and need help?Sometimes when visiting aged people, who were well off, a nice fire burning all the night through, and perhaps those about them who have not allowed them to be many hours without nourishment, I have said to such an one, "You have been kept alive by the fact that you can afford it. If you had been a poor man, you would be dead now."Will you not then, if you have it in your power, give some other old man or woman, who is poor and unable to get the comforts you have in such plenty, some share of what you have; if you do not, how can you expect God to shew you mercy in that day? It will be no use to tell Him that you loved Him; He does not believe in professions of affection for Him, which are not proved by love to our fellows.

XLIII. OPPORTUNITY: BEING THOUGHTS FOR THE NEW YEAR. ON NEW YEAR'S EVE.

We have heard a story told of a celebrated sculptor who had a statue in his studio of a beautiful veiled figure with winged feet; when asked what he called it, he said "Opportunity." "But why is it veiled? And why has it wings on its feet?" "Because," said he, "it is not recognised, and never stays long." How true this is! The New Year, which comes to-morrow, brings with it opportunities for becoming better, and being of greater use than we have ever been. But, alas! how few of us will recognise the good chance till it has passed for ever. Some of us have special opportunities for growing better with age. We live with those who have always shewn us a good example, and have the privilege of listening every Sabbath Day to those who explain the Book of God, so as to feed our souls with bread Divine. Those of us who are not so fortunate, who, it may be, have our lot cast among the ungodly; yet we, though at Patmos, may have revelations which some do not enjoy who have more help from friends and good influences. But does not the past admonish those of us who are Preachers and Teachers? How many opportunities are past, to return no more! How much more useful we should have been had we made use of them! How we might have preached Christ instead of our own selves! How we might have encouraged and stimulated our hearers, if only we had caught more of the spirit of Jesus! How much power from above there would have been in our addresses, if we had spent more time alone; and how many more souls would have been converted, if we had not restrained prayer! * * * * But the past is past. The future dawns, and in its kindling light let us re-consecrate ourselves to the work God has set us to do. We shall have appointments to preach. Shall we not look on each appointment, however distant the place, or small the congregation, as A HEAVEN-SENT OPPORTUNITY? Let us make the most of it. Shall not the new opening for usefulness find us prepared to enter in? Must it ever be said again that the pulpit was open to us, but we were not ready to fill it as it ought to be filled? Could an angel from heaven desire anything better than the opportunity which will come to so many, next Sunday, of preaching, or it may be, of teaching a class of young people out of the Word of God? If we need a stimulus, let us ask ourselves the question, -- How shall I feel, looking at my past chances of usefulness from the observatory of the sick room and dying bed? Are we to fill our dying pillows with thorns, as we remember Sabbaths when we gave way to indolence and self-indulgence, instead of crowding them with well-aimed efforts after usefulness, and diligently employed occasions for study and teaching. To the unconverted reader we say, -- Beware, lest this New Year be wasted as its predecessors were. Is it to be like all the rest? Is that which comes to thee as a friend, wishing to give thee space for repentance and faith, to become another lash in the scourge which is to punish thy soul for ever? Is God's ledger still to chronicle thy unforgiven debts; unforgiven, not because there was no mercy, but because thou wast too indolent to pray. Rouse thyself, sinner, lest these very opportunities should add to thy doom! They fly past thee, but where do they go? They are on their way to the bar of God, to witness against thee. What a crowd of them to testify! Wouldst thou silence them? Come, ere this year closes, and the new one begins, to the feet of Jesus, where thou shalt find pardon and peace, and where thou mayst

receive power to live a life of devotion and holy labour -- thus making opportunity thy willing and true yoke-fellow. PRAYER A VITAL NEED. A Poet has said, that Prayer is the Christian's native air. It seems as if some Christians who are doomed to die of soul decline, might live if they would go back to their native air. Reader, do you need this prescription?

XLIV. THE BRITISH BAYONET.

A great deal has been said in the newspapers lately on the subject of Faulty Bayonets. It seems that from some cause or other these arms have been found out to be faulty and unworthy of trust. Some of them are brittle, and break, others are soft, and bend, so there are a large number of those in use which will have to be discarded on account of unfitness. Where the blame lies we don't know, but doubtless some one has been unfaithful to their trust, or the thing could not have been done. It set us a thinking the other day -- Here is something that no one doubted, has proved unreliable; and the thought flashed across our mind: Is there not something like it in the Church of God to-day? IT IS THE WEAPON OF THE RANK AND FILE THAT IS FAULTY! It is not the General's brain, or the Officer's weapon that is unworthy, but the private's! Does this apply to us? Is not PRAYER to the Church what the bayonet is to the soldier -- that which the private member has to use? Those who cannot preach or write books, or even teach in the Sunday School, can pray. We ask the question -- Are there as many praying-people in proportion to our numbers as there used to be? What is the testimony to those who attend our prayer-meetings? Is not this the weak place in our army to-day? The bayonet has won the battle many a time over for England, and if we are weak here, we are weak where we used to be strong. In the war with the Arabs in Egypt, the squares were sometimes broken. Was that the fault of the bayonet? England cannot afford to be weak here; nor can Methodism bear defeat where she has won so many fights. We have many a time WON THE BATTLE OF THE LORD UPON OUR KNEES, and if we are to be soft there, we may as well retire from the conflict at once. Many a time, when holding Missions, we have felt that if we could but get the members of society to be often in secret but earnest prayer, we should carry the battle to the gate, and more than once we have felt the tide turn, as we have noticed the people get more and more in an agony of supplication. Now that the authorities at the War Office have found out the failing, we shall soon have the faulty bayonets cast out and perfect ones provided. We don't want weak-kneed Christians cast out of the church, we want them improved. And this may be done. Let every one of our readers ask the question AM I AS STRONG IN PRAYER AS EVER I WAS? If not, why not? Or am I one of those who cannot point to direct answers to pleading prayer, because I never did plead? Is there not a cause? Look at what James has said in his epistle, iv.2-4. Is not this "friendship with the world" the cause of this feebleness in prayer? We want all that we can get in pleasure and self-indulgence, and to see our church become a power also. The two things cannot be. This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting, and if we wish to see England won to Christ we must become reliable in prayer. We shall be glad to know that what we have said leads to AN INSPECTION OF ARMS. Let our Class-leaders ask the question of their members -- Do you pray in secret? Do you wrestle with God? How long is it since you had a direct answer to prayer? This is our weak place. May we soon be strong where we are now weak, that the prophecy may be fulfilled, "HE THAT IS FEEBLE AMONG YOU AT THAT DAY SHALL BE AS DAVID, AND THE HOUSE OF DAVID SHALL BE AS GOD." A TEACHER OF SIN. Few men have covered themselves with infamy as did Jeroboam, of whom it is said often he "made Israel to sin." And yet what a chance he had to have led the people, over whom God had made him king, in the path of righteousness? Instead of teaching evil, he might have led his

people into the ways of the Lord. Influence is a talent which brings with it enormous responsibility. Perhaps to none is this more applicable than to parents. Let those of us to whom God has given children, use our influence to TEACH THEM HOLINESS. We teach them every day by example, if not by precept, and example is the teacher whose lessons are followed easiest. What can be worse for a child than to have a parent who teaches his children to sin? Perhaps at the Day of Judgment, the most terrible sights will be where children will reproach father or mother or both, for shewing them the way to the left hand of God!

XLV. A SERVICE IN THE OLDEN TIME. NEHEMIAH viii.

I. -- The Congregation. All who could understand were present (verses 2-3). None should absent themselves from public worship and the preaching of God's word, except infants and idiots. II. -- The Behaviour of the Hearers. We are told (verse 3) "All the people were attentive." There are some who go to God's house, and make such poor use of their ears, that they will wish at the Judgment Day they had been born deaf. We read also of the reverence of the people. They "stood up" to listen, and joined in the prayer with a great "Amen!" What a scene we have depicted in verses 5-6. III. -- The Preachers. There was a PULPIT, but not the tub-like thing that we see in some places -- it held more than a dozen. It would be high enough for all the people to hear and see. But Ezra had more sense than to have it so high that he and his helpers were separated from their hearers. Pulpits should help, not hinder the preacher. **THE PREACHER SPOKE PLAINLY**, verse 8. They read "distinctly." We sometimes listen to a man whom we cannot hear, and it is a pain and grief to us to see his lips move, but because he drops his voice when he has anything extra good to say, we lose the best. Such Preachers forget that "faith comes by hearing." **THE PREACHERS MADE THE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND**,

verse 8. This is one of the duties of Preachers, to make their hearers understand the Bible, so that the man who does not teach as well as preach has not done all that he has been called to do. That is the best kind of Preacher, who not only stirs up the people like a poker, but puts fuel on at the same time. IV. -- The Effects of the Service. First, there was sorrow of heart. No one can understand the Bible and not be moved. The Levites, however, showed their people that God would like them to be happy. Those who weep over the Bible may well be comforted. Let those weep who have not listened to God's word. One blessed result of the sacred joy which followed the weeping, was **the HELP RENDERED TO THE POOR**,

"SEND PORTIONS."(verses 10-12). It would be well if, after every good time we had at chapel, we made the poor to rejoice. If God feeds you with the Bread of Life, send a loaf of bread or a bit of meat to some who are likely to go hungry!**LET THE GODLY BE GLAD.**

XLVI. KEEP THE FIRE BURNING WHILE THE FROST LASTS!

Many railway travellers, besides ourselves, have been often much pleased with the provision made at the principal railway stations for supplying the engines with water. Water is a necessity of motion to the locomotive, and there are watering stations all along the line. Every driver knows where these water-tanks are, and he takes care to stop in time, to get his boiler filled. If he did not look to this, he would find himself stopping between stations, and would have to submit to the indignity of being drawn by another engine! If such a thing occurred, it would be a sort of picture of some Christian workers, men and women, who in days that are past, were remarkable for their zeal and push, but who, for want of grace, have had to cease to work, and are now content to be drawn along by other Christians. We know Ministers, Local Preachers, and Class-Leaders, who in their day were notable soul winners, but alas, now, when there is a revival, they cannot take the lead, but they are helped along by others, perhaps of less power than they once possessed! What a spectacle to men and angels! But this is not what we are writing about just now. During the long frost, which we hope has now passed away for the season, many of us have been pleased with the pains which have been taken to keep the water from freezing in the pipe which leads from the tank to the supply-spout for the engine. Night and day, for weeks, a fire has been kept burning, so as to have the iron column always hot. Orders have been given to keep the fire burning while the frost lasts, and these orders have been obeyed, or we should have seen some poor driver obliged to wire to send another engine to help on the train which would have been delayed. To pursue the analogy, has not God's business been delayed because the fire has not been kept burning? This is a time of spiritual frost. What with the political crisis, general election, depression in trade, there has been spiritual ice in all the Churches of our land. The very supply pipes have been frozen, and men of power are at present quiet, because they have not received the Water of Life. We know men of God, men who are earnest, loyal, trustful souls, who are weeping between the porch and the altar, on account of their want of power. What is to be done? Men of Israel, help! Come to the rescue! Let us get the fires lighted. To your knees! To your knees! Bring the promises. Keep fuel always in hand, so as to replenish the blaze, and we shall see the frozen water leap out to fill again those who so often have drawn the train heavenward! **THE LARGEST PUBLIC MEETING**

WILL BE THE LAST, AND

YOU WILL BE THERE.

XLVII. THE SOWER.

One of the Master's most wonderful parables begins, "BEHOLD, A SOWER WENT FORTH TO sow." There are many lessons in that instructive analogy. YOU CANNOT SOW WHEAT ON THE PARLOUR CARPET. You must go forth. If the world could be converted by self-indulgent theorists, we should have had the Millenium here long ago. It is impossible to read any Christian, newspaper without coming across some of these drawing-room farmers -- men who can sit at their fireside, and show you how to do it! Ask them where their barns are, and they will have excuses to make as to why their plans have not succeeded. We have heard these gentlemen hold forth in a Quarterly Meeting, and have had hard work to keep our temper, and have not always been supposed to have succeeded. We may, however, settle it that Mr. Plan-others-their-work could put all the harvest he ever had in his waistcoat pocket! Would you need a waggon for your gains, you must leave ease and dignity behind, and trudge over the heavy furrows, seed basket in hand. Secondly, as the preachers say, YOU MUST SOW WHERE THE PLOUGH HAS BEEN FIRST. A great deal of seed is lost because the ground has not been prepared. Of late years the cry has been "Believe! Believe!" But what must we believe? "Believe on Jesus," say they. Yes, but have they believed what the Bible says about sin? Those who do not believe in the guiltiness of sin, cannot believe on Christ. Till men see they have been in the wrong, they will not understand the "righteousness which is by faith." Let the ploughshare of repentance make the land ready for the seed, and then there will be some hope of lasting success. Some other time we may have something to say about the birds, which pick up the seed; but for the present let it suffice that we insist upon the ploughman doing his work before the sower comes to do his. We have a notion that it would be well if the seed-basket were left at home for a while, and some one were to take hold of the plough. Before to-day we have found, when we have gone to begin a Mission, that it was of little use to preach Christ as a Saviour. Men and women who are not convinced of the sins of their life, need to be told of the punishment which awaits those who die with their sins unpardoned. We have been too mealy-mouthed, and have feared to offend our hearers; and so the seed has fallen on hard ground, and the birds only have a successful Mission! THE BIBLE OUGHT TO BE THE KING OF YOUR BOOKS. IF IT IS NOT THEY ARE NOT WORTH HOUSE ROOM.

XLVIII. EIGHT EASTER LESSONS LEARNED AT EMMAUS. LUKE

xxiv. 13-35.

I. -- When friends speak of good things, Jesus draws near. "These things" which concern Jesus. Even if men speak sorrowfully, if it is of Jesus they speak, He is nigh. If He were the subject of conversation more, His friends would have more of His company. If you are shy of Him, He will be shy of you. II. -- Unbelief manufactures sorrow for the godly. Jesus said they looked "sad." It is a pity to employ unbelief; he does not know how to make a smile. When he tries it is a misfit. If the disciples had believed Jesus, they would have been dancing for joy, for they would have been round the tomb to see Him rise. We have lost that picture, because no one believed the Lord enough to expect His words to be fulfilled. -- Mark viii.31. III. -- Never expect infidels to be converted while saints are sceptical. Certain women had told them, but they were "slow of heart to believe." Is not this tardiness of faith the secret of popular infidelity? If Christians shewed their faith by works, Bradlaugh, and such like, would have no audiences when they lectured! IV. -- Suffering was the duty of Christ, as the servant of God. "Ought not Christ to have suffered?" Before He could have the wages, He must do the work. Eternity alone gives space for the payment of what He earned in Gethsemane and on Calvary. V. -- The Old Testament was Jesus Christ's Bible. Has it the place it ought to have in our hearts? These men had their hearts warmed while Christ expounded Psalms and Prophecies. He will do the same to you, if you will ask Him. It is a reflection upon the Holy Ghost to make use of so small a portion of the Bible as some do. VI. -- Hospitality is a remunerative virtue. "I was a stranger, and ye took me in." Christ blesses the cupboard from which wayfarers are fed. They fed Jesus, and He filled their hearts with deathless joy. VII. -- Apostates lose the best news. Judas had gone out of hearing when the eleven had heard of a risen Christ. VIII. -- Testifying to grace received brings fresh supplies. It was while telling what they had seen that they heard the voice of Jesus speak peace.

XLIX. WORK FOR BOYS. 1 SAMUEL iii. I.--There is work in God's house for Boys to do.

"The child Samuel ministered." When you sing with feeling you do God's work. When you see some one without a hymn-book and you take one to the stranger, you minister. When you make room for a stranger to sit by you, then you do the work of the Lord. When you pray for the preacher, then you are of use. II. -- Boys' bedrooms are open to God. It was while Samuel was asleep that God stood at his bedside; but He is there before we sleep. He hears when wicked stories are told, and when bad deeds are planned in the dark. III. -- God does not wait for you to grow up before He calls. Perhaps you have heard Him call and, like Samuel, did not know the voice. When you felt that longing to be good, then He called. When you were at the grave-side, and felt awed and silenced by the coffin, thinking that some day people would look down and read your name, He called. When you were ill and felt unfit to die, He called. In your class at Sunday school, and while hearing the gospel preached, you were called. IV. -- Boys should answer the first call. Samuel was not like some lads who have to be called many times before they will get up. "He ran unto Eli." And in doing this he was the picture of the way we should make haste, and delay not to keep God's commandments. You will never be of greater value to God than now. Each day you delay to serve Him, you lessen your value in His sight. V. -- Boys may be taken into God's confidence. The Bible tells us, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," and a boy may fear God so as to know His secrets as Samuel did. If you will listen, as this lad did, you shall hear God speak. VI. -- Boys who do God's will shall have men do their's. See verse 20. The whole nation came to hear the mind of God from the boy- prophet, for we read in the first verse of the next chapter that Samuel's word came unto all Israel. IF DEATH CAN INJURE YOU

YOU ARE NOT ENJOYING FULL

SALVATION.

L. THE BROKEN OAR.

The other day, when the Oxford and Cambridge men were contesting for the mastery, the Oxford boat was behind, but the crew were not willing to admit they were beaten, and were making great efforts to gain the day, when, all at once, the oar of the best man in the boat broke in two, consequently all hope of winning was gone. All the rest of the way there were only seven oars, and the weight of the eighth man to carry as well. In musing over this, it struck us that there were several lessons to be learned -- lessons which the eye that used to scan the race-ground would have made use of, if he were writing an epistle in these days. Is it not true that the dead weight in the boat hinders the progress of the Church of God? Up and down the country we hear of those who hinder the work -- members of society, and sometimes office-bearers, who if they were in heaven would help more, or, at least, hinder less than they do now. If this book should fall into the hands of any of these men, we wish they would lay to heart the lesson, that if from any cause they are not working, we have their weight to carry in addition, and that we could get on better if they were not. As we write we are thinking of one of these hinderers -- smooth of tongue, and sanctimonious in phraseology, who is helping the enemy of God by hindering his servants. This becomes all the more painful when these unfaithful men are persons of power and influence. Some of them were once very useful, and have wielded an influence for good that was of immense use; but, alas! in an evil hour they turned aside, and now retard the progress of what they once loved to assist. We appeal to such of our readers as are doing good service, that they pray to be kept from backsliding in heart, lest their oars be broken, and they become a dead weight in the boat. Some of those who are with us, and yet not of us, are accumulating wealth. We appeal to them to bear in mind that their money makes them greater difficulties than ever, and that the more their balance at the bankers' grows the greater their dead weight in the boat. If we could only get rid of these people, how lightly the boat would spring forward! Sometimes we are ready to wish that these men could lose their money, they would then become manageable. What is to be done? We cannot but think of Circuit after Circuit where men of talent and influence are keeping the Church of God from coming to the front. What a loss life is to them! How much better if they had died in their useful days! If they do not repent, what a hell awaits them! How could such people enjoy heaven if they were sent there? For them to behold the other part of the crew, who did their duty, crowned for their faithfulness, must, as a matter of course, make them reflect that their chances were the same, but that they ceased to toil, and hindered those who would have accomplished much for God but for their baneful presence. There are other lessons we learned from this same boat-race, to which we will refer at some other time. Suffice it that for the present we pray, LORD, SAVE US FROM DEAD WEIGHTS!

LI. [WHY COULD NOT WE CAST HIM OUT?]

And a very sensible question, too. When men fail there is a reason for it; but we cannot always find out what the reason is. But these followers of Jesus, who had not been able to cast out the deaf and dumb devil, asked their Master how it was. He had given them to see that it was not impossible to cast out even that sort, but THEY could not. And why not? It is worth our while to know, for just now the Methodist people are not succeeding as they wish to succeed, and we are inclined to think, for the same reason that caused the disciples to fail. Jesus said, "THIS KIND GOETH NOT OUT BUT BY PRAYER AND FASTING." What does this mean, if not that MEN WHO LOVE EASE MUST EXPECT THE DEVILS TO LAUGH THEM TO SCORN? If we are not prepared to fast, it does not matter how well we do other things -- not only abstain from food, or drink, or tobacco, but from other things we like. We know some men who would do well to fast from having their own way, and others who would serve God if they would take a back seat now and then, and let somebody else talk a bit. But it is not to these men we address ourselves to-day. It is to those who are trying to get as much ease and comfort out of life we would speak. There are some of us who preach and live by it, who might do more to earn our stipend. We fear the Rev. Mephibosheth Neversweat is too "intellectual" to read "JOYFUL NEWS," and it is useless saying much to him, or else we should like to ask him to remember that the time is coming when he will be too old to work, and it may be then, when his eye is too dim to read his newspaper, he may be compelled to read the proof-sheets of his own biography -- a book that will be published and read when all the world be there to hear it. We pity him when in old age he remembers mis-used opportunities of becoming a blessing to his generation, or looks forward to the time when he must give account of himself to God! The reverend gentleman we have named has some cousins, who are Local Preachers; and we should like to have a word with them also. How about those village congregations that were disappointed of a preacher? How about those stale and faded sermons? We wish you would be persuaded to make a sermon on -- "SHAKE THYSELF FROM THE DUST," because there would be at least one penitent, even before the sermon was preached. However, what perhaps is needed most of all is that the decrease in our numbers as Methodists should lead us to repent, and do our first works. We should as a Church humble ourselves before God, and that without delay. He waits to be gracious. We must not lose heart. Let the thousands of faithful workers among us remember that when the disciples were baffled, Jesus was in the company of Moses and Elijah; but He dismissed them that He might come to the help of His people. Whatever he may be doing, we can catch His ear, and bring Him to the rescue. He needs only that we should cry to Him for help. We indulge the hope that when Methodism learns that, in spite of all the earnest work done, we have fewer people meeting in class than we had last year, there will be a bowing before the Lord. Already we see signs of blessing. There is a waking up to duty, and a longing for purity, that can have but one result. The Master is coming, and shall soon say, "BEING HIM UNTO ME."

LII. MANNA. EXODUS xvi. 4.

I. -- Manna like salvation, because undeserved. The people murmured at the very first difficulty. If they had been grateful they would have said, "The God who brought us out of Egypt, and through the Red Sea, will not allow us to die of hunger." But instead of this they accused Moses of being a murderer. And in answer to this God said, "I will rain bread from heaven." What an illustration of Romans v.8. II. -- Manna like salvation, because it saved the people from perishing. Nothing else would have done in its place. The people had jewels, but they could not eat them! They had instruments of music, but they could not live on sound! Nothing else but Jesus can save the soul from famine. Sinner, ask thyself the question of Isaiah li.2. III. -- Manna like salvation, because it was plenteous. There was enough, and more than enough, for some melted ungathered every day. Some Christians dishonour God by their leanness. "If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." John vi.51. IV. -- Manna like salvation, because it had to be gathered. It did not come into their tents. You might starve within only a few feet of plenty. Some people are too lazy to be saved. Whoever got it had to stoop. It did not grow on trees, but on the ground. Some are too proud to be saved! V. -- Manna like salvation, because fresh every day. It was, "Give us this day our daily bread." There are some who try to live on past religion, and it is like the manna of verse 20. Is your religion fresh? VI. -- Manna like salvation, best gathered early. It was in the morning plentiful, but when the sun rose it melted; there would be a little here and there in shady places. If you would have plenteous grace, young reader, seek it now! THE ONLY SORT OF RELIGION

WORTH HAVING IS INFECTIOUS,

YOU HAVE NOT GOT IT IF YOU

DO NOT GIVE IT TO SOME ONE

ELSE!

LIII. SMITTEN OF GOD.

We read that when Peter was in the prison the angel smote him on the side, and raised him up. But He smote Herod, and he was EATEN OF WORMS, and gave up the ghost. Mark the difference between the blows the Lord strikes His own people and His foes. He smites us, and then lifts us up; He smites his enemies, and then casts them down for ever. WHICH ARE YOU? Herod was one of those who gave not God the glory: he was for having the glory himself. Those of us who preach had better be aware that when the people praise us we may fall into Herod's sin, and take God's glory to ourselves. This is a dangerous game to play, and many a man has been eaten by the worm of envy and shame because he allowed the people to make an idol of him, until they saw another bigger idol than himself. Nor was this all. Some preachers have gone where the worm dieth not, because they gave not God the glory. Better far be in jail for Jesus than sitting on a throne, if we are not on the right side. If you are one of God's friends, fear nothing; but if you are one of His foes, you do well to fear everything, for you might, like Herod, have to sink from magnificence to loathsomeness, and know death before you die.

LIV. THE FAN. MATTHEW iii. 12.

Do you think John the Baptist knew anything about it? Do you think he was capable of understanding and appreciating Jesus Christ? Because if so, Jesus Christ has two sides. There is the barn for the wheat, and there is a fire for the chaff. And Jesus Christ is the great Destroyer as well as the great Saviour. The same voice that says, "Come to Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," shall say some day, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Yes, Jesus Christ is the great Destroyer. Now this is the age of the fan. In all times of history there has never been a time like this, when God puts things to the test, and proves them; and everything in this world to-day is on its trial, and if it is not sixteen ounces to the pound it will go. I do not care whether it is a king's crown, a bishop's mitre, or a parson's white tie, it will have to go if it is not right. "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor." Where is Babylon? The greatest heap of dirt in the world is Babylon! Where is Spain -- Spain, that used to make Englishmen tremble? It is nothing; it does not count; it is not put as a cypher in the world's sum. What is Napoleon? Eh! what is Napoleon? The last of the Napoleons died under the hand of a savage when he was where he had no business to be, burning his lips with other folks' broth. The grandest bit of human nature in this world, a few years ago, was the Emperor who has just gone to heaven. The grandest man I ever saw. I never saw what God Almighty could make of flesh and blood until I saw him. And he has left behind him a man with one arm; the other arm is a sword-arm. The Emperor Frederick said that he wanted to live for peace. I wish our princes were more like him. I have been told that I must not say anything about the Prince of Wales. I say "God save the Queen"; she is the best monarch that ever sat on the throne. God bless her, and may she live longer than any of them ever have done. And I say, "God save the Prince of Wales," for racehorses will not save him; gambling will not save him. The man that is to come to the throne owns racehorses; he has a horse called "Mischief," and it is well called. Why must I keep silent when I see the first man in the realm encouraging that which is ruining our young men, and sometimes sending them to a felon's prison? I believe a limited monarchy is the best form of government that can be found for England, but the English crown is on its trial, and if it is not wheat, there are dark days in store for England. I want to see the present style of government, and I want a man on the throne that is a man, and not one that is trying as hard as he can to set such an example as will send the country to hell. I would like the chance of saying it to his face. You can tell people what I have said. Let us thank God that the fan is in the hand of Jesus Christ. You cannot keep Methodism from the action of the fan. It has got to be tried, and everything in Methodism that is not wheat will go into the fire, and serve it right. Everything must be sown, and must grow and bear its fruit, and be gathered, and then winnowed; and the chaff must go into the fire. The Methodist pulpit is not an exception to it. If I cannot interest people I have no right to be paid for it. If I cannot get the people to come and hear me, and if I do not go and look after them in their homes, I have no right to draw the money for doing it. And no preacher has the right to think that people should come and hear him if he cannot preach -- he has no right. I am tired out when I think of the things that put themselves where they have no right. The whole Christian Church to-day has got to come under the fan; and there will be some wonderful changes before all your

heads are grey. The grandest thing is that Jesus Christ holds the fan. The class-meeting is on its trial. I do not believe in a class-leader that does not lead, that is not first. I do not believe in a man's right to be counted a leader because his name is at the top of the book. I know classes, and you know classes, where, if you have a revival, and get twenty new members in the class, they will attend it about once or twice, and after that, if you rub the cypher out, that will stand for the increase. That "leader" is guaranteed to lose everybody that is in his class, except two or three dear people, and they can keep the meeting on for an hour; and be as dreary as -- well, I will not say all that is in my mind. You see, some people would say it is no business of mine. But no man has a right to be a leader if he cannot keep a meeting all alive. If a man can get a class of 150 to 200 people to listen to him when he speaks, that is the man to lead. You must not sacrifice the new-born babes. I do not know what the Committee that has been sitting on "the class meeting" thought about it, but depend upon it, it will have to come under the fan. I know places where a man's name is kept on the class-book because he condescends to pay the minister for his ticket whenever he calls, and where another man is taken off that cannot afford it. Why, John Bunyan would have called that damnable! The chaff is no good. You may plant chaff in the best land that ever was, and you will not get anything. That which is of no use must go into the fire. The Sunday-school is on its trial. Yes! even in Lancashire. The biggest Sunday-school system is here in this county. What is the result? What has it to show, compared with the amount of patient, faithful work that has been done? Do you not think that in some places the result is all chaff? The Sunday-school is fast becoming the grandest entertainment agency in existence, and places that were built for the teaching of God's Word are now places for entertainment, better than any theatre, because they cost nothing. I saw in Leeds, the other Sunday, that in a certain Sunday-school "there will be a sacred drama rendered." It was not a Methodist School. But I know schools where they have "niggers," with blackened faces and banjos. The "nigger troupe of such-and-such a school!" What do you think John Wesley would say if he came to life again? He would drive them out, as Christ drove out those men from the Temple, "with a whip of" -- well! I do not think they would be such "small cords" either. Now the Sunday-school, "the greatest thing of this age," the grandest thing that the Church has seen in the last hundred years, is on its trial: and if we do not mind it will go with the chaff into the unquenchable fire. We cannot play into the devil's hands without getting what he will get some day. Now I am talking here to you to-day for the last time. There will be no services here until after the Conference. There may be some poor, unsaved man here. God can make wheat out of chaff. He can! He will if you will come to Him. He will change your life, and you that are nothing worth, He can make you fit for heavenly thrones. Listen to this letter. The man that wrote it was a football player. He was in the Bolton Wanderers, in its day a crack club. He was also a singer in the choir. And he came to a chapel where I was conducting a mission; and this little word got hold of him. It was not any great thing that was said; for it is sometimes "on boards and broken pieces of the ship that they come to land." This poor lad heard me say this: -- "You singers!" -- I did not know he was there -- "You singers! If you die out of Christ, when you get into the bottomless pit, some of the wicked spirits will come to torment you: 'Sing us a solo!'" It got him on his knees. He became penitent, and through giving his heart to God he is an evangelist in that town now. He was only chaff, though a wonderful player in the field; and he that used to say, "Play up, Jim!" has grown into a man, and the devil hates him now! He writes: -- "I feel drawn out to write to you. Many souls are being saved nearly every day. A man got saved some weeks back; and we went to see how he was going on. He first came to the mission, and

although convinced of his wicked life, he refused the offer of mercy. Not being able to rest, he again found his way to the mission- hall, and there he found the Saviour. A few weeks passed, and I went to find him out. When we got there, they asked us in. I did not see a picture on the wall, only a few almanacks; but they had some bonny children, and the floor was very clean, and the fireplace bright. They had not many friends coming to see them. The father, having changed his pit clothes, came downstairs. He said, 'My wife used to pray when I married her, but I broke her up.' And then, pointing to the five children, he said, 'Thank God! Instead of being cursed to-night, they will all kneel down! The eldest girl is thirteen, and next Saturday I have got money to buy her a new frock, and on the Sunday she shall go to the Sunday school for the first time. Sometimes I pick up one of the children, and say, 'God bless thee, my child; thou wilt not have to fetch me from the ale-house any more!' After he had told us of his changed life, we all knelt down and thanked God. Last night his wife went home rejoicing in the Gospel. -- Your son in the Gospel, JAMES ATHERTON." That poor man was chaff. And you, wherever you are, you may be just about to be carried away. Cry to God! This is my last word -- Poor chaff, cry to God! And He will make thee wheat that shall command a rare price.WE CAN WORK ONLY WHILE IT

IS DAY, AND NONE KNOW WHO HAS

THE SHORTEST DAY!

LV. [THE KING KISSED BARZILLAI.] 2 SAM. xix. 39.

And no wonder, for David could appreciate a real man when he saw him, and so does David's Lord. I. -- LOYALTY IS PRECIOUS TO THE KING OF KINGS. In the days when the son of Jesse had but few friends, it was a precious thing to be treated in the style Barzillai and his neighbours entertained him (see 2 Sam. xvii.27-29). They were rich farmers, and had land which brought forth with abundance, so were able to act with princely hospitality to the fugitive monarch. But plenty may live with avarice, and when that is the case it is not to be expected that men who are fleeing for their lives will be received with kind generosity. In this case, however, the sight of the needy soldiers made the hearts of those kingly farmers beat with sympathy, and so the provisions were put there for the men to help themselves. "Hungry, weary, and thirsty" were they, but their hospitable entertainers made them welcome. Never would those dust-covered soldiers forget the halt they made in those green fields. None felt, though, as David did. He had seen one trusted friend after another fall away, and the thought that the chief among the rebels was his own beloved son pierced him to the heart. It was then he composed the fourth Psalm. And just then to have this welcome feast must have cheered his soul even more than his body. Do you live among those who are the enemies of David's greater Son? Is Jesus in a minority? Are there those who work with you who delight in making assaults upon your faith? Do they insult your God? Stand up for Jesus! Be faithful when others are recreant or hostile. A working man the other day, who has to win his bread among those who hate the name of God, and who profane the air with their blasphemies, said to one who was cursing, "Draw it mild there, that's the name of my best friend." Let us play the man even though we be alone. What did Barzillai care for Absalom's popularity? David is my king, and he shall have the best I have: Sooner or later the king will have the opportunity of rewarding the faithful. The king kissed Barzillai when parting from him; he had pressed his friend to go back with him to Jerusalem, but II. -- WE SEE A BEAUTIFUL ILLUSTRATION OF CONTENTMENT. -- They had come down together after the great battle, and David said, "Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me at Jerusalem." It was worthy of them both, and we cannot but feel touched at David's gratitude; he would fain have the patriarch spend his last days with him. "With me," said he, "I will see thou hast everything thou canst want." "Nay," said the old man, "I will see thee safely over the river, and then I will return to the green fields I love, and when the time comes for me to die I will be laid by the side of my father and my mother." When will men learn that it is not their surroundings but themselves that make a place comfortable or not? Paul could say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," and he said this in a letter he wrote to the town where he had sung praises in the jail! Some people would have jumped to have had this chance of going to live in a palace, but this farmer said, "Give me my farmhouse and my quiet grave beside my mother." Elevation may undo us. A sparrow could only chirp even though in a golden cage. Barzillai felt, "A rustic, like I am, seems all right among my ploughs and cattle, but I should not fit a palace." Many a man has made himself a laughing stock because he left the place he was fitted for, and so looked like a dandelion in a conservatory. III. -- We have in Barzillai's words AN OLD MAN'S VIEW OF EARTHLY ENJOYMENT. As though he had said, "I have lost hearing, sight, and taste; what are all these

things to me? I am soon to be in my grave, what do I want away from home?" It would be well for most of us to weigh these words, "How long have I to live?" To judge from the way we see men toil to get houses and land, you would think they were going to live for ever. Watch them how they are scraping the money they have; they have none to spare to feed the hungry and clothe the naked; they have poor relatives, but they cannot help them. Are they not going to be rich, live in a splendid house, be grand folks some day? Aye, but death cannot be bribed. I was passing through a splendid estate the other day, and was told of the gentleman that owns it; he is an old man, but he will not own to it, and he is quite a fraud, with his dyed hair and wrinkled face; he looks quite ghastly, in spite of all that art can do to pad him and make him up. I wish some of those who are denying themselves the luxury of giving, because they have determined to have a splendid estate for their children, would think "How will my mansion look with the blinds down, and a hearse at the door with a coffin in it, with my name on a silver plate?" We cannot refuse to help the poor, and hear Jesus say, "Well done." We cannot save money for selfish purposes and go to heaven. Besides, to leave riches for those who come after us is the way to have dry eyes at our funeral! IV. -- THOSE WHO ARE LOYAL SHALL WIN PROMOTION FOR THEIR CHILDREN. -- Although Barzillai was not willing to go to live in Jerusalem, he felt that his son might enjoy it, and so called the king's attention to Chimham. Let him go over with my lord the king. He is not too old to bend. He can adapt himself. There would be many questions asked by those who had not left the palace when the king returned, as to who this rustic was who was in the palace of David, and they would be told, "This is the son of Barzillai. His father was a faithful friend when friends were few, and his son is promoted to dwell with the king." When David gave his dying charge to Solomon, he said, "Show kindness to the sons of Barzillai" (1 Kings ii., 7). Tears had passed since he saw the provision made for him and his men, but he could never forget it. On his deathbed he could see the bed that was placed by the road side, and upon which he had rested his weary limbs when a fugitive, and so he would repay his debt to the children of the aged farmer. How true it is that we can make futurity our servant and the servant of our children by at the present time caring for our King. Does God see that we stand by His cause when it is weak? Do we find food and comfort for His fainting soldiers? Then he shows His appreciation by inviting us to Jerusalem the golden. We shall not wish to excuse ourselves from going to that blessed spot. Be we young or be we old, we shall not wish to return, but shall go on to find that the singing men and singing women wish us to join their number and to help them in praising the King, immortal, invisible, to whom be glory and honour for ever.

LVI. [THEN THE FIRE OF THE LORD FELL.] 1 KINGS xviii. 38.

It was fire that came direct from heaven. It was not the first time it had fallen; we read of it in Leviticus ix.24 as coming from before the Lord, and consuming the sacrifice. It was God's way of showing His power and his favour, and it was something that could neither be imitated nor produced by anyone else besides Jehovah. I. -- THIS FIRE CAME AT A TIME OF APOSTACY. The nation, headed by King Ahab, had gone very far away from God. They needed some signal display of God's power to win them back again. It is interesting to notice that God has been in the habit of manifesting Himself in a remarkable way just at the time when his foes seem to be triumphing. The religion of Jehovah was almost forgotten, the rites of unclean idols were popular both in court and cottage, and it was then that the word of the Lord came to Elijah. When Satan can produce Ahab, God can assert Himself by raising up the seer who shall put him to shame. Has it not been so many times since? When the rulers had put Jesus to death, He proved His resurrection by sending tongues of fire on those who kept His word by remaining at Jerusalem. When Popery had placed its iron heel upon the head of Gospel truth, Martin Luther was converted; and later on, when a cold rigour was upon Christendom, Wesley and Whitefield felt the fire of God in their very bones, and were sent out to tell of the Jesus that delivers the vilest of men. May we not expect in these days of blasphemy and rebuke that the fire shall fall upon the Church, and that some shall be so filled with the Holy Ghost that the enemies of God shall be delivered to derision and contempt? Let us not be dismayed by the power and number of those who are arrayed against us. Elijah was in a minority of one. He had the king and queen against him; hundreds of well-fed priests opposed him; the whole nation had turned its back on God, and were opposed to this single-handed prophet. If the fire did not fall, he would become their victim; but they could not prevent the fire coming from heaven. It is the unseen forces that are to be dreaded by the enemies of God. There was no sign of this fire; but there was a needs-be that Jehovah should prove his supremacy, and He did it unmistakably, for the fire of God fell! II. -- THE FIRE WAS SOMETHING BAAL'S PRIESTS COULD NOT PRODUCE. -- The Creator has a pre-emption on His universe. He has not given the key of His treasury to any man or angel. Those heathen priests may have been -- some of them doubtless were -- sincere. They had cried unto Baal for help; they had implored his assistance; but neither the deaf idol nor the listening devil who had invented idolatry could reach the source of the flame which was to come, but not in reply to their desire. It is well for us who are sometimes in perplexity because of the power of evil to look at the helplessness of sin when in extremity. These shrieking priests of Baal are a picture of many a one since, who has cried for help and had no reply. Let the cholera come a little nearer our shores. As I write these words I hear it is in Spain; it may be in London before this is printed. There may be in the printing-office some infidel compositor, but though he sneers at religion and those who believe the Bible, he cannot keep away from the pestilence as silently it steals along the street where he sleeps! The cholera would drive infidelity away from many a scoffer were it but to slay a few hundreds of Englishmen. How powerless are God's foes at such a time! Should there come a universal drought that meant famine if there were not showers to come copious and lasting, how many would look up to God who now never think of Him! What could science and skill do for us

when rain is needed? A famine would make Bradlaugh very unpopular. "If the God of the Christians does not help us by sending rain, what can we do but starve," would be the cry. These prophets cutting themselves and howling their own shame supply a picture of the powerlessness of sin when confronted with necessity. III. -- THE FIRE FELL IN ANSWER TO PRAYER. What a scene is depicted in verses 29 and 30! There were neither voice nor any to answer, nor any that regarded, and Elijah said, "Yes, if we are on the side of God and righteousness we can afford to wait." There will be a time when even those who have opposed us shall long to see us act. The prophet waited for his turn, and it came. How the priests would watch him as he repaired the broken and neglected altar of God? Digging a trench round the stones he had piled, and then laying the bullock on the wood, he sent down to the shore for water, which he continued to pour on the sacrifice till it had filled the trench. Ah! if the fire can consume that, it is no trick. Those who live as near to God as Elijah did, can get fire enough to conquer all His opponents, and need not fear the issue. And now he is about to pray. How all would listen as each word smote upon their ears. He puts God to the proof, and asks Him to show who is master, Baal or Jehovah. Do we not need more of this kind of prayer? Would there not be more of it if there was only greater faith? Who is the God we serve? Have we Elijah's Lord to cry unto? Then how is it we allow the servants of Baal to triumph over us? Prayer is as great a power to-day as it ever was, if only we have faith in Him who tells us, "Knock, and the door shall be opened." Dare we put Him to the test, and ask for that which is sure to bring glory to Him, feeling that if our prayers are not answered it is God's name that will be dishonoured more than ours? Whenever Christians come up to this standard they will prevail in prayer, and be able to call down celestial fire. Pentecost will repeat itself whenever the whole Church will wait on the Lord, as the early Christians did, with one accord. To believe otherwise is to reckon that God has no care either for His glory or for a perishing world. IV. -- THE FIRE CONQUERED ALL OPPOSITION. The physical difficulties were as nothing, it consumed and licked up all. Flesh, stone, wood, and water alike were wrapped in flame, and appeared no more. Difficulties are fuel to the heaven-sent fire! Opposition is opportunity to omnipotence. Does not the history of the Church teach this over and over again? The Israelites crossed the Red Sea "By crystal walls protected." The three Hebrew children "walked unburned in fire." Do not let us be afraid of physical or spiritual difficulties if there is a promise or command. The prophet wished to have his countrymen converted, and prayed that their hearts might be turned back, and this miracle convinced them that Jehovah "was alone among the gods, that all their idols were as nothing before Him. And what is wanted to bring about moral victories is the fire from above, the same fire that fell at Pentecost, tongues of fire, whether we shall see them or not; the people must feel our words to burn them if we have the heaven-sent fire. Nothing will save England and the world but this, and do we not read, "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly? Why should not future writers say Jones or Robinson, or whatever your name is, was a man, and he prayed, and there was a mighty revival? All opposition will fall before the fire. Neither Sacerdotalism nor Atheism can hold its ground before the celestial burnings. What the enemies of Jesus have to fear is for the Church to fall upon its knees. Those who bow before the Lord can stand upright in the presence of His enemies. The man who, later on in this chapter, we are told cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees when he prayed, was wont to say, "As the Lord God liveth before whom I stand." Let us only be mighty in prayer, and we shall be mighty enough to make wicked men tremble. HE WHO CAN WIN FAVOUR IN PRAYER CAN WIN VICTORY IN BATTLE. THE DEVIL IS A GOOD ANGLER,

HIS MOST CRUEL HOOKS ARE IN
HIS NICEST BAIT.

LVII. A PICTURE OF CONVERSION. 2 KINGS ii. 19-22.

Are not the stories of the Old Testament the parables of the Holy Ghost? Jesus taught by parables; and the Holy Ghost, the Divine Teacher, who yet leads into all truth, has stored doctrine in these tales. There is a kernel inside the shell, if only we have the teeth to crack it. I. -- WE HAVE A PICTURE OF AN UNREGENERATE HEART. "The water is naught," said the men of the city. Does not that describe many a life? Naughty actions influence for evil; for wherever these waters flowed they carried desolation. The fields through which the river ran were useless to the farmer. Are there not some whom we know who might be thus described -- perhaps someone who reads these lines among the number? First the schoolboy, then the youth, and now the man, profitless and sour, so that all cultivation has been wasted. Is it so? And, what makes the disappointment the greater, "the situation is pleasant." It is just the place where men like to build. Everything looks so promising. How true this of many in our midst! Have we not heard some father say, when his boy's beauty has been praised, "If he were only as good as he looks!" Is this so with those who are my audience? Is there this combination of beauty and bitterness -- men who are courageous but proud, women that are beautiful but vain, workmen that are industrious but covetous, others who are amiable but intemperate -- servant girls who are wonderfully clean and active but have a dreadful temper? Now, it is well for us to learn that we shall no more cure ourselves than the land around Jericho could bring good crops so long as the water was bad. Education and other appliances are sure to fail. I dare say the people had tried one sort of cultivation after another, and had dressed the land with different appliances; but all had failed; there was no hope of success. Very likely some of you are disgusted that hitherto there has been no improvement. There are times when you have really longed to be better, but there has been nothing in yourself to give you hope. Now what shall be done? Are we to remain as we are? Or shall we, like the men of Jericho, seek help from One who delights to make the barren fruitful, and to make the wilderness glad? This brings me to consider: -- II. -- HOW TO CURE A SINFUL HEART; OR, A PICTURE OF TRUE CONVERSION. The beginning of better days was when Elisha came to Jericho. The farmers did not lose a chance. They would not allow the prophet to leave them without having a proof of his skill. They told him their trouble, and this was all he needed. Doubtless he as a farmer's son saw the barren fields, and sympathised with them. And does not Jesus look at us with pity? Is he not waiting to save now? But he will not save where desire does not turn to prayer. If the men of Jericho had left the matter where it was they would still have had to suffer loss, but they stirred themselves to call on one who was mighty to deliver. Is not this the secret? Are not some of us profitless and barren because we are too indolent to pray? But let us pause a moment to consider what a lesson there is here to the pulpit. Elisha said, "Bring me a new cruse." The dish did not cure the waters, but it had to be used, and therefore must be clean! God is pleased to use human beings as the instruments of conversion. As the prophet needed something to contain the healing salt, so preachers and teachers convey the saving truth. We have no description of the dish, as to its shape or colour; but being new, it was undefiled. We have this treasure in earthen vessels, and if we are to be useful, we had better be cracked, if clean, than entire, but vile. Mark you, preacher, it is not enough that you are a cruse; you must be filled with that which heals. Have we salt? It is

not a question as to the quality or style of pottery; it is salt that is needed. A common flower-pot filled with salt was better than a vase of classic mould if empty! Elisha did not waste time by trying to heal the stream. "He went forth TO THE SPRING." What expense and trouble are thrown away by vain attempts to heal the water lower down! We shall never succeed in keeping the tongue from bitter words if the heart is left to itself. It is useless for men to think blue ribbon will save them from drink if they do not look to God to take the selfishness out of the heart. It is a wise prayer, "Cleanse Thou the thoughts of our heart by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit." Is it not strange that men do not see that an impure fountain cannot be cleansed by either altering the course of the stream or using remedies lower down? III. -- And then we have THE RESULTS OF CONVERSION. "The waters were healed." Mark you, the prophet took care there should be no mistake as to the cause. It was neither he, nor the cruse, nor the salt: "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters." "It shall be to the Lord for a name." Let the crown be on the Head. So the waters were healed. What a change in a short time! But the results would not be seen all at once; it would take time to prove the realness of the change, yet each season would only prove the grand conversion that had happened. If we have received Christ into our hearts, the results will be shown; and there are no evidences of Christianity better than these true conversions, which change a man's life, and make it evident that he, like the fields around Jericho, has passed from death unto life. The other day, a Lancashire coal-miner was killed in the pit; only a minute before he was killed he was overheard praising God. He had been a sad drunkard; his home was wretchedness itself. Money was in his hands only helpful to hellish enjoyment. But the grace of God changed his heart and life. His home and family were soon made happy. He became a preacher, went about from village to village testifying of God's saving grace. In one place he said: "When I was here last, I won 20 pounds by jumping, but my wife and children were no better for it; the publican got it all, and I was locked up into the bargain." He was buried with every sign of respect; hundreds followed him to the grave, and everyone felt that the world was the poorer now that he was gone. These are the evidences we want; these proofs of the truth of the Bible close the mouth of the infidel and scorner. If you would help on the cause of Christianity, love the truth, and make the fields, once barren, bloom with beauty; so shall the name of the Lord be magnified. Shall we not all join in Charles Wesley's prayer? -- Jesus, Thy salvation bring,

Cast the salt into the spring,

In my heart Thy love reveal,

Nature's bitter waters heal;

Let the principles of grace

Bring forth fruits of righteousness:

Then the barren curse is o'er,

Sin and death are then no more.

LVIII. THE FIRST LIE.

"Ye shall not surely die." -- GENESIS iii.4. I. -- WHO WAS THE FIRST LIAR? The old serpent, the devil, called elsewhere "the father of lies." But he had not always been a liar; he had fallen from a position very eminent, teaching us not to measure our safety by our condition. The higher we are elevated, the more dreadful the fall. Some of the most degraded vagrants were cradled in comfort, and have wandered from homes of splendour. Perhaps the vilest of the vile once were ministers of the Gospel. In a village, the other day, I was told of a man, once a Sunday-school teacher, but now a professional gambler, and, in a coal-pit I know in the North of England, the foulest-mouthed blasphemer was once a Methodist local preacher. Who would have expected that one of God's angels would ever have turned tempter, and that one who had lived with God would have the bottomless pit dug for him and his companions? "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." How skilfully this lie was told! It was not to Adam the serpent spoke; he was not cheated (1 Tim. ii.14.) It would have been useless to have spoken to him on the subject; but Eve had not heard the commandment. It would be well if, when we are tempted, we said, "Why do you come to me? Is there no one else who understands this question more than I do?" If Eve had only thought, "Why is not my husband spoken to first?" Perhaps she was glad to accept responsibility she had no right to. Was ambition possible to her? We often see that evil succeeds by using that to pave the way. Lies do not overcome when contentment rules in Eden, but ambition is an incipient hell! Satan has not ceased to lie. He does not improve with old age! He still seeks whom he may devour. The most popular lie ever told is at present deceiving many of those who little think where their ideas were born. It is said over and over again in many circles that God will not punish sin. What is this but giving the Divine Being the lie? And there are some ministers who have taken upon them to contradict the Bible, and try to persuade their hearers, who too often want but little persuasion, that we may hope when God has said "Despair!" What is this but hatching the old serpent's eggs in the pulpit? II. -- WHAT WERE THE RESULTS OF THIS LIE? 1. They are very numerous, and we can only find space to say a few words on each. There was guiltiness. Eve believed the devil instead of God, and took the forbidden fruit, making herself a sinner. Her excuse was, "The serpent beguiled me." But she coveted that which God kept back. How many Edens are lost because we desire that which is forbidden! Is not this the spring of the so-called social evil? We may say what we like against seduction, and our words cannot be too strong, but the woman desiring when God had said, "Thou shalt not," is the true reason of many falls. 2. The next step downwards is the tempting of another and a loved one. Sometimes we have found ourselves wishing Eve had died with the fruit in her mouth, instead of living to do the devil's work, and lure her loved husband to the same ruin. Let me say here and with all emphasis, Never fear so much as when the hand of affection offers you that which God forbids. 3. Now comes Death. The parents of the human race were separated from God. Environment is a condition of life. They have learned to do evil, they have to share the lot of those who had not kept their first estate. Heaven was an impossible climate to the apostate angels, and Eden was only possible to those who obey. It is easy to see that the garden was not now Paradise. Adam and his wife hid themselves among the trees from the presence of the Lord! Those trees were not created for that purpose. Alas for

sin! it poisons food and taints air. We cannot insist upon this with too much force. It was true then as now. "He that believeth not shall not see life." Adam and Eve were poisoned by the forbidden fruit. Is it not yet true that Innocence, Chastity, Modesty, are dead in some who are thought to live? We wonder afterwards to see them cast out, but it is, after all, the separation of the dead from the living. 4. And now comes Suffering. They must hear the curse pronounced, and then depart into the world which has begun to grow thorns for them. Yes, sufferings after death. What is history but the story of punishment? When men scoff at what is called eternal punishment they forget, or, perhaps, have never given it a thought, that the punishment of the first crime is going on at the present moment. Thorns and briars are but parables. They are real, it is true. Man must wrestle with his mother earth for every bit he eats. She does not feed him willingly; she produces that which he cannot eat. He must lacerate her bosom with his spade ere she will yield him bread, and he must sweat with toil before she will give him his crust! Yet this is but the shadow of something terribly worse. The non-producer will live, whatever becomes of those who toil. What is war but one of the many things which rob man of his bread? The soldier is a consumer, not a producer. I do not say he is not a necessity. He is all that, but he must be fed. What matters it to him what is the price of meat; he will have his three-quarters of a pound of meat every day. Aye, and he earns it too! Who would grudge the brave fellows in Egypt the stores we send out? None of us. Yet we cannot but feel that the sword and bayonet, like the thorn hedge, take up soil which might grow corn, and the higher it grows the greater the shadow, and therefore the poorer the crops which are nighest to it. It is a necessity, but it is an expense. What are the so called dangerous classes? They live, they do not starve; they live on honest people. Judges, police, and jailers are fed by those who never trouble them. Crime is like a leech on the body, it will have blood. The wrongdoers are not the thorn hedge which we need for our protection, but the thistle, which has rare powers of reproduction, and uses the wind as its chariot to ride to other lands. Is it any wonder that wickedness is so difficult to eradicate? Those of us who have tried to keep our gardens free have sorrowed many a time when we have thought that the rain, so welcome to our newly-born flowers, will call into vigour the enemy that tries to strangle them. And this is but a figure of the terrible truth that prosperity to a nation always means a growth of crime, and that any event, even a public holiday, which should refresh and recuperate, means the resurrection of violence and an increase of suffering. 5. The first lie dug the first grave, and has never ceased to dig others. We have often imagined the scene when Abel was missed -- when his mother questioned his murderer as to where he had last seen his brother. How they would listen for his step, until suspense could be no longer borne, and the father would go out, only to find the corpse of his beloved child! Can we not hear the mother cry out, as she touches the cold clay -- "Would to God I had died the day I believed the lie!" What a picture for a painter like Rembrandt would that first funeral be! And what are churchyards and cemeteries but the proofs that the devil lied? Have you a grave? Does the clay cover the form once dearer than life to you? Let it plead with you to believe God and his word, rather than to trust to the old serpent. Let us be thankful that the seed of the woman is the Saviour of Men. Eden is not all shadow, even after the loss of purity. There is a promise yet to be fulfilled. "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," saith the Lord." The devil is to be cast into the bottomless pit, and even those whom he has deceived may go to a paradise where the trail of the serpent shall be no more seen. "The Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil," and the time is coming when war, slavery, ignorance, tyranny, hunger, and sin shall be among the dark clouds that roll away, as the sun which shall never set rises above the horizon to make glad the

children of men. Then shall the prophecy of the poet become history -- "In Him the tribes of Adam
boast

More blessings than their father lost."

LIX. WHAT WAS LEARNED IN GOD'S HOUSE. ISAIAH vi.

NOT SEEN BY EVERYONE THERE. -- Isaiah had his eyes opened. The same awful Person had been present before, but had not been seen, and He is still there, but how few of us are conscious of His presence. How differently the church and chapel-goers would look next Sunday morning as they come home, if only they realised what had been going on in the place where they had spent the last hour. I. A LESSON FROM HISTORY. -- "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord." The King of Judah was dead, but the King of Saints lives for ever. Whatever changes go on, whatever crown shifts to another head, GOD remains the same. In no battle is our General slain. In no national disgrace is He humbled. Uzziah had died a leper, his brilliant history ended in disgrace. Not so with Him whom we delight to honour. Of Him it is more true than of anyone else, "The path of THE JUST shineth more and more unto the perfect day." II. A LESSON IN WORSHIP. -- We see how the angels behave when in God's house. "Covered his face." Contrast this with the way the average church-goer acts. To look at the listless faces, the slovenly way in which men and women pray, the want of reverence, often in choirs, and sometimes in pulpits, makes us think there must be either a want of intellect or a lack of faith. If these people believe there is a God, how limited their power to conceive what He is like! But, knowing many of them to be shrewd in business or personal matters, we are led to think there is often more infidelity in places of worship than is thought for. The conduct of the Seraphims makes us blush for many services we have attended. If the thoughts of our hearts were spoken during our prayers, what a revelation there would be! Let us not forget that they are taken down, and are already in print, ready for the day of trial, when the books shall be opened! III. A LESSON IN MORALS. -- Words defile us! "I am a man of unclean lips." And it is a question if even swearing defiles a man's mouth more than words of prayer which are not meant. Would not any one of us rather be abused than cajoled? Who likes to think that men are lying when they praise us? Must we not pray for a watch to be set on our lips? If there could be a physical effect caused, as there is a moral, would not there be a sad disfigurement? Men and women with lips blacker than coal! It is a wise prayer, "Let the words of my mouth be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord." Deceit, flattery, formalism in prayer are abominable to God. It would be well if, when in church or chapel, we could see it in plain letters, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain." IV. -- A LESSON IN GRACE. -- Sin may be forgiven and guilt removed, and this to the certain knowledge of the penitent. One of the devil's lies is that either you are too wicked to be saved, or, if saved, you cannot hope to know it in this life; the one drives men to despair, the other prevents enjoyment of salvation. Isaiah knew that his sins were forgiven, and we have yet to learn that the cross of Jesus has made it less possible for us. It was from the altar the coal came that touched the lips. It is still true that it is sacrifice that takes away guilt. We have an altar, a sacrifice, a benediction such as Isaiah never knew for himself; we understand his sayings as he could not. "By His stripes we are healed." Reader, do you long for pardon, for conscious forgiveness? Wait on the Lord! Think of what He suffered, and why He suffered, and you shall sing with joyous lips -- My pardon I claim,

For a sinner I am,

A sinner believing in Jesu's name.

He purchased the grace,

Which now I embrace;

O Father, thou knowest He hath died in my place. V. -- A LESSON IN THEOLOGY. -- "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' What does this mean? Is it bad grammar or good theology? It sounds like "And God said, Let Us make man in our image?" "And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of Us." In John xii, 40, 41, we find that the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Lord who spoke the words we read in verses 9 and 10. In Acts xxviii.25 we are told it was the Holy Ghost who spake by Isaiah. What does this mean but that the Divine Three in One and One in Three was the Lord whom the prophet saw? VI. -- A LESSON TO WORKERS. -- When iniquity is purged away there is a willingness to be sent on God's errands. The lips that had been touched said, "Here am I, send me." If we are not willing to go, it is because there is still need of cleansing. Let those of us who find our feet slow to move on God's errands come again to the place of burning. We shall do well to say with Charles Wesley, in one of his less known poems -- Ah! woe is me, immerst in sin,

A man of lips and life unclean!

How shall I with Thy message run,

Or preach the pardoning God unknown?

Unless my God vouchsafe to cheer

His guilty, trembling messenger,

My fears disperse, my sins remove,

And purge me by the fire of love! O wouldst Thou teach my lips once more,

The comfort of Thy grace restore;

Assure me, Lord, that mine Thou art,

And stamp forgiveness on my heart;

Then should I, in my Jesu's name,

Glad tidings of great joy proclaim:

Of grace, which every soul may find,

And glory, bought for all mankind. CHRISTIAN, YOUR GREATEST DIFFICULTIES

WILL COME FROM YOUR OWN

SIDE. IT WAS NOT PHAROAH WHO

KEPT MOSES OUT OF CANAAN.

LX. PAUL AT SEA. ACTS xxvii. 22-25.

"There's no hope," said the captain, "the ship cannot live in such a storm." "There's no hope," said the military officer, "we shall never see Rome." "There's no hope," said the prisoners, "we shall die at sea instead of on the scaffold." One prisoner, however, had hope, and in the long run made all his companions to hope. Paul cried out, "BE OF GOOD CHEER, FOR THERE STOOD BY ME THIS NIGHT THE ANGEL OF GOD, WHOSE I AM, AND WHOM I SERVE, SAYING, FEAR NOT, PAUL, THOU MUST BE BROUGHT BEFORE CAESAR, AND LO, GOD HATH GIVEN THEE ALL THEM THAT SAIL WITH THEE." What a ring there is in the words, "Whose I am, and whom I serve." How Paul delighted in the fact that he was the servant of God. Often he used to say, "Paul, a servant of God," or rather "Slave of God," for that is what it means. And is it not still true that SERVICE IS THE BADGE OF SONSHIP? A man has no right to call himself a child of God who does not work for Him. Was it not so with Christ himself? Did He not, even when a boy, say, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" and the work of God is the delight of the heir of God. We do not join the church merely for what we can get, but for what we can do. How is it with you? Do you say, "What can I do?" That's the way Paul began -- "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Too many of us think -- How can I enjoy myself? What can I do to increase my happiness? If we would prove that we are the legitimate children of God, we must find out the best way of carrying out the wishes of God. If we set Christ before us as our example -- and after all He was the best servant His Father ever had, for while He was in this world He went about doing good, and we could have tracked His footsteps by the cessation of suffering, and the increase of comfort -- let us set about the same work. It is our business, if we would live godly, to dry up tears, and make smiles take the place of groans. If you are not at this glorious employment, begin to doubt if after all you are one of the elect. There are numbers of low-spirited Christians who would soon be among those who dance for joy if only they would look out for the one nearest to them who is sad, and who requires sympathy and help. What should you think of a man who wore the Queen's uniform, and yet who fought in the rank of her enemies; or if he did not fight against his own countrymen, assisted the foe to get provisions and ammunition? But this is the position of some who call themselves Christians. If they do not oppose Christianity in person, they help on the other side, and by the way they spend their money, and occupy their time, put all their influence in the wrong scale. Depend upon it when wages are paid, we shall find that each Master will claim those who served him. We know where Paul will be that day. Let us be in the same crowd! While all this is true, we must not forget that SERVICE BEINGS STORMS. If Paul had been the kind of Christian some of us are, he would have had a much easier time of it. However, that was not what he looked for. He did not want his heaven in this world, and so he had a rough time. Depend on it we are not going to have too much heaven down here, if we are to be crowned with immortality some day. There were in Paul's day not a few who escaped peril by being polite to the devil and all his crew, but that is something you and I cannot afford to do. John Wesley might have become a "College Don," and have flourished at Oxford, and perhaps if he had been strong enough of body, become an authority as to the quality of port wine. Who knows? There was a suit of purple and fine linen for him, if he would have worn it, instead of the rusty black cassock he was obliged to wear.

But, then, he chose affliction with the people of God, and won by hard work a place among the four-and twenty elders who sit nearest to the Lamb. And it holds true yet that if we will only be quiet and give Satan a bit of peace he will let us alone. Why could not Paul have been still, he would have kept out of that doomed ship; and so with thee my brother, thou mayest have a quiet life if thou wilt only pray less and be content to allow sin to have its own way. What are you most like? A barge or a brig? For there are some Christians whose course through life is like a canal-boat's path, smooth and level, with nothing more exciting than a lock, while others have to put out to sea and run the risk of tempest and wreck. Yet who does not feel that there is a nobility about a sailor which a bargeman cannot claim? Besides there's no room for promotion aboard a "flat," no more than there is the likelihood of a storm. As we read this story we feel that Paul was the true master-mariner that day. His angelic visitor lifted him to command, and this leads us to say, "STORMS CANNOT SEPARATE US FROM HEAVEN." "The angel stood by me." He made no mistake, he flew to the side of the real Commander, and it is sweet to know that come what will, nothing can come between us and the God we serve. What a different man Moses was when he stood by the Red Sea, to what he was when he was before the burning bush. Here are the sheep patiently and quietly browsing, there is the angry mob crying out "Were there no graves in Egypt?" Here there is the sign of God from whence comes the voice, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people," but yonder is the pillar of cloud shewing the way over the waves of the yet undivided sea. How much more noble is the Moses of the people than the Moses of the sheep! It is true that he had to encounter the storm, but then there was the triumph waiting to succeed the tempest. He who fears the contest should not covet the crown, but let the man who means to wear the conqueror's diadem know that in the fiercest part of the struggle the Lord Himself shall cheer His man! Besides, STORMS CANNOT ALTER THE PROGRAMME. God meant Paul to appear before Caesar. He was a notable illustration of the saying of Solomon, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings." Paul, the slave of God, made judges tremble, and his chained hands ruffled the imperial purple. If only we sail with Jesus, storms become our slaves. The Lord meant to have Christianity planted at Malta, and therefore Euroclydon must drive the wreck to that shore, but still en route to Rome. Take the so-called misfortunes out of the history of religion, and you put it back into commonplace. Persecution has pushed on the cause it has striven to hinder, and heroes are made by hindrances. "Why do the heathen rage? The Lord shall have them in derision." This was never so true as it was when the time came for Jesus to die. It seems as though Satan would have made a good Socinian. He saw not in the Scripture either the Saviour's Divinity or His atoning work, and so he hastened to have Him slain, and thereby carried out the programme of God. Have you ever noticed the prayer that was offered when the servants of God returned from jail? (See Acts iv.26 28). The enemy "gathered together to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done!" It shall yet be seen that no one has done so much for the truth as he who was a liar from the beginning! IT PAYS TO RIDE WITH JESUS CHRIST'S MEN. The angel brought the message, and Paul soon gave it out to all abroad: "GOD HATH GIVEN THEE ALL THEM THAT SAIL WITH THEE." It is yet true that religion is a great enemy to waste of life. Give us men who serve Christ to be our servants, and we need less police and a smaller fire brigade. Let Christ be King, and hospitals will not be needed as they are now. If Jesus is Lord, the alms-house would take the place of the Union. There is less peril where there is piety. Every man aboard the ship was to be saved, because Paul was there. Danger waits on the disobedient, but Providence yet says to the good, all shall come safe to land who sail with Paul.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net