

WE ENDEAVOR

by C.H. Spurgeon

Spurgeon's addresses on the necessity of earnest endeavor, service, and obedience in authentic Christian discipleship, calling believers to wholehearted commitment.

20 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. BOOK: We Endeavor
2. Service and Honour
3. "The Lord Working With Them"
4. The Holy Spirit Not Straitened
5. A Divine Commission
6. Great Faith and Great Works
7. "Give An Account of Thy Stewardship"
8. "Thou Hast Multiplied The Nation"
9. Working With a High Purpose
10. David and the Temple
11. "Is Not The Lord Your God With You?"
12. Vines With Tender Grapes
13. Good Work
14. As a Fire----and Like a Hammer
15. Beware of Foxes
16. Small Rain and Showers
17. The Four Lepers and the Syrian Camp
18. Philip and the Others Preach the Word
19. The Loaves and the Hungry People
20. The Lad's Loaves and Christ's Power

Chapter 1

BOOK: We Endeavor

We Endeavour Helpful Words for Members of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour
by

C. H. Spurgeon

Service and Honour

Service and Honour

You cannot have Christ if you will not serve Him. If you take Christ, you must take Him in all His characters, not only as Friend, but also as Master; and if you are to become His disciple, you must also become His servant. I hope that no one kicks against that truth. Surely it is one of our highest delights on earth to serve our Lord, and this is to be our blessed employment even in heaven itself: "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face." This thought also enters into our idea of salvation; to be saved, means that we are rescued from the slavery of sin, and brought into the delightful liberty of the servants of God. O Master, Thou art such a glorious Lord that serving Thee is perfect freedom, and sweetest rest! Thou hast told us that it should be so, and we have found it so. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." We do find it so; and it is not as though rest were a separate thing from service, the very service itself becomes rest to our souls. I know not how some of us would have any rest on earth if we could not employ our daily lives in the service of Christ; and the rest of heaven is never to be pictured as idleness, but as constantly being permitted the high privilege of serving the Lord.

Learn hence, then, all of you who would have Christ as your Saviour, that you must be willing to serve Him. We are not saved by service, but we are saved to service. When we are once saved, thenceforward we live in the service of our Lord. If we refuse to be His servants, we are not saved, for we still remain evidently the servants of self, and the servants of Satan. Holiness is another name for salvation; to be delivered from the power of self-will, and the domination of evil lusts, and the tyranny of Satan,—this is salvation. Those who would be saved must know that they will have to serve Christ, and those who are saved rejoice that they are serving Him, and that thus they are giving evidence of a change of heart and renewal of mind.

So you are proposing to yourself that you will serve Christ, are you? You are a young man, as yet you have plenty of vigour and strength, and you say to yourself, "I will serve Christ in some remarkable way; I will seek to make myself a scholar, I will try to learn the art of oratory, and I will in some way or other glorify my Lord's name by the splendour of my language." Will you, dear friend? Is it not better, if you are going to serve Christ, to ask Him what He would like you to do? If you wished to do a kindness for a friend, you certainly would desire to know what would best please that friend, or else your kindness might be mistaken, and you might be doing that which would grieve rather than gratify. Now listen. Your Lord and Master does not bid you become either a scholar or an orator in order to serve Him. Both of those things may happen to fall to your lot in that path of duty which He would have you to take; but first of all He says, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." This is what Christ prefers beyond anything else, that His servants should follow Him. If we do that, we shall serve Him in the way which is according to His own choice. I notice that many good friends desire to serve Christ by standing on the top round of the ladder. You cannot get there at one step, young man; your better way will be to serve Christ by following

Him, by "doing the next thing," the thing you can do, that little simple business which lies within your capacity, which will bring you no special honour, but which, nevertheless, is what your Lord desires of you. In effect, you can hear Him say to you, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, not by aiming at great things, but by doing just that piece of work that I put before him at the time." "Seekest thou great things for thyself?" said the prophet Jeremiah to Baruch, "seek them not." So say I to you.

One friend, perhaps, blessed with great riches, is saying, "I will lay by in store until I acquire a considerable amount, and then build a row of almshouses for the poor; I will give very largely to some new foreign missionary effort, or I will build a house of prayer in which Christ's name shall be preached." God forbid that I should stop you in any right design whatever! Still, if you would do what is absolutely certain to please Christ, I would not recommend the selection of any one particular object, but I would advise you just to do this,—follow Him, remembering that He said, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." You will, by simply going behind your Master, following His footsteps, and being truly His disciple, do that which would please Him more than if you could endow His cause with a whole mint of riches. This is what He selects as the choicest proof of your love, the highest testimonial of your regard: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me."

He requires of you that you should become as a little child, that you may be taught by Him. His own words are, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." If you would be a servant of Christ, come to Him as a little child; sit on the infants' form, to be taught by Him the gospel A B C. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me,—follow Me as My disciple, regarding Me as his Teacher, to whom he bows his understanding and his entire mind, that I may fashion it according to My own will." This is the language of our Lord, and I would impress it very earnestly upon you all, and especially upon any who are beginning the Christian life. If you are to serve Christ, put your mind like a tablet of wax under His stylus, that He may write on you whatsoever He pleases. Be you Christ's slate, that He may make His mark on you. Be His sheet of paper, on which He may write His living letters of love. You can serve Him in this way in the best possible manner.

"Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." If you want truly to serve Christ, do not do what you suggest to yourself, but do what He commands you. Remember what Samuel said to Saul, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." I believe that the profession of consecration to God, when it is accompanied by action that I suggest to myself, may be nothing but will-worship, an abomination in the sight of God; but when anyone says to the Lord, "What wilt Thou have me to do? Show me, my Master, what Thou wouldst have me to do,"—when there is a real desire to obey every command of Christ, then is there the true spirit of service, and the true spirit of sonship. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, running at My call, following at My heels, waiting at My feet to do whatsoever I desire him to do." This makes life a very much simpler thing than some dream it to be. You are not to go and carve a statue out of the marble by the exercise of your own genius; if that were the task set before us, the most of us would never accomplish it. But you have just to go and write according to Christ's own example, to copy His letters, the upstrokes and the downstrokes, and to write exactly as He has written. The other day, I was asked to sign my name to a deed, and when it was handed to me, I said, "Why, I have signed my name!" "Yes," said the one who brought it, "you have the very easy task of marking it all over again." Just so, in that case I followed my own writing; and you have the easy task of writing after Christ, blacking

over again the letters that He Himself has made, and you cannot do Him better service than this. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; that is, let him do just what I bid him to do; follow Me by imitating My example." It is always safe to do what Christ would have done under the same circumstances in which you are placed. Of course, you cannot imitate Christ in His miraculous work, and you are not asked to imitate Him in some of those sorrowful respects in which He suffered that we might not suffer; but the ordinary life of Christ is in every respect an example to us. Never do what you could not suppose Christ would have done. If it strikes you that the course of action that is suggested to you would be un-Christly, then it is un-Christian, for the Christian is to be like Christ. The Christian is to be the flower growing out of the seed, Christ; and there is always a congruity between the flower and the seed out of which it grows. Keep your eyes fixed on your heavenly model, and pattern, and seek in all things ever to imitate Christ. If you want to serve Christ, repeat His life as nearly as possible in your own life. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me by copying My example."

You do not need to run away from your father and mother, and leave your home and friends, and go away to the blacks in Africa, in order to serve Christ. It is not the getting of some idle speculation in your own brain, and working that out according to your own whims and fancies, that constitutes service for Christ; it is just simply this,—if any man will serve Christ, let him follow Christ. Let him put his foot down as nearly as he can where Christ put His foot down; let him tread in Christ's steps, and be moved by His spirit, actuated by His motives, live with His aim, and copy His actions. This is the noblest way in which to serve the Lord.

"If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be." I do not know any other master but Christ who ever said that. There are some places where an earthly master does not want his servant to be; he must have some room to himself, and some engagements which he cannot explain to his servant, and into which his servant must not pry. But the Lord Jesus Christ makes this the glorious privilege of everyone who enters His service that, where He is, there shall His servant be. But where is Christ? He is and always was in the place of communion with God. He was always near to His Father. He often spoke with God. He ever had the joy of God filling His spirit. And you, perhaps, are saying to yourself, "I wish that I had communion with God." Well, through Jesus Christ, it is to be had by serving Him in that particular kind of service which consists in following Him. If you want to walk with God, why, of course, you must walk! If you sit down in idleness, you cannot walk with Him; and if you do not keep up a good brisk pace, He will walk on in front of you, and leave you behind, for the Lord is no laggard in His walking. Therefore, you see, there must be diligent progress, and activity in service, in order that we may keep pace with Him, and have communion with Him; and if we act thus here, He has promised that we shall be in the place of communion with our blessed Master. Our Lord Jesus Christ was in the place of confidence. Whenever Christ went to work, He worked with assurance. He never had a doubt as to His ultimate success. No haphazard work ever came from Christ's hands. He spoke with certainty, and He worked with the full assurance that His labour would not be in vain. If you want to have confidence in your work for Christ, so as to perform it without any doubts and fears, you will have to obtain it by serving Him, and to serve Him by following Him; and then, into that hallowed place of confidence where your Master always stood, there shall you also come.

It is very sweet to notice how the Lord Jesus brings His Father into His speech; it is as if He said, "When a man joins himself to Me, then he joins himself to My Father also. It is not only I who will love him, and do My best to honour him, but My Father, the great and ever-blessed Lord over all, keeps an eye on that man." On whom does He look with this gaze of approval? Not on those who have some grand project of serving themselves, but on those who serve Christ, and who do it by following Him.

It is delightful to have a sense of the approbation of God, such as you never had when you had the approbation of men. Sometimes, when even Christian people cry, "Well done, well done," the Lord says, "That is quite enough praise for him; I shall not give him My 'Well done.'" But when you get no "Well done" from men, but, on the contrary, are misunderstood and misrepresented, then the Lord comes and puts His hand upon you, and says, "Be strong, fear not, I have accepted your service. I know your motive, and I approve your action. Be not afraid of them, but go on your way." Such approval as that is the highest honour we can have here. "If any man serve Me," says Christ, "him will My Father honour," with a sense of sonship, and with a sense of approbation.

If a man will serve Christ by following Him, the Father will give him honour in the eyes of the blood-bought family. There are certain of the Lord's people who do not carry yard measures with them, but they carry scales and weights, and if they do not measure by quantity, they measure by quality; their approval is worth having. They are often the poorest and most afflicted members of the church; but being the most instructed, and living the nearest to God, to be had in honour of them is a thing worth having. I believe that, if any man will lead the life of a Christian, however few his talents, and if his service lies in close obedience and imitation of Christ, the real saints, not the mere professors, especially not the shining worldly ones among them, but real saints will say, "That is the man for us; that is the woman with whom we like to converse." Thus it comes to pass that those who really do serve the Lord by following Him have honour in the estimation of those who sit at meat with them at their Lord's table. And then, when we come to die, or when we stand at the judgment seat of Christ, or when we enter upon the eternal state, what a glorious thing it will be, to find the Father ready to honour us for ever because we served the Son! Our reward will not be of debt, but of grace; it is grace that gave us the service, and grace that will reward us for our service; but no man and no woman shall serve the Lord Jesus Christ here on earth by following Him, without finding that the Father has some special honour, some rich and rare reward, to give to such soldiers in due time. This is the fighting day, expect nothing now but bullets, bruises, wounds, scars; but the battle will soon be over, and when the war is ended, the King will come, and ride up and down the ranks, and in that day you who have been most battered and most wounded in the battle shall find Him pause when He reaches you, and He will fasten on your breast a star that shall be more honour to you than all the Victoria Crosses that have decorated brave men here below. Stars and garters they may have who want them, but blessed are they who shall shine as the stars in the kingdom of our Father! And this honour is to be had by that believer who will faithfully serve his Lord; not by any who merely talk about it, or dream of it, or propose to do it, but to those who serve Him by following Him this honour shall be given.

"The Lord Working With Them"

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I like the thought of Christ being taken up to heaven because His work was done, and His people being left on earth because there was still work for them to do. If we could steal away to heaven, what a pity it would be that we should do so while there is a single soul to be saved! I think that, if I had not brought to Christ the full number of jewels that He intended me to bring to adorn His crown, I would ask to come back again even from heaven. He knows best where we can best serve Him, so He ordains that, while He sits at the right hand of God, we are to abide here, and go forth to preach everywhere, the Lord working with us. This work of the disciples was aggressive; "they went forth." Some of them were bound to stay for a while at Jerusalem; though that old nest was eventually pulled down, not a stick of it was left, and the very tree on which it was built was cut down. Persecution drove forth the bulk of them further and further; we do not know where they all did go. There are traditions, which are not very valuable, to show where each of the apostles went, but it is quite certain that they all went somewhere or other; starting from the one common centre, they went in various directions preaching Christ. They worked: "They went forth, and preached." The disciples did not say:—"Well, the Master has gone to heaven, the eternal purposes of God will be quite sure to be carried out, it is not possible that the designs of infinite love should fail, the more especially as He is at the Father's side, therefore let us enjoy ourselves spiritually. Let us sit down in the happy possession of covenant blessings, and let us sing to our hearts' content because of all that God has done for us and given to us. He will effect His own purposes, and we have only to stand still and see the salvation of God." No, it was not for them to judge what they ought to do. When they were told to tarry at Jerusalem, they did tarry at Jerusalem. There are times of tarrying; but, inasmuch as the Master had commanded them to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, they also, when the hour had struck, went into all the world, and began to preach everywhere the gospel they had learned at Jesu's feet. It is not for us to judge what would seem most reasonable, much less what would be most comfortable; it is for us to do as we are bidden, when we are bidden, and because we are bidden, for are we not servants and not masters? It is not wise to map out the proceedings even of a single day, but to take our cue from Him who is our Guide and Leader, and to follow Him in all things.

There are some who only come to the communion; why? Because they are always at work for Christ in some way or other. They are at work in some mission-station, or trying to open a new room for preaching, or doing something or other for the Master; the Lord bless them! I do not want all to go out at one time; but I do want you all to feel that it is not the end, though it may be the beginning, of Christian life to come and hear sermons. Scatter as widely as ever you can the blessing which you get for yourself; the moment you find the light, and realize that the world is in the dark, run away with your match, and lend somebody else a light. Be glad of the light yourself; but, depend upon it, if God gives you a candle, and all you do is to lock yourself up in a room, and sit down, and say, "Sweet light! sweet light! I have got the light while all the world is in the dark; sweet, sweet light!" your candle will soon burn out, and you also will be in the dark. But if you go to

others, and say, "I shall have none the less light because I give some to you," by this means God the Holy Spirit will pour upon you fresh beams of light, and you shall shine brighter and brighter even to the perfect day.

"They went forth," Oh, that some people I know of could have their chapels burnt down! They have stuck in a hole down a back street for the last hundred years. They are good souls, and so they ought to be; they ought to be matured by now after so much storage; but if they would only come out in the street, they might do much more good than at present. "Oh, but there is an old deacon who does not like street-preaching!" I know him very well; he will be gone to heaven soon. Then, as soon as ever you have had his funeral sermon, turn out into the street, and begin somehow or other to make Christ known. Oh, to break down every barrier, and get rid of every restraint that hides the blessed gospel! Perhaps we must respect these dear old believers' feelings just a little, but not so much as to let souls die; we must seek to bring sinners to Jesus whether we offend men or whether we please them.

These disciples went forth promptly, for though there is not a word here about the time, yet it is implied that, as soon as the hour had struck, and the Holy Ghost had descended from Christ, and rested upon them, "they went forth, and preached the word everywhere." Alas, too often are we "going" to do something! If about a tenth part of what we are going to do were only done, how much more might be accomplished! "They went forth." They did not talk about going forth, but "they went forth." They did not wait until they received directions from the apostles where they were to go, but Providence guided each man, and each man went his own way, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You believe the gospel; you believe that men are perishing for lack of it; therefore, I pray you, do not stop to consider, do not wait to deliberate any longer. The best way to spread the gospel is to preach the gospel. I believe the best way of defending the gospel is to spread the gospel.

They served their Master obediently: "They went forth, and preached." Suppose they had gone forth, and had "a service of song"? Suppose they had gone forth, and held a meeting that was partly comic, with just a little bit of a moral tacked on to the end of it? We should have been in the darkness of heathendom to the present day. There is nothing that is really of any service for the spreading of the gospel but preaching. I mean by preaching, as I have already said, not merely the standing up in the pulpit, and delivering a set discourse, but talking about Christ,—talking about Him as risen from the dead, as the Judge of quick and dead, as the great atoning Sacrifice, the one Mediator between God and men. It is by preaching Jesus Christ that sinners are saved. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Whatever may be said outside the Bible about preaching, you have only to turn to the Word of God itself to find what a divine ordinance it is, and to see how the Lord makes that mainly to be the means of the salvation of men. This is the gun that will win the battle yet, though many have tried to silence it. They have had all sorts of new inventions and contrivances: but when all their inventions shall have had their day, and proved futile, depend upon it the telling out of Jesus Christ's name, and gospel, and work amongst mankind will be found to be effectual when all things else have failed. "They went forth and preached." It is not said that they went forth and argued, or that they went forth, and wrote Apologies for the Christian faith. No, they went forth and proclaimed—told out the truth as a revelation from God; in the name of Christ they demanded that men should believe in Him, and left

them, if they would not believe, with this distinct understanding, that they would perish in their unbelief. They wept over them, and pleaded with them to believe in Jesus; and they felt sure that whosoever did believe in Him would find eternal life through His name. This is what the whole Church of Christ should do, and do at once, and keep on doing with all its might, even until the end of the age.

There is one more word, everywhere. One of our great writers, in a very amusing letter which he has written to a person who had asked for a contribution towards the removal of a chapel debt, wants to know whether we cannot preach Christ behind hedges and in ditches. Of course we can, and we must do so, provided it does not rain too hard. Can we not preach Jesus Christ at a street corner? Of course we can. Yet in such a climate as ours we often need buildings in which we can worship God, but we must never get into the idea of confining our preaching to the building. "They went forth, and preached everywhere." John Wesley was complained of for not keeping to his parish, but he insisted that he did, for all the world was his parish; and all the world is every man's parish. Do good everywhere, wherever you may be. Some of you are going to the seaside for a holiday; do not go without a good stock of tracts, and do not go without seeking an opportunity, when you are sitting on the sands, to talk to people about the Lord Jesus Christ. A man had nothing particular to do except to go and sit down on a seat in Hyde Park, and there talk with ladies and gentlemen who came and sat there; he would tell them that he had a pew at the Tabernacle, and he would lend them his ticket, so that they might have a comfortable place; and then he took care after the sermon to talk to them about Christ. He said, "I cannot myself preach, but I can bring people to hear my minister, and I can pray God to bless them when they come." I saw another brother, who leaves his home at 8 o'clock on Sunday morning. There are, or there were, church members who walked twelve miles every Sunday morning to hear the gospel, and walked back again to their homes at night. This brother starts at 8 o'clock in the morning, and puts one of my sermons into each of the letter-boxes in a certain district as he comes along. So he utilizes a long walk, and in the course of the year circulates many thousands of sermons. What a capital way he has found of spending the Sabbath-morning! Having done that service for his Lord, he enjoys the gospel all the better because of what he has himself done in making it known to others.

You remember the passage in which we are said to be labourers together with God. Is it not gracious and kind on the Lord's part to let us come and work with Him? Yet it seems to my mind more condescending for God to come and work with us, because ours is such poor, feeble, imperfect service, yet so He does: "the Lord working with them." The Lord is working with that dear sister who, when she takes her class, feels that she is quite unfit for it; and with that brother who, when he preaches, thinks that it is not preaching at all, and is half inclined never to try again. Oh, yes, "the Lord working with them," such as they were,—fishermen, humble women, and the like! This was wonderful condescension. The Holy Ghost made what they said to be divinely powerful. However feebly they uttered it, according to the judgment of men, there was an inward secret power that went with their utterances, and compelled the hearts of men to accept the blessed summons of God. I believe that when we are seeking to serve Christ, we little know often how very wonderfully God is working with us. I had an instance; there was a certain district of which I heard that there was great need of the gospel there, and that there were many people in that district who were as ignorant of the way of salvation as Hottentots, and the various places of worship seemed

to affect a very small proportion of the people. A brother visited the neighbourhood for me, and I prayed very earnestly that his visits might be blessed. It is a very curious thing that, while I was thinking about that district, there were certain Christian people close to it who were thinking about me, and longing for the gospel to be carried to their neighbours; and after I had moved ever so little in the matter, I received a letter from them saying how much they wanted somebody to come and labour for the Lord among them. I said to myself, "This is strange; I have known this district for years, yet I have never noticed that anybody wanted me or my messaged; but the moment I begin to move towards the people they begin to move towards me." You do not know that you may not have a similar story to tell. There is that street you feel moved to go and work in,—God has been there before you, Do you not remember how, when His children had to go and destroy the Canaanites, the Lord sent the hornet before them? Now, when you have to go and preach to sinners, God sends some preparatory work before you, He is sure to do so. In other cases God works afterwards; sometimes, immediately afterwards; at other times, years afterwards. There are different sorts of seeds in the world. The seeds of some plants and trees, unless they undergo a peculiar process, will not grow for years. There is something about them which preserves them intact for a long time, but in due season the life-germ shoots forth: and there are certain kinds of men who do not catch the truth at the time it is uttered, and it lies hidden away in their souls till, one day, under peculiar circumstances, they recollect what they heard, and it begins to affect their hearts.

If we work, and God works with us, what is there that we may not expect? Therefore, the great need of any working church is for God to work with them, and therefore this ought to be our daily confession, that we need God to work with us. We must always realize that we are nothing apart from His working; we must not pretend to compliment the Holy Ghost by now and then talking about Him, as though it were the proper thing to say that of course the Holy Spirit must work. It must be a downright matter of fact with us that the Holy Spirit must work, as much as it would be with a miller that his sails could not go round without the wind; and then we must act as the miller does. He sets his sails and tries to catch the wind from whatever quarter it blows; and we must try to work in such a way that the Holy Ghost is likely to bless us. I do not think the Holy Ghost will bless some service that is done even by well-meaning people, because if He did, it would seem as if He had set His seal to a great deal that was not according to the mind of the Lord. Let us so act in our work, that there is never the smudge of a dirty thumb across the page, and nothing of pride, or self-seeking, or hotheadedness, but that all is done humbly, dependently, hopefully, and always in a holy and gracious spirit, so that we may expect the Holy Spirit to own and bless it. That will, of course, involve that everything must be done prayerfully, for our Heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him; and we must ask for this greatest of blessings, that God the Holy Spirit may work with our work.

Then we must believe in the Holy Spirit, and believe to the highest degree, so as never to be discouraged or think anything difficult. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Can anything be difficult to the Holy Spirit? It is a grand thing often to get into deep water so as to be obliged to swim; but we like to keep our feet touching the sand. What a mercy it is to feel that you cannot do anything, for then you must trust in God and God alone, and feel that He is quite equal to any emergency! Thus trusting, and thus doing His bidding, we shall not fail; Come, Holy Spirit, and work with all Thy people now! Come and rouse us to work; and when we are bestirred to a holy energy, then

work Thou with us!

The Holy Spirit Not Straitened

The Holy Spirit Not Straitened Have faith in God, and never let your discovery of your own weakness shake your firm conviction that with God all things are possible. It seems to me to be a fountain of comfort, a storehouse of strength. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel, nor conceive of the Holy Ghost as bounded and checked by the difficulties which crop up in fallen human nature. No case which you bring to Him with affectionate tears and with an earnest faith in Jesus shall ever be dismissed as incurable. Despair of no man, since the Lord of hosts is with us. Sometimes we are troubled because of the hardness of men's hearts. You that work for the Lord know most about this. If anybody thinks that he can change a heart by his own power, let him try with any one he pleases, and he will soon be at a nonplus. Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon: our trembling arm cannot roll away the stone of natural depravity. Well, what then? The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! Did I hear you cry, "Alas! I have tried to reclaim a drunkard, and he has gone back to his degradation"? Yes, he has beaten you, but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Do you cry, "But he signed the pledge, and yet he broke it"? Very likely your bonds are broken; but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot He renew the heart, and cast out the love of sin? When the Spirit of God works with your persuasions, your convert will keep his pledge. "Alas!" cries another, "I hoped I had rescued a fallen woman, but she has returned to her iniquity." No unusual thing this with those who exercise themselves in that form of service; but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot He save the woman that was a sinner? Cannot He create a surpassing love to Jesus in her forgiven spirit? We are baffled, but the Spirit is not. What narrow and shallow vessels we are! How soon we are empty! We wake up on the Sabbath morning and wonder where we shall find strength for the day. Do you not sigh, "Alas! I cannot take my Sunday-school class today with any hope of teaching with power; I am so dreadfully dull and heavy; I feel stupid and devoid of thought and feeling"? In such a case say to yourself, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" He will help you. You purpose to speak to someone about his soul, and you fear that the right words will not come. You forget that He has promised to give you what you shall speak. "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Cannot He prepare your heart and tongue? No, the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. Still is that promise our delight: "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is a joy to become weak that we may say with the apostle, "When I am weak then am I strong." Behold, the strength of the Lord is gloriously revealed, revealed to perfection in our weakness. Come, ye feeble workers, ye fainting labourers, come and rejoice in the unstraitened Spirit. Come you that seem to plough the rock and till the sand, come and lay hold of this fact, that the Spirit of the Lord is omnipotent. No rock will remain unbroken when He wields the hammer, no metal will be unmelted when He is the fire. Still will our Lord put His Spirit within us and gird us with His power, according to His promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." But some have said, "Yes, but then, see how few the conversions are nowadays! We have many places of worship badly attended, we have others where there are scarcely any conversions from the beginning of the year to the end of it." This is all granted, and granted with great regret; but "is the Spirit of the Lord straitened: are these His doings?" Cannot we find some other reason far more near the truth? If there are no conversions we cannot fall back upon the Spirit of God, and blame Him. Has Christ been

preached? Has faith been exercised? The preacher must take his share of blame; the church with which he is connected must also inquire whether there has been that measure of prayer for a blessing on the word that there ought to have been. Christians must begin to look into their own hearts to find the reason for defeat. If the work of God be hindered in our midst, may there not be some secret sin with us which hinders the operation of the Spirit of God? May He not be compelled by the very holiness of His character to refuse to work with an unholy or an unbelieving people? Have ye never read, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief"? May not unbelief be turning a fruitful land into barrenness? The Spirit Himself is not straitened in His power; but our sin has made Him hide Himself from us. The want of conversions is not His doing: we have not gone forth in His strength. We shake off with detestation the least trace of a thought that should lay any blame to the Spirit of the Most High. Unto us be shame and confusion of face as at this day. But it is also said that there is a want of power largely manifested by individual saints. Where are now the men who can go up to the top of Carmel and cover the heavens with clouds? Where are the apostolic men who convert nations? Where are the heroes and martyr spirits of the better days? Have we not fallen upon an age of little men, who little dare and little do? It may be so; but this is no fault of the great Spirit. Our degeneracy is not His doing, We have destroyed ourselves, and only in Him is our help found. Instead of crying today, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord," we ought to listen to the cry from heaven which saith, "Awake, awake, O Zion; shake thyself from the dust, and put on thy beautiful garments." Many of us might have done great exploits if we had but given our hearts thereto. The weakest of us might have rivalled David, and the strongest among us might have been as angels of God. We are straitened in ourselves; we have not reached out to the possibilities of strength which lie within grasp. Let us not wickedly insinuate a charge against the good Spirit of our God; but let us in truthful humility blame ourselves. If we have not lived in the light, can we marvel that we are in great part dark? If we have not fed upon the bread of heaven, can we wonder that we are faint? Let us return unto the Lord. Let us seek again to be baptized into the Holy Ghost and into fire, and we shall yet again behold the wonderful works of the Lord. He sets before us an open door, and if we enter not, we are ourselves to blame. He giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and if we be still impoverished, we have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss.

"Look at the condition of the world. After the gospel has been in it nearly two thousand years, see how small a part of it is enlightened, how many cling to their idols, how much of vice, and error, and poverty, and misery, are to be found in the world!" We know all these sad facts; but are these His doings? Tell me, when has the Holy Spirit created darkness or sin? Where has He been the author of vice or oppression? Whence come wars and fightings? Come they from Him? Come they not from our own lusts? What if the world be still an Augean Stable, greatly needing cleansing; has the Spirit of God in any degree or sense rendered it so? Where the gospel has been fully preached, have not the words of the Lord done good to them that walk uprightly? Have not cannibals, even during the last few years, been reclaimed and civilized? Has not the slave trade, and other villainies, been ended by the power of Christian influence? How, then, can the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the gospel, be blamed? Will you attribute the darkness to the sun? Will you charge the filthiness of swine to the account of the crystal stream? Will you charge the pest upon the fresh breeze from the sea? It were quite as just, and quite as sensible. No, we admit the darkness and the sin and the misery of men. Oh, that our head were waters and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night concerning these things! But these are not the

work of the Spirit of God. These come of the spirit from beneath. He that is from above would heal them. He is not straitened. These are not His doings. Where His gospel has been preached, and men have believed it and lived according to it, they have been enlightened, and sanctified, and blessed. Life and love, light and liberty, and all other good things, come of the Spirit of the Lord.

"Blessings abound where'er He reigns; The prisoner leaps to lose his chains, The weary find eternal rest, And all the sons of want are bless'd."

A Divine Commission

A Divine Commission

If any of us would receive a commission for Christian service, it must come from Christ Himself; if we would carry out that commission, it must be in loyalty to Christ; and if we hope to succeed in that commission, it must be in a perpetual, personal fellowship with Christ. We must begin to work with Him, and go on working with Him, and never cease to work until He Himself shall come to discharge us from the service because there is no further need of it. Oh, that we did all our work in the name of the great Head of the Church! Oh that we did all Christ's work consciously in the presence and in the strength of Christ!

Christ at this moment possesses a royal authority;—by might, it is true, but chiefly by right. His is the power which comes of His merits, of His glorious nature, and of the gift of the Divine Spirit who rests upon Him without measure. The word we translate "power" has a wider meaning than that; you find a good instance of it in John 1:12 : "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God," where the word "power" might be rendered "privilege" or "right" or "liberty", and yet be correctly translated "power" also. Christ at this moment has all rights in heaven and in earth; He has all sovereignty and dominion, and, of course, He has all the might which backs up His right; but it is not mere power in the sense of force, it is not the dynamite power in which earthly kings delight, it is another and a higher kind of force which Christ has, even the Divine energy of love. He possesses at this moment all authority in heaven and in earth.

"All power," He says, "is given unto Me"; that is to say, He has it now. You and I are not sent out to preach the gospel in order to get power for Christ; He has it now. We are not sent out, as we sometimes say, to win the world for Christ; in the strictest sense, it is His now. He is the King of Glory at this very moment, He is even now Lord over all, King of kings, and Lord of lords; all authority is given unto Him. I shall not try to explain the particular time when it was given, but I remind you that it has been given. That great act is accomplished; our Lord Jesus holds in His hand the sceptre which gives Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him. He has already in His hand that sceptre with which He shall break the nations as with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. He has not to go up to His throne, He is already enthroned. He has not to be crowned, He is already crowned, as we have said, King of kings and Lord of lords.

I have met with some who have tried to read the Bible the wrong way upwards. They have said, "God has a purpose which is certain to be fulfilled, therefore we will not budge an inch. All power is in the hands of Christ, therefore we will sit still;" but that is not Christ's way of reading the passage. It is, "All power is given unto Me, therefore go ye, and do something." "But, Lord, what dost Thou want from us when Thou hast all power? We are such poor insignificant, useless creatures that we shall be sure to make a muddle of anything that we attempt." "No," says the Master, "all power is given unto Me, therefore go ye." He puts us on the go because He has all power. I know that with many of us there is a tendency to sit down and say, "All things are wrong, the world gets darker

and darker, and everything is going to the bad." We sit and fret together in most delightful misery, and try to cheer each other downwards into greater depths of despair! Do we not often act thus? Alas! it is so, and we feel happy to think that other people will blend in blessed harmony of misery with us in all our melancholies; or if we do stir ourselves a little, we feel that there is not much good in our service, and that very little can possibly come of it. This message of our Master seems to me to be something like the sound of a trumpet. I have given you the strains of a dulcimer, but now there rings out the clarion note of a trumpet. Here is the power to enable you to "go." Therefore, "go" away from your dunghills, away from your ashes and your dust. Shake yourselves from your melancholy. The bugle calls, "Boot and saddle! Up and away!" The battle has begun, and every good soldier of Jesus Christ must be to the front for his Captain and his Lord. Because all power is given unto Christ, He passes on that power to His people, and sends them forth to battle and to victory.

"Go, go ye," says Christ. "But, Lord, if we go to men, they will ask for our passports." "Take them," says He, "all authority is given unto Me in heaven and earth. You are free of heaven, and you are free of earth. There is no place,—whether it be in the far-off Ethiopia, or in the deserts of Scythia, or in the centre of Rome,—there is no place where you may not go. There are your passports: 'All authority is given unto Me, therefore go ye.'"

"But, Lord, we want more than passports, we need a commission." "There is your commission," says the Lord; "all power is given unto Me, and I delegate it to you. I have authority, and I give you authority; go ye therefore because I have the authority. Go and teach princes and kings and beggars, teach them all alike. I ordain you, I authorize you, as many of you as know Me, and have My love shed abroad in your hearts, I commission you to go and—

" 'Tell to sinners round What a dear Saviour you have found;'

and if they ask how you dare to do it, tell them not that the bishop ordained you, or that a synod licensed you, but that all power is given to your Master in heaven and in earth, and you have come in His name, and nobody may say you nay."

"Moreover," says the Master, "I send you with My power gone before you." Observe that, for I bring it again to your recollection. Christ does not say, "Go and win the power for Me on earth, go and get power for Me among the sons of men." No; but "All authority and power are already vested in Me, go ye therefore. I send you to a country which is not an alien kingdom, I send you to a country which is Mine, for all souls are Mine. If you go to the Jews or to the Gentiles, they are Mine; if it be to India or China that you go, you need ask no man's leave; you are in your own King's country, you are on your own King's errand, you have your own King's power going before you." I do believe that, often, when missionaries go to a country, they have rather to gather ripe fruit than to plant trees. As the Lord sent the hornets to clear the way for the children of Israel, so does He oftentimes send singular changes, political, social, and religious, before the heralds of the Cross, to prepare the way for them; and this is the message which sounds with clear clarion note to all the soldiers of King Jesus:—"I have all authority in heaven and in earth, therefore, without misgivings or questionings, go ye and evangelize all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Unless the Holy Ghost blesses the Word, we are of all men most miserable, for we have attempted a task that is impossible, we have entered upon a sphere where nothing but the supernatural will ever avail. If the Holy Spirit does not renew hearts, we cannot do it. If the Holy Ghost does not regenerate them, we cannot. If He does not send the truth home into their souls, we might as well speak into the ear of a corpse. All that we have to do is quite beyond our unaided power; we must have our Master with us, or we can do nothing. We deeply feel our need of this great truth; we not merely say it, but we are driven every day, by our own deep sense of need, to rejoice that our Lord has declared, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

Why are we ever cast down? Why do we ever begin to question the ultimate success of the good cause? Why do we ever go home with aching head and palpitating heart because of the evils of the day? Courage, courage; the King has all power, it is impossible to defeat Him. The right wing of our army may be shattered for a moment; but the King in the centre of the host still rides upon the white horse of victory, and He has but to will it, He has but to speak a single word, and the enemy shall be driven away like chaff before the wind.

Christ says, "Go." Then, let us go at once, according to His Word, in the track which God's own hand marks out for us. Let us go and disciple all nations, let us tell them that they are to learn of Christ, and that they are to be obedient to His will.

Next, let us be loyal to Him in all things, and let us train up His disciples in loyalty to Him: "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." As He has all authority, let us not intrude another authority. Let us keep within the Master's house, and seek to know the Master's mind, to learn the Master's will, to study the Master's Book, and to receive the Master's Spirit, and let these be dominant over all other power; and all the while let us endeavour to keep in fellowship with Him: "Lo, I am with you always." Let us never go away from Him. Because all authority is given unto Him, let us keep close by His side; let us be the yeomen of His guard. Let us be the servants who unloose the latchets of His shoes, who bring water for His feet, and who count ourselves highly honoured thereby. "Lo, I am with you always," saith He, so let us always be with Him.

Great Faith and Great Works

Great Faith and Great Works

Those nine disciples, who remained at the foot of the mountain when the Saviour took the other three to behold His transfiguration, had each of them a true commission from the Lord Jesus Christ. They were nine of His chosen apostles. He had elected them in His own good pleasure, and there was no doubt about their being really called to the apostleship. They were not only elected, but they were also qualified, for on former occasions they had healed the sick, they had cast out devils, and they had preached the Word of Christ with great power. Upon them rested miraculous influences, and they were able to do great wonders in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; and they were not only qualified to do this, but they had actually performed many marvels of healing. When they went forth, girded with divine power, they healed the sick, and cast out devils everywhere; yet on this occasion they were completely baffled and beaten. A poor father had brought to them his epileptic son, who was also possessed with an evil spirit; and they could neither cast out the evil spirit nor heal the epileptic boy. They came, as it were, to a great difficulty which quite nonplussed them; and the scoffing scribes were there, ready enough to take advantage of them, and to say in scorn and contempt, "You cannot cure this child, for the power you have received from your Master is limited. He can do some strange things, but even He cannot do all things. Perhaps He has lost His former power, and now, at last, a kind of devil has appeared that He cannot master. You see, you are mistaken in following Him; your faith has been fixed upon an impostor, and you had better give it up." Oh, how ready the evil spirit ever is to suggest dark thoughts if we cannot always be successful in our work of faith and labour of love! Why do you think that the Lord allows his servants to be beaten at all? Well, of course, the chief reason in this case was—because God gives the victory to faith, and if we will not believe, neither shall we be established. If we fall, as those disciples probably had fallen, into an unspiritual frame of mind and a low state of grace, our commission will not be worth much, our former qualifications will be of little value, and all successes we have had in earlier days will not take away the effect of present failures. We shall be like Samson, who went out and shook himself as he had done aforetime; but the Spirit of God had departed from him; and the Philistines soon overcame him,—those very Philistines whom, if his Lord had still been with him, he would have smitten hip and thigh with great slaughter. If we are to do the Lord's work, and to do it successfully, we must have faith in Him, we must look beyond ourselves, we must look beyond our commission, we must look beyond our personal qualifications, we must look beyond our former successes, we must look for a present anointing by the Holy Spirit, and by faith we must hang upon the living God from day to day. If I am successful, why is it that I succeed? Let me know the secret, that I may put the crown on the right head. If I do not succeed, let me know the reason why, that I may at any rate try to remove any impediment, if it be an impediment of my own making. If I am a vessel that is not fit for the Master's use, let me know why I am not fit, that I may, as much as lieth in me, prepare myself for the great Master's service. I know that, if I am fit to be used, He is sure to use me; and if He does not use me, it will most probably be because there is some unfitness in me. Try to know

why you get baffled in holy service, for it will be wise to know.

Probably, it may tend very greatly to your humiliation. It may make you go, with tears in your eyes, to the mercy-seat. You may not yet know all that is in your own heart; there may be a something, which to you seems to be a very trifling affair, which is grieving your God, and weakening your spiritual power. It may seem to you to be a little thing, but in that little thing may lie the eggs of so much mischief that God will not tolerate it, and He will not bless you until you are altogether clear of it. It will be wise and right, therefore, even though it be to your sorrow and regret, that you should find the answer to the question, "Why could not we cast him out?" I am sure that anything that makes us often come back to our Lord, must be a blessing to us. It is very humiliating to have so long preached in vain; to have gone to that village so many times, and yet to see no conversions; to visit that lodging-house so often, and apparently to have made no impression upon the careless inmates, or to have gone into that dark garret, and told out the story of the Cross, only to find that the hearer is just as dark, and, possibly, just as brutal as ever. It seems as if our hearts must break, when we are really in earnest, yet we cannot achieve the blessed purpose that we feel sure must be dear to the Saviour's own heart; but it may be that our non-success has much of divine instruction in it, and it may be the preface and preparation for future success that shall greatly honour the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a part of the training of the twelve. They were at college now, with Christ as their Tutor. They were being prepared for those grand days when they should do even greater things than He had done, because He had gone back again to His Father, and had received still greater power, and had given it to them. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."

For, whatever may be the reason of your failure, it may be cured. In all probability, it is not a great matter, certainly not an insuperable difficulty to the Lord. By the grace of God, this hindrance may be taken away from you, and no longer be allowed to rob you of your power. Search it out, then; look with both your eyes, and search with brightest light that you can borrow, that you may find out everything that restrains the Spirit of God, and injures your own usefulness.

"Why could not we cast the evils out of them?" That question each teacher may ask concerning his class, and each worker concerning his sphere of labour. I ask it concerning some who have made a profession of religion, and then have foully fallen, and others who have backslidden into coldness or lukewarmness, and many who, after years of preaching, remain just the same as ever. What devil is this that has got into them? Why cannot we cast him out? The Lord Jesus told them that their failure was due to their want of faith. He did not say, "Because of the devil, and his peculiar character, and the strength of his entrenchment within the poor sufferer's nature;" but he said, "Because of your unbelief." They might have said, and it would have been true, "This demon has been long in possession." The father said that the affliction came upon him when he was a child. You know that it is not easy to turn out a devil that has lived in any place, say, for twenty years. It is a difficult thing to cast out evils of long standing; still, if we have faith, there will be no difficulty in overcoming even those sins that have held possession of the sinner for a great length of time.

Moreover, in this case, there was the strength of this devil as well as the length of his possession. He took this poor child, and threw him into the fire or into the water, and hurled him to and fro at his cruel and wicked pleasure. He did this even before the disciples' eyes. Yes, but if they had had

faith, they would have understood that, though Satan is strong, Christ is far stronger. The devil is mighty, but God is almighty. If the disciples had only believed, they might have overcome the demon by the power of Christ.

You see, the want of faith breaks the connection between us and Christ. We are like the telegraphic wire, which can convey the message as long as the electricity can travel along it; but if you break the connection, it is useless. Faith is our connection with Christ; break the connection, and then what can we do? It is by faith that God works in us and through us; but if unbelief comes in, we are unfit for Him to work with us. Would you have God to bless the man who will not believe in Him? Would you have God to set His seal to the works of the unbelieving? That cannot be. The first condition of success in any work for God must be hearty faith in the God for whom we are working.

Looking now upon the condition of our times, and upon the work allotted to each one of us, I feel that what we want is more faith. Never mind how firmly fixed are the mountains of iniquity; they must move if faith be strong. Never mind how deep have gone the roots of the sycamine tree; it shall be plucked up by its roots if faith be strong. We do not half believe! Dare and venture, and yet find no daring and no venturing in it, as you simply trust your God as a child trusts his father. We have often failed because of our unbelief.

It may be that there are cases in which God will not yield to your faith until your faith works in prayer; and then, when prayer has wrought to its utmost, you shall get the blessing.

I think that I can understand some of God's reasons for acting thus. First, He wants to make us see the greatness of the mercy, so He occupies our thoughts with the greatness of the distress that needs to be relieved, and with the impossibility of that distress being relieved except by His own power and Godhead. That experience does us good. It makes us feel that the mercy, when it does come, will be remarkably precious. The Lord intends also to excite our desires, and that, likewise, does us good. To be all aglow with holy desires is, in itself, a healthy exercise. Then the Lord means to create in us unity of action. One brother finds that he cannot get on alone, so he will call in another to help him in prayer; and much holy united supplication will be called forth by the very desperateness of the case which cannot be met by simple faith, or even by the prayer of one. Let us always seek the united prayers of many brethren and sisters. You remember that man who was carried by four, and let down from the roof into Christ's presence. Oh, I wish that, in your houses, you met frequently, in twos and threes, for united prayer! I should like to hear of little bands formed of Christian men and women, who pledged themselves to pray, four at a time, for somebody possessed by a devil of the kind that will not go out by ordinary means, and must be ejected by four of you. Get together, and say to yourselves, "We will not rest until this soul, and that soul, shall have the devil cast out, and shall sit, clothed, and in their right mind, at Jesus Christ's feet." "This kind"—these certain kinds of devils are not to be driven out, except by special, importunate, continued, united prayer. They can be cast out if you only believe and pray; there is never a devil but will have to go, if you have faith enough and prayer enough to drive him out.

"By prayer and fasting." Our Lord Jesus Christ never made much of fasting. He very seldom spoke about it; and when the Pharisees exaggerated it, he generally put them off by telling them that the time had not come for his disciples to fast, because the Bridegroom was still with them, and while He was with them their days were to be days of joy. But, still, Holy Scripture does speak of fasting,

in certain cases it advises fasting, and there were godly men and godly women, such as Anna, the prophetess, who "served God with fastings and prayer night and day." I do not mean to spiritualize this away. I believe, literally, that some of you would be a great deal the better if you did occasionally have a whole day of fasting and prayer. There is a lightness that comes over the frame, especially of bulky people like myself; we begin to feel ourselves quite light and ethereal. I remember one day of fasting and prayer, in which I realized to myself, spiritually, the meaning of a popish picture, which I have sometimes seen, of a saint floating in the air. Well that, of course, was impossible; and I do not suppose that, when the picture was painted, it was believed in its literal sense; but there is a lightness, an elevation of the spirit above the flesh, that will come over you after some hours of waiting upon God in fasting and prayer. I can advise brethren sometimes to try it; it will be good for their health, and it certainly will not harm them. If we only ate about half what is ordinarily eaten, we should probably all of us be in better health; and if, occasionally, we put ourselves on short commons, not because there is any virtue in that, but in order to get our brains more clear, and to help our hearts to rest more fully upon the Saviour, we should find that prayer and fasting have great power.

Permit me to say just one thing more. I believe that the devil of drunkenness will not go out of some men, unless Christian people, who pray for them, and talk with them, will practise fasting in the matter of total abstinence. I do mean this, not that it is wrong for you to take what you do take, but that there are some souls that you cannot win unless you say to them, "For your sakes we are going to give up what might be lawful to us, that we may save you from the public-house and all its temptations. Come, Jack, I intend to take the pledge; I never was drunk, and probably never shall be, but I will sign the pledge for your sake." There are some devils that will not go out till you act like that; and we ought to do anything that may result in the saving of a soul. We ought to deny ourselves anything of which we can deny ourselves, if it be necessary to bring one single person to the cross of Christ. Let us see to it that we are quite clear in this matter, for there are still many devils that will not go out without prayer and fasting. Well then, say, "I will not fast to please the devil, or to please other people; but I will fast to spite the devil, and to get him out of that man. I will fast from anything so that I may but bring him to the feet of Jesus, that he may be saved." We who love the Lord are, I trust, all agreed on that matter, that no cost on our part should be spared to win a soul from the dominion of Satan, and bring him into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

"Give An Account of Thy Stewardship"

"Give an Account of Thy Stewardship"

Give an account of thy stewardship as to thy talents. We all vary in natural gifts and in acquirements; one has the tongue of eloquence, another the pen of a ready writer, and a third the artistic eye that discerns beauty; but, whichever of these we may have, they belong to God, and ought to be used in His service. Some have only such gifts as qualify them to earn their daily bread by manual labour; they have but little mental power, yet for that little they must give an account, and also for the physical strength with which God has blessed them. There is no person without a talent of some sort or other, no one without some form of power either given by nature or acquired by education. We are all endowed in some degree or other, and we must each one give an account for that talent. What an account must some give, who have been endowed with ten talents, but have wasted them all! What must be the account rendered by a Napoleon? What must be the reckoning given in by a Voltaire, with all the splendour of his intellect laid at the feet of Satan, and desecrated to the damnation of mankind? Yet, while you think of these great ones of the earth, do not forget yourselves. What has been your special gift? You can speak well enough in some companies; have you ever spoken for Christ? You can write well, you judge that you have no mean gift in that direction; has your pen never written a line that will bring your fellow men to the service of the Saviour? What! having ten talents, are they all wrapped up in napkins, or all used for self, and none employed for God, for holiness, for truth, for righteousness? How sternly does the command come, "Give an account of thy stewardship;" yet I am afraid that we cannot any of us give an account of talents without fear and trembling.

Give an account of thy substance. We vary greatly as to temporal circumstances. I suppose there are a few to whom God has entrusted great wealth, more to whom He has given considerable substance, and that to most He has given somewhat more than is absolutely necessary for actual wants; but whether it is much or little, we must give an account for it all. I do not know what some rich professors will have to say concerning that which they give to the cause of God. It is no tithe of their substance; nay, it is, as it were, but the cheese-parings, and the candle-ends, and these they only give for the sake of appearance, because it would not look respectable if they were altogether to withhold them. The church's coffers could never be so empty as they are if it were not that some of the stewards in the church are not faithful to their trust. It is very sad to think of some of the great men in our own country, who have incomes which, in a single month, would furnish a competent support for an entire family during their whole lives. I wonder what sort of reckoning theirs will be when they have to give an account of hundreds of thousands or even millions of pounds. With some of them, all that they can say will be, "So much lost on the racecourse, so much spent upon a paramour, so much paid for diamonds, so much squandered in this form of waste, and so much in that." But for the poor and needy, who are perishing in our streets, the multitudes who crave even necessary bread, some of them have done nothing at all. There are grand exceptions, names that shall live as long as philanthropy is prized amongst mankind; but the exceptions are so terribly few, that when the rich men of England are indicted at the bar of God, as

they certainly will be, the account of their stewardship will be a truly terrible one. Yet what are you, and what am I, to judge thus, if we cannot say that we have been faithful with our little? I ask if you have, and I pray you to make a reckoning in your mind now of your stewardship of the gold, or the silver, or the copper, with which God has entrusted you.

We must give an account of our influence. Everybody has some kind of influence. The mother who never leaves the nursery has a wondrous influence over those little children of hers, though no neighbour feels the force of her influence, and no one but her own little ones is affected by her faithfulness. And who knows but that she is pressing to her bosom, perhaps a Whitefield, who will thunder out the gospel through the length and breadth of the land; or perhaps, on the other hand, an infidel, whose dreadful blasphemies shall ruin multitudes? There is an influence that the mother has for which she must give an account to God. And the father's influence,—oh! fathers, you cannot shake off your obligations to your children by sending them to school, whether to a Sunday-school or a boarding-school. They are your children, and you must give an account of your stewardship concerning your own offspring. Ay, and even the nurse-girl, though she seems of small note in the commonwealth, yet she also has an influence over her little charge, which she must use for Christ. Not only he who thrills a senate with his oratory, but he also who speaks a word from the carpenter's bench, each has his influence, and each must use it, and give an account of it; not merely the man who, by refusing to lend his millions, could prevent the horrors of war, but the man who with a smile might help to laugh at sin, or with a word of rebuke might show that he abhorred it. There is no one of you without influence, and I ask you now how you have used it. Has it always been on the side of the Lord?

"Give an account of thy stewardship," for that influence will not always last.

We might consider other things that God has entrusted to us, but time would fail; so I remind you that the account which you will have to render, and which I ask you to render now, is not an account concerning other people. Oh, how nice it would be if we had to do that, would it not? With what gusto some would undertake the task if they had to give in a report upon other people's characters! How easily each of us can play the detective upon our fellows! How ready we are to say of this man, "Oh, yes! he gives away a good deal of money, but it is only out of ostentation," or of that woman, "Yes, she appears to be a Christian, but you do not know her private life," or of that minister of the gospel, "Yes, he is very zealous; but he makes a good thing out of his ministry." We like thus to reckon up our fellow-creatures, and our arithmetic is wonderfully accurate—at least, so we think; but when other people cast us up according to the same rule, the arithmetic seems terribly out of order, and we cannot believe it to be right. Ah! but at the great judgment we shall not be asked to give an account for others, neither will I ask any of you now to be thinking about the conduct of others. What if others are worse than you are, does that make you the better, or the less guilty? What if others are not all they seem to be, perhaps neither are you; at any rate, their hypocrisy shall not make your pretence to be true. Judge yourselves, that ye be not judged. Let each thrust the lancet into his own wound, and see to the affairs of his own soul, for each one must give account of himself to God.

Remember, too, that you are not called upon to give an account to others. Alas! there are many who seem to live only that they may win the esteem of their fellows. There is somebody to whom we look up; if we do but have that somebody's smile, we think all is well. Perhaps some here are

brokenhearted because that smile has vanished, and they have been misjudged and unjustly condemned. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment; and who is he that judges another man's servant? To his own master the servant shall stand or fall, and not to this interloping judge.

Remember, also, that the account to be rendered will be from every man, personally concerning himself; and whatever another man's account may be, it will not affect him.

It was a maxim of Pythagoras that each of his disciples should, every eventide, give in a record of the actions of the day. I think it is well to do so; for we cannot too often take a retrospect. Sit down a while, pilgrim; sit down a while. Here is the milestone marked with the end of another year; sit down upon it, put thine hand to thy brow and think, and lay thine hand upon thy heart, and search and see what is there. There are no persons who so dislike to look into their account-books as those who are insolvent. Those who keep no books, when they come before the court, are understood to be rogues of the first water; and men who keep no mental memoranda of the past, and bring up no recollections with regard to their sins, having tried to forget them all, may depend upon it that they are deceiving themselves. If you dare not search your hearts, I am afraid there is a reason for that fear, and that above all others you ought to be diligent in this search.

It may be that some may live for years, and yet be no longer stewards. A preacher may be laid aside, his voice gone, his mental faculties weakened,—he is "no longer steward." One is thankful to have further opportunities of serving the Lord, and trying to bring sinners to the Saviour. Work for God while you can! It is one of the bitterest regrets a man can know, to lie on his bed, to be unable to speak, and to think to himself, "I wish I could preach that sermon over again. I did not drive that nail home with all the force I ought to have used; I have not been earnest enough in pleading with sinners, I have not wrestled even to agony over the salvation of their souls." It may be possible that you and I may have twenty or thirty years of being laid aside from active service; then let us work while we can, ere the night cometh when no man can work. Let us seize the oar of the lifeboat, and row out over the stormy sea, seeking to snatch the drowning ones from yonder wreck, for the time may come when our strong right arm shall be palsied, and when we can do no more.

Yes, and rich professors may have to give an account of their stewardship, and be no longer stewards. There were some of that kind when the financial panic came; though they had much before the crash, they had nothing left afterwards, so they could be no longer stewards of the wealth that had been taken from them. It must be a cause of deep regret to men in that position if they cannot give a good account of their stewardship, because they have done but little good with their wealth while they had it; and think you, to whom God has given great possessions, how soon He may take them from you, for riches abide not for ever. Behold, they take to themselves wings, and fly away. I know of no better way of clipping their wings than by giving generously to the cause of God, and using in His service all that you can. It would be a subject for continual regret to you if you came down to poverty, not so much that you had descended in the social scale, for that you could bear, if it came by mere misfortune through the providence of God; but if you felt, "I did not do what I should have done when I had wealth,"—that would be the arrow which would pierce you to the heart. It may be so with some; at any rate, I feel that there are some who are poor because God will not lend His money where He knows that it will be locked up, and not put out to good interest in His cause. What little you have is all hidden away, so the Lord will not trust you with

more; He sees you are not fit to be one of His stewards. There are some, on the other hand, whom God has entrusted with much because He sees that they use it wisely in promoting the interests of His kingdom.

But, after all, to every man, whether he be rich or whether he be in the office of the ministry, there may be a close of his stewardship before he dies. The mother has her little children swept away one after another; this is the message to her, "Thou mayest be no longer steward." The teacher has his class scattered, or he is himself unable to go to the school; the word to him also is, "Thou mayest be no longer steward." The man who went to his work, who might have spoken to his fellow workman, is removed, perhaps to another land, or he is placed in a position where his mouth is shut; now he can be no longer steward. Use all opportunities while you have them, catch them on the wing, serve God while you can today! Let each golden moment have its pressing service rendered unto God, lest it should be said to thee, "Thou mayest be no longer steward." But we shall soon be no longer stewards in another sense. The hour must come for us to die. We have constant reminders that those who have served God faithfully cannot abide with us for ever. One or another, whom we have loved and honoured, gives in his account, and passes to rest. So will it be in turn with the pastor, with the deacons, and with the elders. Do not put away the thought of that day, my fellow-workers, as though you were immortal. It may come to us on a sudden; no grey hairs may cover our heads, but while we are yet in the full strength of manly vigour, you or I may be called to give in our account. What think ye? Could you gather up your feet in the bed, and look into eternity without feeling the cold sweat of fear stand upon your brow? Could you face the great judgment seat, and say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.... I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"? Oh! God be praised if we are able to say that! What monuments of mercy will you and I be if we are able to say this at the close of our service, and to hear our Lord say:—"Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

"Thou Hast Multiplied The Nation"

"Thou Hast Multiplied the Nation" &c. The Authorised Version has it, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy." This is not consistent with the connection; and the Revised Version has very properly put it, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, Thou hast increased their joy." I have not any learning to display; but I think I could show you, if this were the proper time, how the passage came to be read with a "not," and I could also prove to you, that, in this instance, the Revisers were right in making their alteration.

We feel that we ought to be glad when others are joined to the church, because we look back, with exquisite pleasure, upon our own joining it. I remember the trouble it cost me to join the church. I think I went to see the pastor some four or five days running; he was always too busy to see me, till at last I told him it did not matter, for I would go to the church-meeting, and propose myself as a member; and then he, all of a sudden, found time to see me, and so I managed to get into the church, and confess my faith in Christ. That was one of the best day's work I ever did, when I openly declared my faith in Christ, and united myself with His people! I think many could say the same; they remember when they united with the people of God, and publicly avowed their faith. Conversion must be the Lord's work. The only multiplication of the Church of God that is to be desired is that which God sends: "Thou hast multiplied the nation." If we add to our churches by becoming worldly, by taking persons who have never been born again; if we add to our churches by accommodating the life of the Christian to the life of the worldling, our increase is worth nothing at all; it is a loss rather than a gain. If we add to our churches by excitement, by making appeals to the passions, rather than by explaining truth to the understanding; if we add to our churches otherwise than by the power of the Spirit of God making men new creatures in Jesus Christ, the increase is of no worth whatever. A man picked himself up from the gutter, and rolled up against Mr. Rowland Hill, one night as he went home, and he said, "Mr. Hill, I am pleased to see you, sir. I am one of your converts." Rowland said, "I thought it was very likely you were. You are not one of God's converts, or else you would not be drunk." There is a great lesson in that answer. My converts are no good; Rowland Hill's converts could get drunk; but the converts of the Spirit of God, those who are really renewed in the spirit of their mind, by a supernatural operation, these are a real increase to the church of God. "Thou hast multiplied the nation." Pray hard that the Lord may continue to send us converts. He never sends the wrong people. However poor they may be, however illiterate, if they are converted, as they will be if the Lord sends them, they are the very people that we want. May God send us thousands more!

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined," When God brings men to the church, they are the people who have undergone a very remarkable change. They have come out of darkness, palpable, horrible, into light, marvellous and delightful. God sends no other than these. If you are not changed characters, if you are not new creatures in Christ Jesus, if you cannot say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see," the church cannot receive you as you are, and God has not sent you. Now, who can turn us from darkness unto light but God? Who can work this great

miracle within the heart? Darkness of heart is very hard to move. Who but God can make the eternal light burst through the natural darkness, and turn us from the power of Satan unto God?

Conversion must have a distinct relation to Christ. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." We want converts who know this Christ, men and women to whom He is "Wonderful," to whom He has become the "Counsellor." We want no additions to the church of those who cannot call Him "the mighty God, the everlasting Father." We want men and women to whom Christ has become "the Prince of Peace." If these are added to us, the church groweth exceedingly. If others are added, they do but increase our burden; they become our weakness; in many cases they become our disgrace. The joy of any growing church will be such as God gives. That is the kind we desire to have. If anybody wishes to see the church grow that we may excel other churches, that is not the joy that God gives. If we like to see converts because we are glad that our opinions should be spread, God does not give that joy. If we crave converts that we may steal them from other people, God does not give that joy, if it be a joy. I do not think God is the lover of sheep-stealers, and there are plenty such about. We do not desire to increase our numbers by taking Christian people away from other Christian communities. No, the joy which God gives is clear, unselfish delight in Christ being glorified, in souls being saved, in truth being spread, and in error being baffled. The husbandman expects a harvest. He says, "It is so many weeks to harvest." He sows his seed with a view to harvest. He turns in a man to clear out the weeds with a view to harvest. He has a barn, and he has a threshing-machine, all with a view to harvest. Well, now, every church should be looking out for a spiritual harvest. One said to me, once, "I have preached for several years, and I believe God has blessed the Word; but nobody ever comes forward to tell me so." I said to him, "Next Lord's-day, say to the people, 'I shall be in the vestry, when the sermon is finished, to see friends who have been converted.'" To his surprise, ten or twelve came in; and he was taken quite aback; but, of course, quite delighted. He had not looked for a harvest, so of course he did not get it. My first student went out to preach on Tower Hill, Sunday after Sunday. He came to me, and said, "I have been out preaching now for several months on Tower Hill, and I have not seen one conversion." I said to him, rather sharply, "Do you expect God is going to bless you every time you choose to open your mouth?" He answered, "Oh! no, sir; I do not expect Him to do that." "Then," I replied, "that is why you do not get a blessing." We ought to expect a blessing. God has said, "My Word shall not return unto Me void;" and it will not. We ought to look for a harvest. He who preaches the gospel with his whole heart, ought to be surprised if he does not hear of conversions; and he ought to begin to say in his heart, "I will know the reason why," and never stop till he has found it out. The joy of harvest is what we have a right to expect.

He is bound to rejoice in a harvest who has sorrowed in ploughing, and in the sowing of the seed, and in watching his crop when it was in the ear, and when frost, and blight, and mildew threatened to destroy it. Many of us here can rejoice with the joy of harvest, because, in those converted to Christ, we see the fruit of our soul's travail. I find that I am very generally the spiritual grandfather of these who come, rather than their father in the faith; for I find that you, whom God gave me in years past are, many of you, diligent in seeking the souls of others. In the case of many who join the church, their conversion is due to this sister and to that, to this brother and to that, rather than distinctly to my ministry. I am very glad to have it so. I have spoken to two friends, both of whom

said to me, "I am your spiritual grandchild." One from America said so. I asked, "How is that?" The answer was, "Mr. So-and-so, whom you brought to Christ, came out to America, and he brought me to Christ."

It is a joy which has solid ground to go upon. I do not know of a more joyful occasion than when young men and women, and, for the matter of that, old men and women, too, are brought to confess Christ, and to unite with His people. It is a very joyful thing to attend a wedding; but it is always a speculation as to how it will turn out; but when you come to see a soul yield itself to Christ, there is no speculation about that; you have a blessed certainty. Oh, methinks the angels sing more sweetly than ever as they hear a man, or woman, or child say, "I trust in Jesus; I confess His name." When we know and believe that true faith in Christ means present salvation, there is a great joy about that. I heard of some preachers who say that there is no such thing as a present salvation; and though they constantly preach, they tell the people, every now and then, that they may be saved when they come to die; but there is no such thing as being saved now. I should like to present those brethren with a little "Catechism for the Young and Ignorant," which Mr. Cruden was wont to give away; for, if they are not young, they certainly must be ignorant of the first principles of the faith. You are saved, if you have believed in Christ Jesus. You are saved even now. If you were not, I do not see any reason why we should rejoice over you with the joy of harvest. This is a joy in which many may join; for, in the harvest, anybody who likes may rejoice. There is the proprietor of the field; he rejoices. How greatly Christ rejoices! There are the labourers; they may shout as they bring home the loads; they know what that field of wheat has cost. Let us, who are working for Jesus, have the joy of harvest. The onlookers, too, as they go by, and see the harvest gathered in, will stop, and even give a shout over the hedge. If you are not yourself saved, you might be glad that other people are. Even if you are not yourself going to Heaven, rejoice that others are choosing the blessed road. I invite even you to come, and share with us the joy of harvest. The gleaner, Ruth, over yonder, says, "I have stooped many times. I have almost broken my back over the work; and I have only picked up this little handful." I know you, sister, and I am pleased that you should bring even one to Christ. I know you, my brother; and I rejoice with you that you should bring even one child to the Saviour. Though you be but a gleaner, join heartily with us in the joy of harvest.

What say we of those who never sow? Well, they will never reap; they will never have the joy of harvest. Am I addressing any professing Christians who never sow, never speak a word for Christ, never call at a house, and try to introduce the Saviour's name, never seek to bring children to the Saviour, take no part in the Sunday-school, or other service for Christ? Do I address some lazy man here, spiritually alive only for himself? Oh, poor soul, I would not like to be you, because I doubt whether you can be spiritually alive at all! Surely, he who lives for himself is dead while he lives; and you will never know the joy of bringing souls to Christ; and when you get to heaven, if you ever do get there, you will never be able to say, "Here am I, Father, and the children Thou hast given me." Thou wilt have to abide eternally alone, having brought no fruit unto God in the form of converts from sin. Shake yourselves up, brothers and sisters, from sinful sloth. "Oh!" says one, "I am not my brother's keeper." No, I will tell you your name; it is Cain. You are your brother's murderer; for every professing Christian, who is not his brother's keeper, is his brother's killer; and be you sure that it is so; for you may kill by neglect quite as surely as you may kill by the bow or by the dagger.

What say we to those who have never reaped? Well, that depends. Perhaps you have only just begun to sow. Do not expect to reap before God's time. "In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." There is a set season for reaping. But, if you have been a very long time sowing, and you have never reaped, may I ask the question, Where do you buy your seed? If I were to sow my garden year by year, and nothing ever came up, I should change my seedsman. Perhaps you have bad seed, and have not sown the gospel pure and undiluted. You have not brought it out in all its fulness. Go to the Word of God, and get "seed for the sower" of a kind that will feed your own soul, for it is "bread for the eater"; when you sow that kind of seed, it will come up.

Working With a High Purpose

Working With a High Purpose To have a noble purpose, and to pursue that purpose with all your might, prevents your being like "dumb driven cattle", and lifts you out of the mist and fog of the valley, and sets your feet upon the hilltop, where you can commune with God. I would suggest to our younger friends that they should begin their Christian life with a high purpose, and that they should never forget that purpose, and if trouble should come, they should say, "Let it come; my face is set, like a flint, to do this work to which my Lord has called me, and I will pursue it with all my might." It may seem as if there were no spiritual help in such advice as this; but, believe me, there is. If God shall give you grace to go on with your lifework, He will thereby give you grace to overcome your life-trouble.

David's work fits on to the work of another. That should be a great joy to some of you who do not see much coming of what you are doing. Your work is going to fit on to somebody else's work. This is the order of God's providence in His Church. It does not often happen that He gives a whole piece of work to one man; but He seems to say to him, "You go and do so much; then I will send somebody else to do the rest." How this ought to cheer some of you up, the thought that your work may be no failure, though in itself it may seem to be so, because it fits on to the work of somebody else who is coming after you, and so it will be very far from a failure! You have sometimes seen a man take a contract to put in the foundations of a house, and to carry it up to a certain height. He has done that; he will not be the builder of that house: that will be the work of the next contractor, who carries up the walls, and puts on the roof, and so forth. Yes, but he who did the foundation-work did a great deal, and he is as much the builder of the house as the man who carries up the walls.

I daresay that Solomon often thought gratefully of his father David, and what he had done; and you and I, if God blesses us, ought always to think with thanksgiving of the Davids who went before us. If you have success in your class, my sister, remember that there was an excellent Christian woman who had the class before you. You come, young man, into the Sunday-school, and you think that you must be somebody very great because you have had several conversions in your class. How about the brother who had to give up the class through ill-health? You took his place: who knows which of you will have the honour at the last great day? I was about to say, Who cares? for we do not live for honour, we live to serve God; and if I can serve God best by digging out the cellar, and you can serve God best by throwing out that ornamental bay window, my brother, you go on with your bay window, and I will go on with my cellar, for what matters it what we do so long as the house is built, and God is glorified thereby? It is the way of God in providence to set one man to do part of a work which pieces on to that of another man. But this is a terrible blow at self. Self says, "I like to begin something of my own, and I like to carry it out; I do not want any interference from other people." A friend proposed, the other day, to give you a little help in your service. You looked at him as if he had been a thief. You do not want any help; you are quite up to the mark; you are like a waggon and four horses, and a dog under the waggon as well! There is everything about you that is wanted; you need no help from anybody; you can do all things

almost without the help of God! I am very sorry for you if that is your opinion. If you get into God's service He may say to you, "You shall never begin anything; but shall always come in as the second man;" or, "You shall never finish anything; you shall always be getting ready for somebody else." It is well to have an ambition not to build upon another man's foundation; but do not carry that idea too far. If there is a good foundation laid by another man, and you can finish the structure, be thankful that he has done his part, and rejoice that you are permitted to carry on his work. It is God's way of striking a blow at our personal pride by allowing one man's work to fit on to another's. I believe that it is good for the work to have a change of workers. I am glad that David did not live any longer; for he could not have built the temple. David must die. He has had a good time of service. He has gathered all the materials for the temple. Solomon comes, with young blood and youthful vigour, and carries on the work. Sometimes, the best thing that some of us old folk can do is to go home, and go to heaven, and let some younger man come, and do our work. I know there are great lamentations about the death of Dr. So-and-so, and Mr. So-and-so; but why? Do you not think that, after all, God can find as good men as those He has found already? He made those good men, and He is not short of power; He can make others just as good as they have been. I was present at a funeral, where I heard a prayer that rather shocked me. Some brother had said that God could raise up another minister equal to the one who was in the coffin; but prayer was offered up by another man who said that this preacher had been eyes to his blindness, feet to his lameness, and I do not know what beside; and then he said, "Thy poor unworthy dust does not think that Thou ever canst or wilt raise up another man like him." So he had not an omnipotent God; but you and I have, and with an omnipotent God it is for the good of the work that David should go to his rest, and that Solomon should come in, and carry on the work.

Certainly, this creates unity in the Church of God. If we all had a work of our own, and were shut up to do it, we should not know one another; but now I cannot do my work without your help, my dear friends; and, in some respects, you cannot do your work without my help. We are members one of another, and one helps the other.

We want recruits; we are always wanting them. May God lead some, who have been on the side of sin and self, to come out and say, "Set my name down amongst God's people. By the grace of God, I am going to be on Christ's side, and help to build His temple." Come along, my brother; come along, my sister; we are glad of your help. The work is not all done yet; you are not too late to fight the Lord's battles, nor to win the crown of the victors. The Lord has a large army of the soldiers of the cross; and "thou mayest add thereto." God save thee! Christ bless thee! The Spirit inspire thee!

David and the Temple

David and the Temple The building of the temple is an admirable type of the building of the Church of God. If you are workers for the Lord, if your hearts are right with God, I think that I shall be able to say some things that will encourage you to work on, even if you should not for a time see any immediate results from your work.

There were many who helped to build the temple: David gathering the materials; Solomon, the master mason, by whose name the temple would afterwards be called; the princes helping him in the great work; strangers, foreigners, and aliens, who dwelt throughout Israel and Judah; these all took their share, and even the Tyrians and Zidonians had a part in the work.

There are many servants of God whose names are little known, who, nevertheless, are doing a work that is essential to the building up of the Church of God. I have known many such, who have never lived to realise any great success; their names have never been written upon any great temples that have been built; but, nevertheless, they have worthily done their part, even as David did.

David gathered the materials. Many a man collects people together, and yet he has not the fashioning of them. He is the founder of a Christian congregation; but he does not live to see many conversions. He gets together the raw material upon which another shall work. He ploughs and he sows; but it wants another man to come and water the seed, and perhaps another to gather in the harvest. Still, the sower did his work, and deserves to be remembered for what he did. David did his part of the work, in getting together the materials for the temple.

Besides which, he fashioned some of the materials. He had the stones cut from the quarry, and many of them shaped to take their places, by-and-by, in silence in the temple, when it should be reared without sound of hammer or axe. So there are teachers and preachers who help to form the characters of their scholars and hearers, by working away upon their minds and hearts. They will never build up a great church; but still they are knocking the rough edges off the stones. They are preparing and fashioning them; and by-and-by the builder will come and make good use of them.

David prepared the way for Solomon's temple. It was by his fighting that the time of peace came, in which the temple could be erected. Though he is called a man of blood, yet it was needful that the foes of Israel should be overthrown. There could be no peace till her adversaries had been crushed; and David did that. You do not hear much about the men who prepare the way for others. Somebody else comes along, and apparently does all the work; and his name is widely known and honoured; but God remembers the heralds, the pioneers, the men who prepare the way, the men who, by casting out devils, routing grievous errors, and working needful reforms, prepare the way for the triumphal progress of the gospel.

David found the site for the temple. He discovered it; he purchased it; and he handed it over to Solomon. We do not always remember the men who prepare the sites for the Lord's temples. Luther is rightly remembered; but there were Reformers before Luther. There were hundreds of

men and women who burned for Christ, or who perished in prison, or who were put to cruel deaths for the gospel. Luther comes when the occasion has been made for him, and when a site has been cleared for him upon which to build the temple of God. But God remembers all those pre-Reformation heroes. It may be your lot to clear the site, and to make the occasion for others; and you may die before you see even a cornerstone of your own work laid; for it will be yours when it is finished, and God will remember what you have done.

It was David who received the plans from God. The Lord wrote upon his heart what He would have done. He told him, even to the weight of the candlesticks and lamps, everything that was to be arranged. Solomon, wise as he was, did not plan the temple. He had to borrow the designs from his father, who received them direct from God. Many a man is far-seeing; he gets the plan of the gospel into his heart, he sees a way in which great things can be done, and yet he is scarcely permitted to put his own hand to the work. Another will come by-and-by, and will carry out the plan that the first one received; but we must not forget the first man, who went into the secret place of the Most High, and learned in the place of thunder what God would have His people do.

David did one thing more: before he died, he gave a solemn charge to others; he charged Solomon, and the princes, and all the people, to carry out the work of building the temple. I revere the man who, in his old age, when there is weight in every syllable that he utters, concludes his life by urging others to carry on the work of Christ. It is something to gather about your last bed young men who have years of usefulness before them, and to lay upon their conscience and their heart the duty of preaching Christ crucified, and winning the souls of men for the Lord. So you see that David had done his part towards the building of the temple. Have you done your part? You are a child of God; God has loved you, and chosen you; you have been redeemed with precious blood. You know better than to think of working in order to save yourself; you are saved; but have you diligently done all that you can do for your Lord and Master?

Then there is much else that you can do for Christ, in your family, in your business, and in the neighbourhood where you live. Could you go to bed tonight, and there close your eyes for the last time, feeling, "I have finished the work which God gave me to do. I have done all that I could for the winning of souls"? I am afraid that some have a talent wrapped in a napkin, hidden away in the earth. Dig it up, before it gets altogether covered with rust, to bear witness against you. Take it up, and put it out to heavenly interest, that your Lord may have what He is entitled to receive. O Christian men and women, there must be very much unused energy in the Church of God! We have a great dynamo that is never used. Oh, that each one would do his own part, even as David did his!

We shall soon be gone; our day lasts not very long. "The night cometh when no man can work." Shall it be said of you, or of me, that we wasted our daylight; and then, when the evening shadows came, we were uneasy and unhappy, and though saved by divine grace, we died with sad expressions of regret for wasted opportunities? It is not very long ago that I sat by the bedside of one who was wealthy, I might say very wealthy. I prayed with him. I had hoped to have found him rejoicing in the Lord, for I knew that he was a child of God; but he was a child of God with a little malformation about the fingers. He could never open his hand as he ought to have done. As I sat by his side, he said, "Pray God, with all your might, that I may live three months, that I may have an opportunity of using my wealth in the cause of Christ." He did not live much more than three

hours after he said that. Oh, that he had woke up a little sooner to do for the Master's Church and cause what he ought to have done! Then he would not have had that regret to trouble him in his last hours. He knew the value of the precious blood, and he was resting in it; and I had great joy in knowing that all his hope and all his trust were in his Lord, and he was saved; but it was with a great deal of regret and trembling. I would spare any of you who have wealth such trouble on your dying bed.

If there is a young man who has the ability to preach the gospel, or to be doing something for Christ, and he is doing nothing, I am sure that it will be a pain to him one of these days. When conscience is thoroughly aroused, and his heart is getting nearer to God than it has been, he will bitterly regret that he did not avail himself of every occasion to talk of Christ, and seek to bring souls to Him.

David had done his part in trouble. "Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold;" and so on. In the margin of your Bibles, you will find the words, "in my poverty." It is strange that David should talk about poverty when his gifts amounted to many millions of pounds.

David thought little of what he had prepared. He calls it poverty, I think, because it is the way of the saints to count anything that they do for God to be very little. The most generous men in the world think the least of what they give to God's cause. David, with his millions that he gives, says, "In my poverty I have prepared for the house of the Lord." As he looked at the gold and silver, he said to himself, "What is all this to God?" And the brass and the iron, that could not be reckoned, it was so much and so costly; he thought it was all nothing to Jehovah, who fills heaven and earth, whose grandeur and glory are altogether unspeakable. If you have done the most that you can for God, you will sit down, and weep that you cannot do ten times as much. You that do little for the Lord will be like a hen with one chick; you will think a great deal of it. But if you have a great number of works, and you are doing much for Christ, you will wish that you could do a hundred times as much. Some Christians want to have all sunshiny weather, and the birds must sing all day and all night to please them. If they receive a rebuke, or somebody seems a little cold to them, they will do no more. I have seen many, who called themselves Christians, who were like a silly child at play, who says, when something offends him, "I won't play any more." They run away at the first rough word that they hear. But David, in the day of his trouble, when his heart was ready to break, still went on with his great work of providing for the house of God.

David prepared for the house of the Lord in his trouble; and I have no doubt that it was a solace to his sorrow. To have something to do for Jesus, and to go right on with it, is one of the best ways to get over a bereavement, or any heavy mental depression. If you can pursue some great object, you will not feel that you are living for nothing. You will not sit down in despair; for, whatever your trouble may be, you will still have this to live for, "I want to help in building the Church of God, and I will do my part in it whatever happens to me. Come poverty or wealth, come sickness or health, come life or death, as long as there is breath in my body, I will go on with the work that God has given me to do." In many Christian works you will have to do without me, one of these days; but that will not matter. There will be somebody who will carry on the work of the Lord; and so long as the work goes on, what matter who does it? God buries the workman, but the devil himself cannot bury the work. The work is everlasting, though the workmen die. We pass away, as star by star

grows dim; but the eternal light is never-fading. God shall have the victory. His Son shall come in His glory. His Spirit shall be poured out among the people; and though it be neither this man, nor that, nor the other, God will find the man to the world's end who will carry on His cause, and give to Him the glory.

"Is Not The Lord Your God With You?"

"Is Not the Lord Your God With You?"

1 Chron. 22:18.

Let every man and every woman among us judge of our life, not merely from that little narrow piece of it which we ourselves live, for that is but a span; but let us judge it by its connection with other lives that may come after our own. If we cannot do all we wish, let us do all we can, in the hope that someone who shall succeed us may complete the project that is so dear to our heart. That is a blessed prayer which Moses wrote in Psalm xc.: "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children." We shall be quite satisfied to do the work, and scarcely see the glory, if we may but know that, in another generation, the work that we shall have done shall produce glory to God which shall be seen among the sons of men. It is enough for us to do today's work in the day; let somebody else do tomorrow's work if we are not spared to do it. Today, do that which cometh to thy hand, and be not dreaming of the future. Put down that telescope; you have nothing to do with peering into the next hundred years. The important matter is, not what you spy with your eye, but what you do with your hand. Do it, and do it at once, with all your might, believing that God will find somebody else to go on with the next piece of the work when you have finished your portion.

There is also another delightful thought here, and that is, the continuity of the divine blessing. God was with David in the gathering together of the great stores of treasure for the building of the temple; but then God was also with Solomon. Oh, what a mercy it is that God did not give all His grace to other people before we came into the world! The God of grace did not empty the whole horn of grace upon the head of Whitefield or Wesley; He did not pour out all the blessings of His Spirit upon Romaine and John Newton, so as to leave nothing for us. No; and to the end of time He will be the same God as He was yesterday, and as He is today. There is no break in the Lord's blessing; He has not ceased to be gracious, His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, nor is His ear heavy that He cannot hear. God buries His workmen, but His work goes on; and He, the Great Worker, wearies not of it, nor shall He ever fail or be discouraged. All His everlasting purposes shall be accomplished, and Christ shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. Wherefore, let us be of good heart, if we have been apt to look upon the future with fear. The Lord Jesus still lives, and He will take care that His Church shall live and work on until He Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.

We are engaged in the building of a temple, in a spiritual sense. God has sent His servants into the world, to gather together for His beautiful house stones hewn out of the quarry of nature, to be shaped, polished, and prepared for building into the temple of His grace. The Church is the living temple of God, "exceeding magnificat." It is a wondrous idea that men's hearts and souls can be blended together, and built up into a spiritual temple wherein God will dwell. This temple is to be builded of stones taken from the quarry of nature, and, God being with us, you and I are to go

forth, and to hew out and shape and prepare the stones for the building of this house of the Lord which shall endure for ever.

"Is not the Lord your God with you?" I will go any length with the brother who likes to preach upon the incapacity of man, the utter and entire weakness of the creature apart from the Creator. You cannot, I think, exaggerate there; but do not always keep dwelling upon your own weakness, recollect that, when you are weak, then you are strong, if you do but fall back upon the omnipotence of God. "Is not the Lord your God with you?" Has He sent us into the world with the gospel, and will He not be with us? Has He sent us to be the means of seeking souls, and made our hearts to ache because of the sins that men have committed against Him, and will He not be with us? Do not let us talk as if we had to live and labour without our God. We have been brought to know Him, we have been made members of the mystical body of Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in us, if we are what we profess to be,—the Church of the living God; will He not occupy the house that He has built? "Is not the Lord your God with you?" Then, what can be too difficult for you?

It is the good pleasure of God to be with His people. He is our Father; and do not fathers love to be with their children? The loving father says, when he has little ones at home, "I will get back from my business early, that I may spend my evening in the family." We feel ourselves happiest when, laying aside external cares, we leave the world, and rest with our loved ones at home; so God is at home with His people, as a Father He delights in His children. Remember how Divine Wisdom said, "My delights were with the sons of men." It is a wonderful thing to be able to say, but God takes a great deal more pleasure in us than we do in Him; yet there seems in us nothing that can give Him pleasure, while in Him there is everything that can afford us delight. The Lord so loves His people that He is never long away from them. A brother going out to Australia, came to bid me farewell; he gave me a little sketch of his life during three-and-twenty years, and said, "Yes, sir, you drove me out to work for Christ, you would not let me be idle. You said, 'The worst kind of lazy people are lazy Christians,' and you also said 'to come twice on a Sunday and hear me preach, and to be doing nothing for the Master, is not at all the right thing.'" Then the good man added, "I do not often get to hear you now. I have been secretary of a Sunday-school for some time, and I often go out preaching, so I cannot come to the Tabernacle." I do delight in so many members not coming to hear because they are doing the Master's work elsewhere! I know that in many churches the main thing is to sit down in a corner pew, and be fed. Well, of course every creature needs to be fed, from the pig upwards;—you must excuse my mentioning that unclean animal, for he is the creature whose principal business it is to feed, and he is not a nice creature at all, and I do not at all admire Christian people whose one business is to feed and feed. Why, I have heard them even grumble at a sermon that was meant for the conversion of sinners, because they thought there was no food for them in it! They are great receptacles of food; but, dear Christian people, do not any of you live merely to feed,—not even on heavenly food; but if God be with you, as you say He is, then get to His work.

"What shall I do?" asks one. That is no business of mine; you have to find work for yourself. He who works for God does not need to go to this man, or that man, and enquire, "What shall I do?" Why, do the first thing that comes to hand, but do get to work for your Master! Many Christians live in country villages where there is no preaching of the gospel; then preach it yourself.

"Oh, but I could not!" Well then, get somebody who can. "But we have no chapel," says one. What do you want with a chapel these bright days? Preach on the village green, where the old trees that were cut down a year or two ago are still lying and will serve for seats. "I could not preach," says one, "I should break down." That would be a capital thing to do; breakdown sermons are often the best for breaking down other people as well as the preacher. Some of the greatest enterprises in the world have sprung from very little causes; the forest of the mightiest oaks in the world was once only a handful of acorns. Oh, that we might all do what we can for Him who laid down His life for us, and who still continues to abide in us, to be our joy and our strength!

David exhorted people to set their hearts upon what they had to do: "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God." Oh, how much there is of our religion that is a kind of celestial going to sleep; the preacher preaches as if he had not really woke up yet; and the people hear in the same fashion. Are there not, even in our churches, many who, if a guinea were to jingle, would be sufficiently wide awake to look for it, but when the gospel is being preached, they are not thoroughly aroused? As to speaking to strangers, and saying a word for the Master, that has not yet occurred to them.

"I do not know what I can do," says one. Brother, if the text is true, I do not know what you cannot do. "Is not the Lord your God with you?" "Well, I could not——" "Could not,—could not;" do you put God and "could not" together? I think it would be infinitely better to put God and "can" or God and "shall" together. If God be with us, what can be impossible, what can be even difficult to us? God being with His people, "he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them."

Vines With Tender Grapes

Vines With Tender Grapes

Song of Solomon 2:13. The vine is of all trees the most useless unless it bears fruit. You can make hardly anything of it; you would scarcely be able to cut enough wood out of a vine to hang a pot upon; you cannot turn it into furniture, and barely could you use it in the least degree for building purposes. It must either bear fruit, or else it must be consumed in the fire. The branches of the vine that bear no fruit are necessarily cut off, and they are used, as I have seen them used in the South of France many a time, in little twisted bundles for kindling the fire. They burn very rapidly, so there is soon an end of them, and then they are gone. The vine is constantly used in Scripture as a picture of the nominal Church of Christ; so, like the vine, we must either bring forth fruit or we shall be accounted as good for nothing. We must serve God, we must bring forth, from our very soul, love to God and service to Him as the fruit of our renewed nature, or else we are useless, worthless, and shall only abide our time, and then we shall be cut down to be burned. Our end must be destruction if our life be not fruitful. This gives a very solemn importance to our lives, and it should make each of us seriously ask, "Am I bringing forth fruit unto God? Have I brought forth fruits meet for repentance? For if not, I must, by-and-by, feel the keen edge of the Vine-dresser's knife, and I shall be taken away from any sort of union that I now have with the Church which is Christ's vine, and be flung over the wall as a useless thing whose end is to be burned."

We must bear fruit, or we shall certainly perish; and we cannot have fruit unless we have Christ, we must be knit to Christ, vitally one with Him, just as a branch is really, after a living fashion, one with the stem. It would be no use to tie a branch to the stem of the vine; that would not cause it to bring forth fruit. It must be joined to it in a living union, so must you and I be livingly joined to Christ. Do you know, by experience, what that expression means? For, if you do not know it by experience, you do not know it at all. No man knoweth what life is but the one who is himself alive, and no man knoweth what union to Christ is but he who is himself united to Christ. We must become one with Christ by an act of faith; we must be inserted into Him as the graft is placed in the incision made in the tree into which it is to be grafted. Then there must be a knitting of the two together, a vital junction, a union of life, and a flowing of the sap, or else there cannot be any bearing of fruit. Again, I say, what a serious thing this makes our life to be! How earnest should be our questioning of ourselves! "For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart;" and so may there be about this matter. Let each one of us ask. "Am I bearing fruit? I am not unless I am vitally united to Christ. I have openly professed that I am in Christ, but am I bringing forth fruit unto His honour and glory?"

I think I hear someone say, "I hope I have begun to bring forth some fruit, but it is very little in quantity, and it is of very poor quality; and I do not suppose that the Lord Jesus will hardly stoop to notice it." Well, now, listen to what the text says; it is the Heavenly Bridegroom, it is Christ Himself, who speaks to His spouse, and bids her come into the vineyard, and look about her. For, saith He, "the vines with the tender grape give a good smell." So, you see, there was some fruit, though it

could only be spoken of as "the tender grape." Some read the passage, "The vines in blossom give forth fragrance;" others think it refers to the grape just as it begins to form. It was a poor little thing, but the Lord of the vineyard was the first to spy it out; and if there is any little fruit unto God upon anyone, our Lord Jesus Christ can see it. Though the berry be scarcely formed, though it be only like a flower which has just begun to knit, He can see the fruit, and He delights in that fruit.

Another tender grape is, a humble faith in Jesus Christ. The man, perhaps, has got no farther than to say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!"

Then there comes another tender grape, and that is, a genuine change of life. The man has evidently turned right about; he is not looking the way he used to look, and he is not living as he used to live. At first he fails, and perhaps fails a good many times, like a child who is learning to walk, and has many a tumble; but it will never walk if it does not tumble a bit.

Another very blessed fruit of spiritual life in the soul is, "secret devotion." The man never prayed before; he went sometimes to a place of worship, but he did not care much about it. Now, you see that he tries to get alone for private prayer as often as he can.

What is the Lord's estimate of these tender grapes? What does He think of that sorrow for sin, that little faith, that humble trust in His atoning sacrifice, that earnest attempt to live a changed life, that weariness of frivolity, that private prayer and study of the Scriptures, that eager desire for more grace, and that childlike love? What does the Lord think of all this?

Well, first, He thinks so much of it that He calls His Church to come and look at it. Look at the verses that precede our text: "My Beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell."

Then He says, "The vines with the tender grape give a good smell." Of what do they smell?

Well, they smell of sincerity. You say, "That young man does not know much, but he is very sincere." How many do I see, who come to make a confession of their faith in Christ, who do not know this doctrine, or have not had that experience, but they are very sincere! I can tell that they are genuine by the way they speak; they often make such dreadful blunders, theologically, that I know they have not learnt it by rote, as they might get up a lesson. They talk straight out of their loving but ignorant hearts, and I like that they should do so, for it shows how true they are in what they say; and our Lord Jesus always loves sincerity. There is no smell so hateful as the smell of hypocrisy; a religious experience that is made to order, religious talk such as some indulge in, which is all cant, is a stench in the nostrils of God. The Lord save us from it! But these vines with the tender grape give forth the sweet smell of sincerity.

Next, there is about these young believers a sweet smell of heartiness. Oh, how hearty they generally are, how earnest, how lively! By-and-by, some of the older folks talk about the things of God as if they were worn threadbare, and there was nothing of special interest in them; but it is not so with these newborn souls, everything is bright and fresh, they are lively, and full of earnestness, and Jesus loves that kind of spirit.

There is sure to be also about these young Christians the sweet smell of zeal; and, whatever may be said against zeal, I will take up the cudgels for it as long as I live. In the work of God, we cannot do without fire. When I see our young men and young women full of zeal for God's glory, I say, "God bless them! Let them go ahead." Some of the old folk want to put a bit in the mouths of these fiery young steeds, and to hold them in; but I trust that I shall ever be on their side, and say, "No, let them go as fast as they like. If they have zeal without knowledge, it is a deal better than having knowledge without zeal; only wait a bit, and they will get all the knowledge they need."

These young believers have another sweet smell: they are teachable, ready to learn, willing to be taught from the Scriptures and from those whose instructions God blesses to their souls. There is also another delicious smell about them, and that is, they are generally very joyful. While they are singing, some dear old brother, who has known the Lord for fifty years, is groaning; what is the matter with the good man? I wish that he could catch the sweet contagion of the early joy of those who have just found the Saviour. There is something delightful in all joy when it is joy in the Lord, but there is a special brightness about the delight of those who are newly-converted.

Some people seem to think that none but advanced Christians are worth looking after, but our Lord is not of that opinion. "Oh, it was only a lot of girls that joined the church," said somebody. "A lot of girls?" That is not the way that our Lord Jesus Christ speaks about His children. He calls them King's daughters; and let them be called so. "They were only a pack of boys and young men." Yes, but they are the material of which old men are made; and boys and young men, after all, are of much account in the Master's esteem. May we always have many such.

Good Work

Good Work

Matthew 26:10

Study carefully the story of the enthusiastic Christian woman who poured the alabaster box of very precious ointment upon the head of our blessed Lord and Saviour. Her first and last thoughts were for the Lord Jesus Himself.

Seek to do something for Jesus which shall even be above all a secret sacrifice of pure love to Jesus. Do special and private work towards your Lord. Between you and your Lord let there be secret love-tokens. You will say to me, "What shall I do?" I decline to answer. I am not to be a judge for you; especially as to a private deed of love. The good woman did not say to Peter, "What shall I give?" nor to John, "What shall I do?" but her heart was inventive. I will only say, that we might offer more private prayer for the Lord Jesus.

"Prayer also shall be made for Him continually." Intercede for your neighbours; pray for yourselves; but could you not set apart a little time each day in which prayer should be all for Jesus? Could you not at such seasons cry with secret pleadings, "Hallowed be thy name! Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"? Would it not be a sweet thing to feel at such a time—I shall now go up to my chamber, and give my Lord a few minutes of my heart's warmest prayer, that He may see of the travail of His soul? That is one thing which all saints can attend to. Another holy offering is adoration—the adoring of Jesus. Do we not too often forget this adoration in our assemblies, or thrust it into a corner? The best part of all our public engagements is the worship—the direct worship; and in this the first place should be given to the worship of the Lord Jesus. We sing at times to edify one another with psalms and hymns, but we should also sing simply and only to glorify Jesus. We are to do this in company; but should we not do it alone also? Ought we not all, if we can, to find a season in which we shall spend the time, not in seeking the good of our fellowmen, not in seeking our own good, but in adoring Jesus, blessing Him, magnifying Him, praising Him, pouring forth our heart's love towards Him and presenting our soul's reverence and penitence. I suggest this to you. I cannot teach you how to do it. God's Holy Spirit must show your hearts the way.

I offer you a counsel or two about doing good works for Jesus. Take care that self never creeps in. It is to be all for Jesus: let not the foul fingers of self-seeking stain your work. Never do anything for Jesus out of love for popularity. Be always glad if your right hand does not know what your left hand does. Hide your works as much as possible from the praise of the most judicious friend. At the same time, let me also add, never have any fear of censure from those who know not your love to Jesus. This good woman did her work publicly, because it was the best way to honour her Lord; and if you can honour Him by doing a good work in the marketplace before all men, do not be afraid. To some, the temptation may be to court the public eye; to others, the temptation may be to dread it. Serve your Lord as if no eye beheld you; but do not blush though all the eyes in the

universe should gaze upon you. Let not self, in either case, come in to defile the service.

Never congratulate yourself after you have wrought a work for Jesus. If you say unto yourself, "Well done!" you have sacrificed unto yourself. Always feel that if you had done all as it should be done, it would still be but your reasonable service.

Remember that deeds of self-sacrifice are most acceptable to Jesus. He loves His people's gifts when they give, and feel that they have given. Oftentimes we are to measure what we do for Him, not by what we have given, but by what we have left; and if we have much left we have not given as much as that widow who gave two mites—nay, for certain we have not, for she gave "all her living."

Let us, above all, keep out of our heart the thought which is so common in this general life, that nothing is worth doing unless something practical comes out of it—meaning by "practical" some manifest result upon the morals or temporals of others. It is almost universal to ask the question, Cui bono?—"What is the good of it? What good will it do to me? What good will it do to my neighbour? To what purpose is this waste?" Nay, but if it will glorify Christ, do it; and accept that motive as the highest and most conclusive of reasons.

If a deed done for Christ should bring you into disesteem, and threaten to deprive you of usefulness, do it none the less. I count my own character popularity, and usefulness to be as the small dust of the balance compared with fidelity to the Lord Jesus. It is the devil's logic which says, "You see I cannot come out and avow the truth, because I have a sphere of usefulness which I hold by temporizing with what I fear may be false." What have we to do with consequences? Be just, and fear not! The consequences are with God, and not with thee. If thou hast done a good work unto Christ, though it should seem to thy poor bleared eyes as if great evil has come of it, yet hast thou done it, Christ has accepted it, and He will note it down, and in thy conscience He will smile thee His approval.

There is a good defence for any kind of work which you may do unto Jesus, and unto Jesus only. However large the cost, nothing is wasted which is expended upon the Lord, for Jesus deserves it. What if it did no service to any other; did it please Him? He has a right to it. Is nothing to be done for the Master of the feast? Are we to be so looking after the sheep as never to do honour to the Shepherd? Are the servants to be cared for, and may we do nothing for the Well-beloved Lord Himself? I have sometimes felt in my soul the wish that I had none to serve but my Lord. When I have tried to do my best to serve God, and a cool-blooded critic has pulled my work to pieces, I have thought, "I did not do it for you! I would not have done it for you! I did it for my Lord. Your judgment is a small matter. You condemn my zeal for truth. You condemn what He commands." Thus may you go about your service, and feel "I do it for Christ, and I believe that Christ accepts my service, and I am well content." Jesus deserves that there should be much done altogether for Him. Do you doubt it? There is brought into the house, on his birthday, a present for father. That present is of no use to mother, or to the children; it cannot be eaten, it cannot be worn; father could not give it away to anybody, it is of no value to anybody but himself. Does anybody say, "What a pity it was to select such a gift, even though father is pleased"? No, everybody says, "That is just the thing we like to give to father, since he must keep it for himself. We meant it to be for him; we had no thought of any second; and we are glad that he must use our gift for his own pleasure." So with regard to Jesus. Find out what will please Him; and do it for Him. Think of no one else in the

matter. He deserves all you can do, and infinitely more.

Besides, you may depend upon it that any action which appears to you useless, if you do it prompted by love, has a place in Christ's plan, and will be turned to high account. This anointing of our Lord's head was said to be useless. "No," said Jesus, "it falls in just in its proper place—she has done it for My burial." There have been men who have done an heroic deed for Christ, and at the time they did it they might have asked, "How will this subserve my Lord's purpose?" But somehow it was the very thing that was wanted. When Whitefield and Wesley turned out into the fields to preach, it was thought to be a fanatical innovation, and perhaps they, themselves, would not have ventured upon it if there had not been an absolute necessity; but by what seemed to that age a daring deed they set the example to all England, and open-air preaching has become an accepted agency of large value. If you, for Christ's sake, become Quixotic, never mind; your folly may be the wisdom of ages to come. The woman's loving act was not wasted; for it has helped us all down to this very moment. There has it stood in the Book; and all who have read it, and are right in heart, have been fired by it to sacred consecration out of love to Jesus. That woman has been a preacher to nineteen centuries; the influence of that alabaster box is not exhausted today, and never will be. Whenever you meet a friend in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, who has done anything unto our Lord Jesus, you still smell the perfume of the sacred spikenard. Her consecrated act is doing all of us good at this hour: it is filling this house with fragrance. If you are serving Christ in your own secret way in which you do not seek to benefit others as to honour Him, it may be you will be an instructive example to saints in ages to come. Oh, that I could stir some hearts to a personal consecration to Jesus, my Lord! Young men, we want missionaries to go abroad; are none of you ready to go? Young women, we want those who will look after the sick in the lowest haunts of London; will none of you consecrate yourselves to Jesus, the Saviour?

I shook hands with a good missionary of Christ from Western Africa. He had been there sixteen years. I believe that they reckon four years to be the average of a missionary's life in that malarious region. He had buried twelve of his companions in the time. For twelve years he had scarcely seen the face of a white man. He was going to Africa to live a little while longer, perhaps, but he expected soon to die; and then he added, as I shook his hand, "Well, many of us may die: perhaps hundreds of us will do so; but Christ will win at the last! Africa will know and will fear our Lord Jesus; and what does it matter what becomes of us—our name, our reputation, our health, our life—if Jesus wins at the last?" What heroic words! What a missionary spirit!

We Endeavour: Helpful Words for Members of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour.

As a Fire—and Like a Hammer

As a Fire... and Like a Hammer When the Lord spoke by His servant, Jeremiah, His Word was "like as a fire." There was something burning about it: human nature did not like it, but human nature was made to feel its force and power. When the false prophets spoke, they would bow and cringe to the people, and say all manner of soft and pleasing things; but when Jeremiah spoke, in the name of Jehovah, every word seemed to tell upon his hearers. It was as when a mighty man lifts up a sledgehammer, and brings it down with all his force upon the stone he means to break. The message did not comfort the ungodly, but it broke their hearts, for the prophet was seeking, if possible, to separate them from their sins.

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;" and we are not so foolish that we do not know what truth it is that cheers and comforts our heart, and what kind of teaching it is that makes us glad in the midst of the winter of our discontent. There is far too much teaching, nowadays, that will not comfort a mouse. You might hear it to all eternity, and never be relieved of a single ounce of the burden of life. You might come in and out of the house of God, and you might perhaps say, "Yes, it is very pretty;" but what is that to a man who has the burden of life to carry, and the battle of life to fight? But when you hear the glorious gospel of the blessed God, it lifts you up out of your discouragements, and makes you say, after all, "It is worth while to live, it is worth while to suffer, it is worth while to press forward; for we see the great love the Lord hath towards us, and what good things He hath laid up in store for them that love Him." The Word of the Lord is like a fire, for it warms and comforts the hearts of His people. But God's Word is like "a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." I should think that it does not require any great education to learn how to use a hammer; I do not know, it may do; but it seems that to use a hammer aright, one has nothing to do but to strike with it. A stone-breaker, for instance, gets a good strong hammer, and a heap of stones to strike at, and he has but to hit them as hard as he can, and to keep on hitting till all are broken. Brethren, when you preach, take the gospel hammer, and strike as hard as ever you can with it. "Oh, but I must try to improve the look of my hammer; it must have a mahogany handle!" Never mind about the mahogany handle; use your hammer for striking, for hammers are not for ornament, they are meant to be used for real hard work. And when you come to use the gospel as it ought to be used, the result is wonderful; it is a rock-breaking thing. "Oh!" you cry, "there is a very obdurate man there!" Strike at him with the gospel. "Oh, but he ridicules and scoffs at the truth!" Never mind if he does, keep on smiting him with the gospel. "Oh, but in a certain district, I have wielded this hammer against the rock for years, and nothing has come of it!" Still go on wielding it, for this is a hammer that never failed yet. Only continue to use it; everything is not accomplished with one stroke; nor, perhaps, with twenty strokes. The rock that does not yield the first time, nor the second time, nor the third time, nor the twentieth time, will yield at last. There is a process of disintegration taking place at every stroke; the great mass is inwardly moving even when you cannot see that it is doing so; and there will come at last one blow of the hammer which will seem to do the deed, but all the previous strokes contributed to it, and brought the rock into the right state for breaking it up at last. Hammer away, then, with nothing but the gospel of Jesus

Christ. The heart that is struck may not yield even year after year, but it will yield at last.

Now, put the two together,—the fire and the hammer,—and you will see how God makes His servants who are to be instruments for His use. He puts us into the fire of the Word; He melts, He softens, He subdues. Then He takes us out of the fire, and welds us with hammer strokes such as only He can give, till He has made us fit instruments for His use; and He goes forth to His sacred work of conquering the multitudes, having in His hands the polished shafts that He has forged with the fire and the hammer of His Word.

How often have we seen men, who have not been moved even by the law of God, at last won to Christ by the gospel,—the gospel of free grace and dying love, full forgiveness for the greatest sinners; immediate, irreversible pardon given in a moment to every sinner who believes in Christ! Oh, how this gospel has acted like a fire, and burned up all the sinner's opposition! How this gospel has also been like a hammer to break down human obstinacy! The gospel of redemption through the precious blood of Jesus, the gospel which tells of full atonement made, the gospel which proclaims that the utmost farthing of the ransom price has been paid, and that, therefore, whosoever believeth in Jesus is free from the law, and free from guilt, and free from hell,—the telling out of this gospel has made men's hearts burn within them, and has dashed out the very brains of sin, and made men joyfully flee to Christ. So, preach the gospel then, the gospel of justification by faith, the gospel of regeneration by the Holy Ghost, the gospel of final perseverance through the unchanging love of God. Preach the whole of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, as it is revealed in the covenant of grace, and you will be doing fire-and-hammer work of the very choicest sort. As God's Word is like a fire and like a hammer, if we have used it upon ourselves, let us try to use it upon others. I have an opinion that there are a great many persons in this world, whom we give up as hopeless, who have never been really tried and tested with the gospel in all their lives. I am afraid that there are persons of whom we speak as unlikely to be converted, who have never been fully brought under the influence of the fire of God's Word, or beneath the fall of the hammer of the gospel. "I brought one person," says somebody. I am glad you have; but have you ever spoken faithfully to that person about his soul? "Well, I do not know that I have; I have said a little to him." Have you ever plainly put the gospel before him? "Well, I do not think he was quite the person to be spoken to in that fashion." Ah! I see that you thought you were going to burn him without using fire, and to break that rock without lifting the hammer. The fact is, you believed that something better than the gospel fire was wanted in his case, or that something gentler than the gospel hammer was needed. Will you not try that old-fashioned hammer upon him? Will you not try that old fire upon him? I have heard of congregations where men have said, "There is no good to be done there," and I have wondered if they were to try preaching one of the old-fashioned sort of gospel sermons, if they could get Whitefield to preach, or have someone to preach the same truth as Whitefield preached, what results would follow. When I am told that the hearts of the people are not affected by the preaching in any place, I ask, "But was it the gospel with which you tried to affect them? Was it the very Word of God that was preached?" Our words are like paper pellets thrown against the wall, they effect nothing; but God's Word is like a shot fired from one of the greatest Woolwich cannon. Where it comes, it crushes through every obstacle, and destroys everything that is opposed to it.

Why should we not always set the whole truth before those whom we seek to save? I believe that, sometimes, even in Sunday-schools, children are taught "to love gentle Jesus," and so on, as if

that were the way of salvation. Why not tell them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Why is love to take the place of faith? Let it be the same gospel for the children that you give to the adults. Try them with the same gospel, and see what will come of it; and let this work be attempted everywhere.

"But," says someone, "there are certain districts where you cannot do any good if you try to preach the gospel. You must fiddle to the people, and drum to them; and then you must have amusements and entertainments for them, you must have penny readings and concerts." Very well, convert sinners that way if you can; I do not object to any method that results in the winning of souls. Stand on your head if that will save the people; but still, it seems to me that if God's Word is like a fire, there is nothing like it for burning its way; and if God's Word is like a hammer, there can be nothing like that Word for hammering down everything that stands in the way of Jesus Christ. Why, then, should we not continually try the gospel, and nothing but the gospel?

"Well," says one, "but the poor people are dirty; we must have various sanitary improvements." Of course we must; go on with them as fast as ever you can; the more of such things, the better. There is nothing like soapsuds and whitewash for dirty people and dirty places; but you may whitewash and soapsud them as long as you like, yet that will not save their souls without the gospel of Christ. You may go to them and plead the cause of temperance with them, and I hope you will; the more of it, the better. Make teetotallers of every one of them if you can, for it will be a great blessing to them; but still, you have not really done anything permanent if you stop there. Try the gospel! Try the gospel! Try the gospel! When the gospel was tried against the world in the days of Paul,—when the power of the great empire of Rome had crushed out liberty, and when lust of the most abominable kind made the world reek in the nostrils of God,—nothing was done but preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and the common people heard of Jesus Christ, heard of Him gladly, and believed in Him; and very soon down went the false gods, down went the brutal lusts of the Roman empire, and a great part of the world was permeated with the gospel; and it will have to be done again, and it must be done again. But remember that it is only to be done by that same Word of the Lord which did it the first time; and the sooner we get back to that Word, the better; and the more we throw away everything else but the simple telling out of that Word, the more speedy will be the victory, and the more swift and sure will be the triumph for our God and for His Christ.

Beware of Foxes

Beware of Foxes

Dear young friends who have lately found Christ, there are foxes about. We try all we can to stop the gaps in the hedge, that we may keep the foxes out; but they are very crafty, and they manage to get in sometimes. The foxes in the East are much smaller than ours, and they seem to be even more cunning and more ferocious than those we have in "this country, and they do much mischief to the vines. In the spiritual vineyard there are foxes of many kinds. There is, first, the hard censurer. He will spoil the vines if he can, and especially the vines that have the tender grapes. He finds fault with everything that he can see in you who are but young believers. You know that you are simply depending upon Christ for salvation; but this censurer says, "You are no child of God, for you are far from being perfect." If God had no children but those who are perfect, He would have none under heaven. These censorious people will find fault with this and that and the other in your life and character, and you know well enough that you have all too many imperfections, and if they look for them, they can soon spy them out. Then they say, "We do not believe that there is any grace at all in you," though you know that by the grace of God you are what you are. It may be that there is a fault in you which they have discovered, perhaps you were taken by surprise, and suddenly overcome. Possibly, they even set a trap for you, and allured you into it, provoking you to anger, and then turning round upon you, said, "You have made a profession, have you? That is your religion, is it?" and so on. May God deliver you from these cruel foxes! He will often do so by enabling you not to mind them. After all, this is only the way in which all Christians have been tried, there is nothing strange in your experience from these censurers; and they are not your judges, you will not be condemned because they condemn you. Go and do your best in the service of your Lord; trust in Christ, and do not mind what they say; and you will be delivered from that kind of fox. A worse fox even than that one, however, is the flatterer. He comes to you smiling and smirking, and he begins to express his approval of your religion, and very likely tells you what a fine fellow you are. Indeed, you are so good that he thinks you are rather too precise, you have gone a little over the line! He believes in religion, he says, fully; though, if you watch his life, you will not think so; but he says that he does not want people to be righteous overmuch; he knows that there is a line to be drawn, and he draws it. I never could see where he drew it; but still he says he does, and he thinks that you draw the line a little too near the cross. He says, "You might be a little more worldly, you cannot get through life in your way; if you get out of society, you might as well get out of the world at once. Why do you make yourself appear so singular?" I know what he is after; he wants to get you back among the ungodly. Satan misses you, and he wants to have you again, and he is sending Mr. Flatterer to wheedle you back, if possible, into your former bondage to himself. Get away from that fox at once. The man who tells you that you are too precise ought to be precisely told that you do not want his company. There never lived a man who was too holy, and there never will live a man who will imitate Christ too closely, or avoid sin too rigidly. Whenever a man says that you are too Puritanical, you may always smell one of these foxes. It would be better if we were all more Puritanical and precise. Has not our Father said to us, "Be ye

holy; for I am holy"? Did not our Lord Jesus say to His disciples, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"?

Then there comes another fox, Mr. Worldly-wiseman. He says, "You are a Christian, but do not be a fool. Carry your religion as far as you can make it pay; but if it comes to losing anything by it, well then, don't you do it. You see, this practice is the custom of the trade; it is not right, I know, but still, other people do it, and you ought to do it. If you do not, you will never get on in business." Mr. Worldly-wiseman further says, "Never mind if you tell a lie or two, make your advertisements say what is not true; everybody else does it as a matter of course, and why should not you? Then try whether you cannot get a slice out of your customer here and a slice there when he does not know it, it is the custom of the trade; it is the way other people do, and, as it is the custom, of course you must do it." To all such talk I reply that there is another custom, a custom that God has, of turning all liars into hell; mind that you do not come under that divine rule and law. There is another custom that God has,—namely, that of cutting down as hypocrites those who do not walk honestly and uprightly towards their fellowmen. The plea of custom will not stand for a moment at the judgment-seat of Christ; and it ought to have no weight with us here. I know that there are many young people who, unless they are watchful and careful at the very beginning of their spiritual life, will get lamed, and never walk as they ought to do, because this fox has bitten them.

There is another ugly fox about, and that is a doubting fox. He comes and says, "You seem very happy, and very joyful; but is it true? You appear to have become quite a different person from what you used to be; but is there, after all, such a thing as conversion?" This fox begins nibbling at every doctrine, he even nibbles at your Bible, and tries to steal from you this chapter and that verse. God save you young people from all these foxes!

There are some foxes of evil doctrine, and they generally try to spoil our young people. I do not think anybody ever attempts now to convert me from my belief; the other day, when a man was arguing with another, I asked him, "Why don't you try me?" "Oh," he said, "I have given you up as a bad case, there is no use trying to do anything with you." It is so when we get to be thoroughly confirmed in our convictions of the truth; they give us up, and they generally say that we are such fools that we cannot learn their wisdom, which is quite correct; and so we intend to be as long as ever we live. But with some of the younger folk, they manage it thus. They say, "Now you are a person of considerable breadth of thought, you have an enlarged mind, you are a man of culture; it is a pity that you should cling to those old-fashioned beliefs, which really are not consistent with modern progress;" and the foolish young fellow thinks that he is a wonder, and so is puffed up with conceit. When a man has to talk about his own culture, and to glory in his own advancement, it is time that we suspected the truth about him. When a man can despise others who are doing vastly more good than he ever dreamed of doing, and call such people antiquated and old-fashioned, it is time that he should get rebuked for his impudence, for that is what it really is. These clever men, as far as I know them, are simply veneered with a little learning, not the sixteenth-thousandth of an inch thick. There is nothing in the most of them but mere pretence and bluster; but there are some who hold firmly to the Old Gospel, who have read as much as they are ever likely to do, and are fully their equals in learning, though they do not care to boast of their acquirements. Do not any of you young people be carried away with the notion that all the learned men are heretics; it is very largely the reverse, and it is your sham, shallow philosopher who goes running after heresy. Get out of the way of that fox, or else he will do much mischief to the tender grapes.

If you have any sign of spiritual life, if you have any tender grapes upon your branches, the devil and his foxes will be sure to be at you; therefore, endeavour to get as close as ever you can to two persons who are mentioned hard by my text,—namely, the King and His spouse. First, keep close to Christ, for this is your life; and, next, keep close to His Church, for this is your comfort. Get among elderly Christian people, seek to catch up with those who have long known the Lord, those who are farther on the heavenly road than you are. Pilgrims to Zion should go to heaven in company, and often, when they go in company, and they can get a Mr. Greatheart to go before them, it saves them from many a Giant Slaygood and many a Giant Grim, and they get a safe and happy journey to the Celestial City where else they might have been buffeted and worried. Keep close to God's people, whoever they may be; they are the best company for you, young believers. Some Christians may, like Bunyan's pilgrim, start on the road to heaven alone; but they miss much comfort which they might have with companions of a kindred spirit. As for Christiana and her children, and the younger folk especially, they will do well to keep in company with some one of the Lord's champions, and with the rest of the army with banners who are marching towards the Celestial City.

Small Rain and Showers

Small Rain and Showers

We are all to be teachers of the gospel, according to our ability; and the way to do it is to be "as the small rain upon the tender herb." Perhaps, dear friend, you say, "Well, I should be small rain, without any great effort, for I have not much in me." Just so, but yet that small rain has a way of its own by which it makes up for being so small. How is that, say you? Why, by continuing to fall day after day. Any gardener will tell you that with many hours of small rain there is more done than in a short period with a drenching shower. Constant dropping penetrates, saturates, and abides. Little deeds of kindness win love even more surely than one bounteous act. If you cannot say much of gospel truth at a time, keep on saying a little, and saying it often. If you cannot come out with a wagonload of grain for an army, feed the barnyard fowls with a handful at a time. If you cannot give the people fulness of doctrine like the profound divines of former ages, you can at least tell out what the Lord has taught you, and then ask Him to teach you more. As you learn, teach; as you get, give; as you receive, distribute. Be as the small rain upon the tender herb. Do you not think that in trying to bring people to Christ we sometimes try to do too much at once? Rome was not built in a day, nor will a parish be saved in a week. Men do not always receive all the gospel the first time they hear it. To break hearts for Jesus is something like splitting wood; we need to work with wedges that are very small at one end, but increase in size as they are driven in. A few sentences spoken well and fitly may leave an impression where the attempt at once to force religion upon a person may provoke resistance, and so do "harm. Be content to drop a word or two today, and another word or two tomorrow. Soon you may safely say twice as much, and in a week's time you may hold a long distinctly religious conversation. It may soon happen that where the door was rudely shut in your face you will become a welcome visitor, whereas had you forced your way in at first you would have effectually destroyed all future opportunity.

There is a great deal in speaking at the right moment. We may show our wisdom in not doing, and in not saying, as much as in doing and saying. Time is a great ingredient in success. To speak out of season will show our zeal, but not always our sense. We are to be instant out of season as well as in season, but this does not involve incessant talking. I commend to everyone who would be a winner of souls by personal effort, "as the small rain upon the tender herb." The rain is seasonable, and in accordance with its surroundings. The rain does not fall while a burning sun is scorching the plants, or it might kill them; neither is it always falling, or it might injure them. Do not bring in your exhortations when they would be out of place, and do not be incessantly talking even the best of truth, lest you weary with chatter those whom you desire to convince with argument. If you will wait upon the Lord for guidance, He will send you forth when you will be most useful, even as He does the rain. God will direct you as to time and place, if you put yourself at His disposal.

Now, small rain is meant to enter the herb, so that it may drink in the nourishment and be truly refreshed. The rain is not to drench the herb, and it is not to flood it; it is to feed it, to revive it, to refresh it. This was what Moses aimed at. This is what all true preachers of Christ aim at. We long

that the word which we speak may enter into the soul of man, may be taken up into the innermost nature, and may produce its own divine result.

Why is it some people never seem to take in the word, "as the small rain upon the tender herb"? I suppose it is, first, because some of it may be above their understanding. If you hear a sermon, and you do not know at all what the good man is about, how can it benefit you? If the preacher uses the high-class pulpit-language of the day, which is not English, but a sort of English-Latin—produced rather by reading than by conversation with ordinary mortals,—why then the hearer usually loses his time, and the preacher his labour.

One said to me, "If I went to such-and-such a place I should not want my Bible, but I should need a dictionary, for otherwise I should not know what was meant." May that never be the case with us! When people cannot understand the meaning of our language, how can we expect that they can drink in the inner sense?

We cannot feed upon that which is high above and out of our sight. Ballooning in theology is all very fine, but it is of no use to poor souls down here below, who cannot hope to be allowed a place in the car. Tender plants are not refreshed by water which is borne aloft into the clouds, they want it to come down to earth, and moisten their leaves and roots; and if it does not come near them, how can they be refreshed by it? The fountains of Versailles are very grand, but for the little flowerpot in a London window a cupful from a child's hand, poured near the root, will suffice.

"As the small rain upon the tender herb." Now, observe, in looking about among mankind, that whenever wise men expect any result from their labours, they always go to work in a manner suited and adapted to the end they have in view. If Moses means that his speech shall bless those whom he compares to tender herbs, he makes it like small rain. I see clearly that he seeks a result, for he adapts his means. There is a kind of trying to do good which I call the hit-or-miss style of doing it. Here you are going to do good: you do not consider what method of doing good you are best fitted for, but you aspire to preach, and preach you do. Of course, you must give a sermon, and a sermon you give. There is no consideration about the congregation, and its special condition, nor the peculiar persons composing it, nor what truth will be most likely to impress and benefit. Hit-or-miss, off you go! When a man means to see results, he begins studying means and their adaptation to ends; and if he sees that his people are strong men, and he wants to feed them, well, he does not bring out the milk jug, but he fetches out a dish of strong meat for them. You can see he means to feed his people, for he has great anxiety when preparing their spiritual meat. When a person wants to water plants, and they are tender herbs, if he looks for results he does not drench them: that would look as if he had no real object, but simply went through a piece of routine. Moses meant what he was doing. Finding the people to be comparable to tender herbs, he adapted his speech to them, and made it like the small rain.

Now, what will be the result if we do the same? Why, it will come to pass thus: there will be among us young converts like tender herbs, newly-planted, and if we speak in tenderness and gentleness we shall see the result, for they will take root in the truth, and grow in it. Paul planted, and then Apollos watered. Why did Apollos water? Because you must water plants after you have planted them, that they may the more readily strike into the earth.

Happy shall you be if" you employ your greater experience in strengthening those whose new life is as yet feeble! You shall have loving honour as nursing fathers, and your wise advice shall be "as the small rain upon the tender herb," for you shall see the result in the young people taking hold of Christ, and sucking out the precious nutriment stored away in the soil of the covenant, that they may grow thereby. When discourse is like small rain to the tender herb, the weak and perishing revive and lift up the head. The herb was withering at first, it lay down as you see a newly-planted thing do, faint and ready to die; but the small rain came, and it seemed to say, "Thank you," and it looked up, and lifted its head, and recovered from its swoon. You will see a reviving effect produced upon faint hearts and desponding minds. You will be a comforter, you will cheer away the fears of many, and make glad the timid and fearful. What a blessing it is when you see that result, for there is so much the more joy in the world, and God is so much the more glorified! When you water tender herbs, and see them grow, you have a further reward. It is delightful to watch the development and increase of grace in those who are under our care. This has been an exceedingly sweet pleasure to me. I quote my own instance because I have no doubt it is repeated in many of you. It has been a great delight to me to meet men serving God, and preaching the gospel gloriously, who were once young converts, and needed my fostering care. I know men, deacons of churches, fathers in Israel, that I recollect talking to twenty or twenty-five years ago, when they could not speak a word for Jesus, for they were not assured of their own salvation. I rejoice to see them leaders of the flock, whereas once they were poor, feeble lambs. I carried them in my bosom, and now they might almost carry me. I am glad enough to learn from them, and sit at their feet.

Once more, we water plants that we may see them bring forth fruit, and become fit for use. So shall we see those whom God blesses by our means become a joy to the Lord Himself, yielding fruits of holiness, patience, and obedience, such as Jesus Christ delights in. His joy is in His people; and when He can rejoice in them, their joy is full. Let us try to be little in our own esteem, that we may be as the small rain. Let us try to be a little useful, if we cannot reach to great things: the small rain is a great blessing. Let us try to be useful to little things. Let us look after tender herbs; let us try to bring to Jesus boys and girls. Let us look after the tender plants of the Lord's right hand planting, those who are babes in grace, the timid, trembling, half-hoping, half-fearing ones.

The Four Lepers and the Syrian Camp

The Four Lepers and the Syrian Camp

God had come to the Syrian camp, and had by Himself alone routed the whole Syrian host: they had every man of them fled. Though the starving citizens of Samaria did not know it, the Lord had made provision in abundance for all their hunger; and there it was, within a stone's throw of the city gates. The Lord had done it: His own right hand and His holy arm had gotten Him the victory, and had provided for Israel's needs, though they did not know it. These lepers found out the joyful facts, and had utilized their discovery by entering into possession of the treasure: they were appointed to make known the joyful facts; and if they had concealed them they would have been guilty men. No man has done all the good he could have done, and ought to have done. If any man assures me that he has done all the good that might have been possible to him, I do not believe him. I will say no more; but let us labour to avoid sins of omission. If you know the Lord; and you have never confessed His name, then you have not done well. If you have been in company, and you have not spoken up for Christ, you have not done well. If you have had opportunities of telling out the gospel even to children, and you have not done so, you have not done well. It is a heavy charge, after all, for a man's conscience to bring against him when it forces him to join with others in saying, "We do not well." That is the reason why the barren fig-tree was cut down. He that kept the vineyard did not say, "Cut it down, it bears such sour fruit." It bore no fruit at all. There was the point: it cumbered the ground. Had those lepers held their tongues, they would actually have been doing evil. Suppose that they had kept their secret for four-and-twenty hours, many hundreds might have died of starvation within the walls of Samaria: had they so perished, would not the lepers have been guilty of their blood? Do you not agree with that? May not neglect be as truly murder as a stab or a shot? If, in your street, a man shall perish through not knowing the Saviour, and you never made an effort to instruct him, how will you be guiltless at the last great day? If there be any within your reach who sink down to perdition for want of the knowledge of Christ, and you could have given them that knowledge, will your skirts be free from blood in the day when the great inquest shall be held, and God shall make inquisition for the blood of men?

These lepers, if they had held their tongues, would have acted most unseasonably. Note how they put it themselves: they say, "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace." Has Jesus washed your sins away, and are you silent about it? I remember the day when I first found peace with God through the precious blood; and I declare that I was forced to tell somebody about it: I could not have stifled the voice within me. Are you saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and can you keep the blessing to yourself? Do you not wonder that all the timbers in your house do not groan at you, and that the earth itself does not open her mouth to rebuke you? Can you be such an ungrateful wretch as to have tasted of amazing mercy, and yet to have no word to say by way of confessing it? Overcome that retiring spirit, and cry, "I cannot help it; I am driven to it; I must and will bear witness that there is a Saviour, and a great one." Personally, I cannot hold my tongue, and never will while I can speak.

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream, His flowing wounds supply;

Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die!"

The Church of God has a claim upon all of you who have discovered the great love of Jesus. Come and tell your fellow-Christians. Tell the good news to the King's household. The Church of God is often greatly refreshed by the stories of new converts. I am afraid that we who get over fifty come by degrees to be rather old-fogeyfied, and it is a great blessing to us to hear the cries of the babes in grace, and to listen to the fresh and vivid testimony of new converts. It stirs our blood, and quickens our souls, and thus the Church of God is benefited.

Besides that, a decided testimony for Christ is due to the world. If a man is a soldier of the cross, and does not show his colours, all his comrades are losers by his want of decision. There is nothing better for a man when he is brought to Christ than for him decidedly to express his faith, and let those about him know that he is a new man. Unfurl your standard. Decision for Christ and holiness will save you from many dangers, and ward off many temptations. Compromise creates a life of misery.

If all Christians came out, and declared what the Lord has done for their souls, the world would feel the power of Christianity, and would not think of it as men now do, as though it were some petty superstition, of which its own votaries were ashamed. If indeed ye be soldiers of the cross, bear your shields into the light of day, and be not ashamed of your Captain! What can there be to make us blush in the service of such a Lord? Be ashamed of shame, and quit yourselves like men! Your open confession is due all round, and it is specially due to yourself. It is due to your spiritual manhood that, if the Lord has done anything for you, you should gratefully acknowledge it. It is also due to your love of others—and love of others is of the very essence of Christianity—that you should explicitly declare that you are on the Lord's side. What more shall I say? What more need I say? I would sound the trumpet, and summon to our Lord's banner all who are good men and true. This declaration should be continually made. Here I speak of many who have confessed Christ publicly, and are not ashamed of His name. We ought always to make Christ known, not only by our once-made profession, but by frequently bearing witness in support of that profession. I wish that we did this more amongst God's own people. Miss Havergal very admirably says, "The king's household were the most unlikely people to need to be instructed in this good news—so it seems at first sight. But, secondly, the lepers were the most unlikely persons to instruct the king's household; and yet they did so." You and I might say, "Christian people do not require to be spoken to about our Lord and His work; they know more than we do. If they do require it, who are we, who are less than the least of all our Master's household, that we should presume to instruct them?" Thus even humility might check our bearing testimony in certain companies. If you were in the midst of uninstructed people, to whom you could do good, you might feel bound to speak; but among Christians you are apt to be dumb. Have you not said to yourself, "I could not speak to that good old man. He is much better instructed in the faith than I am"? Meanwhile, what do you think the aforesaid good old man is saying? He says to himself, "He is a fine young man, but I could not speak to him, for he has so much more ability than I have." Thus you are both as mute as mice when you might be mutually edified. Worse still, perhaps you begin talking upon worthless themes: you speak of the weather, or of the last wretched scandal, or of politics. Suppose we were to change all this, and each one say, "I am a Christian man, and next time I meet a brother Christian,

whether he is my superior or not, I shall speak to him of our common Master." If two children meet, they will do well to speak of father and mother. If one is a very little child, he may know but little about his father compared with the knowledge possessed by his big sister; but then he has kissed his father last, and has of late enjoyed more caresses from his father than his grown-up sister has. The elder can tell more of father's wisdom and providence, but the younger has a more vivid sense of his tenderness and love; and so they can unite in fervent admiration.

Why should Christian people so often meet and part without exchanging five words about the Lord Jesus? I am not condemning any of you: I am censuring myself more than anyone else. We do not bear enough testimony for our Lord. I am sure I felt quite taken aback the other day when a flyman said to me, "You believe that the Lord directs the way of His people, don't you, sir?" I said, "That I do. Do you know anything about it?"

"Why," he said, "yes. This morning I was praying the Lord to direct my way, and you engaged me; and I felt that it was a good beginning for the day." We began talking about the things of God directly. That flyman ought not to have been the first to speak: as a minister of the gospel, I ought to have had the first word. We have much to blame ourselves for in this respect. We hold our tongues because we do not know how a word might be received; but we might as well make the experiment. No harm could come of trying. Suppose you were to go into a place where persons were sick and dying, and you had medicine about you which would heal them; would you not be anxious to give them some of it? Would you say nothing about it because you could not tell how it might be received? How could you know how it would be received except by making the offer? Tell poor souls about Jesus. Tell them how His grace healed you, and perhaps they will answer, "You are the very person I need; you have brought me the news I have longed to hear."

There are districts in London, to my knowledge, in the suburbs especially, where, if a man knocks at the door, and begins to say a word about Christ, the poor people answer, "No one ever calls upon us to do us any good. We are left to perish." It is shameful that it should be so, but so it is. Men live and men die in this Christian country as much lost to the knowledge of the gospel as if they had lived on the Congo. If they lived on the Congo, we should all subscribe to send a missionary up the river to tell them of Jesus and His love; even at the risk of his dying of fever, we should send a missionary to them; and yet those who live next door to our homes, or are even in our employ, are left in ignorance of salvation. The woman that comes in charing, the man who sweeps up the mud from the street,—these may know no more of Christ than Hottentots, and yet we do not speak about Christ to them. Is not this shocking? We have satisfied our own hunger, and now we allow others to starve! Do let us quit indifference, and get to work for Jesus. It is not enough to me that I should myself preach the gospel; I would fain turn all out to proclaim it.

I spoke once about Christian young men who were great hands at cricket, but could not bowl straight at a sinner's heart. A gentleman who heard me, said, "That is true about me; I am a Christian man, but yet I am better known as a cricketer than as a worker." He began to serve his Lord with his whole heart, and he is at this day in the front rank of usefulness. Oh, that I could win another such! The multitudes of London are dying in the dark. I beseech you bring them all the light you have! Myriads are perishing all over this United Kingdom. Hasten to their rescue! The world also remains under the power of evil. I beseech you to reclaim it!

"I do not know anything," says one. Then do not say what you don't know. "oh!" cries another, "I hope I am a Christian." Tell others how you became a believer, and that will be the gospel. You need not study a book, and try to make a sermon with three heads and a tail; but go home, and say to your biggest boy, "John, I want to tell you how your father found a Saviour." Go home to that sweet little daughter of yours, and say, "Dear Sarah, I want to tell you how Jesus loves me." Before the morning light you may have had the joy of seeing your dear children brought to the Saviour if this very evening you talk to them out of the fulness of your heart.

Philip and the Others Preach the Word

Philip and the Others Preach the Word Acts 8:4-5; Acts 8:35 In every church where there is really the power of the Spirit of God, the Lord will cause it to be spread abroad, more or less. He never means that a church should be like a nut shut up in a shell; nor like ointment enclosed in a box. The precious perfume of the gospel must be poured forth to sweeten the air. Just now we have little of that form of persecution which drives men from home. But godly people are scattered through the necessity of earning a livelihood. Sometimes we regret that certain young men should have to go to a distance; but should we regret it? We lament that certain families must migrate to the Colonies. Does not the Lord by this means sow the good seed widely? It is very pleasant to be comfortably settled under an edifying ministry, but the Lord has need of some of His servants in places where there is no light. In many ways the great Head of the Church scatters His servants abroad; but they ought of themselves to scatter voluntarily. Every Christian should say, "Where can I do the most good?" and if he can do more good anywhere beneath the sun than in the land of his birth, he is bound to go there, if he can. God will have us scattered; and if we will not go afield willingly, He may use providential necessity as the forcible means of our dispersion. The Lord's design is not the scattering in itself, but scattering for a purpose. He intended that, being scattered, the saints of Jerusalem should go everywhere preaching the Word.

I would call your attention to the translation in the Revised Version, where Philip is said to have proclaimed the Word. The word proclaim is not quite so subject to the modern sense which has spoiled the word "preach." Preach has come to be a sort of official term for delivering a set discourse; whereas gospel preaching is talking, discoursing, and telling out the gospel in any way. We are to make known the Word of the Lord.

Every converted man is to teach what he knows; all those who have drunk of the living water are to become fountains out of which shall flow rivers of living water. We shall never get back to the grand old times of conquest until we get back to the old method of "all at it." In proportion as we come, in any one church, to individual service—nobody dreaming of doing his work by deputy, but each one serving God for himself—in that proportion, under the blessing of God, we shall come back to the old success.

There were no professional exceptions. Philip is mentioned as going down to Samaria to preach; but Philip was originally set apart to attend the distribution of alms of the church. It is good for every man to attend to his own special office; but where that office ceases to be needful, let him get to that work which is common and constant. The time had come when there was no need for the deacon to sit in the vestry, for the poor people were all scattered. What does the deacon do? As the work to which he was appointed has come to an end, he keeps to the work for which every Christian is appointed, and he proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ. No one of us, then, can be exempted from the work of spreading the gospel because we are engaged in some other work. Good as it is, though it may be very intimately connected with the kingdom of Christ, yet it does not exonerate us from the work of endeavouring to bring sinners to Christ in some way or other.

Stephen, the deacon, began first to bear testimony; and when he died, Philip, the next on the roll, stepped into his place. One soldier falls, and another steps forward. All are to proclaim the Word, and no one is exempted by another form of service. Oh, that the Lord's people everywhere would note this!

There were no educational or literary exceptions. It is thought nowadays that a man must not try to proclaim the gospel, unless he has had a good education. To try and preach Christ, and yet to commit grammatical blunders, is looked upon as a grave offence. People are mightily offended at the idea of the gospel being properly preached by an uneducated man. This I believe to be a very injurious mistake. There is nothing whatsoever in the whole compass of Scripture to excuse any mouth from speaking for Jesus when the heart is really acquainted with His salvation. We are not all called to "preach," in the new sense of the term, but we are all called to make Jesus known if we know Him. Has the gospel ever been spread to any extent by men of high literary power? Look through the whole line of history, and see if it is so. Have the men of splendid eloquence been remarkable for winning souls? I could quote names that stand first in the roll of oratory, which are low down in the roll of soul-winners. Those whom God has most honoured have been men who, whatever their gifts, have consecrated them to God, and have earnestly declared the great truths of God's Word. Men who have been terribly in earnest, and have faithfully described man's ruin by sin, and God's remedy of grace—men who have warned sinners to escape from the wrath to come by believing in the Lord Jesus—these have been useful. If they had great gifts, they were no detriment to them; if they had few talents, this did not disqualify them. It has pleased God to use the base things of this world, and things that are despised, for the accomplishment of His great purposes of love. Paul declared that he proclaimed the gospel, "not with wisdom of words." He feared what might happen if he used wordly rhetoric, and therefore he refused the wisdom of words. We have need to do so now with emphasis. Let us trust in the divine energy of the Holy Ghost, and speak the truth in reliance upon His might, whether we can speak fluently with Apollos, or are slow of speech, like Moses. As there were no exceptions on account of educational defects, so were there no exclusions on account of sex. Men and women were to spread abroad the knowledge of Jesus. We read that, "As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad" (and these must have been men and women) "went everywhere preaching the Word." There are many ways in which women can fittingly proclaim the Word of the Lord, and in some of these they can proclaim it more efficiently than men. There are minds that will be attracted by the tender, plaintive, winning manner in which the sister in Christ expresses herself. A Christian mother! What a minister is she to her family! A Christian woman in single life—in the family circle, or even in domestic service—what may she not accomplish, if her heart be warm with love to her Saviour! We cannot say to the women, "Go home, there is nothing for you to do in the service of the Lord." Far from it, we entreat Martha and Mary, Lydia and Dorcas, and all the elect sisterhood, young and old, rich and poor, to instruct others as God instructs them. Young men and maidens, old men and matrons, yes, and boys and girls who love the Lord, should speak well of Jesus, and make known His salvation from day to day. Our Lord means to bring in the rest of His chosen through those who are already called; but if these start aside and are untrue to their calling, how is the work to be done? I know the work is of God alone; still He uses instruments. If you do not tell the gospel, you are leaving your fellowmen to perish. The principal reason for their constant proclamation of Jesus was, that they were in a fine state of spiritual health. They went everywhere

preaching the Word when scattered abroad, because they had told it out when at home. You will never make a missionary of the person who does no good at home. If you do not seek souls in your own street, you will not do so in Hindostan. If you are of no use in Whitechapel, you will be of no use on the Congo. He who will not serve the Lord in the Sunday-school at home, will not win children to Christ in China. Distance lends no real enchantment to Christian service. You who do nothing now, are not fit for the war, for you are in sad health. The Lord give you spiritual health and vigour, and then you will want no pressing, but you will cry at once, "Here am I; send me!"

The Loaves and the Hungry People

The Loaves and the Hungry People

John 6:2

Look, there are the people! Five thousand of them, as hungry as hunters, and they all need to have food given to them, for they cannot any of them travel to buy it! And here is the provision! Five thin wafers—and those of barley, more fit for horses than for men—and two little anchovies, by way of a relish! Five thousand people and five little biscuits wherewith to feed them! The disproportion is enormous: if each one should have only the tiniest crumb, there would not be sufficient. In like manner, there are millions of people in London, and only a handful of wholehearted Christians earnestly desiring to see the city converted to Christ; there are more than a thousand millions of men in this round world, and oh, so few missionaries breaking to them the bread of life; almost as few for the millions, as were these five barley cakes for those five thousand! The problem is a very difficult one. The contrast between the supply and the demand would have struck us much more vividly if we had been there, in that crowd at Bethsaida than it does here, nearly nineteen hundred years afterwards, and merely hearing about it. But the Lord Jesus was equal to the emergency: none of the people went away without sharing in His bounty; they were all filled. Our blessed Master, now that He has ascended into the heavens, has more rather than less power; He is not baffled because of our lack, but can even now use paltry means to accomplish His own glorious purposes; therefore let no man's heart fail him. Do not despair of the evangelization of London, nor think it hopeless that the gospel should be preached in all nations for a testimony unto them. Have faith in God, who is in Christ Jesus; have faith in the compassion of the Great Mediator: He will not desert the people in their spiritual need, any more than He failed that hungry throng, in their temporal need, long ago.

Notice the providence of God in bringing the lad there. We do not know his name; we are not told anything concerning his parentage. Was he a little pedlar, who thought that he could make some money by selling a few loaves and fishes, and had he nearly sold out? Or was he a boy that the apostles had employed to carry this slender provision for the use of Jesus and His friends? We do not know much about him; but he was the right boy in the right place that day. Be his name what it might, it did not matter; he had the barley loaves and fishes upon which the people were to be fed. Christ never is in need but He has somebody at hand to supply that need. Have faith in the providence of God. What made the boy bring the loaves and fishes I do not know. Boys often do unaccountable things; but bring the loaves and fishes he did; and God, who understands the ideas and motives of lads, and takes account even of barley loaves and fishes, had appointed that boy to be there. Again I say, believe in the providence of God. Mr. Stanley tells us that, when he came out of that long journey of his through the forest, I think after a hundred and sixty days of walking in darkness, and found himself at last where he could see the sun, he felt that there was a special providence of God that had taken care of him. I am very glad that Mr. Stanley felt that it was the hand of God that had brought him out of the noisome shade; but I do not need to go to Africa to

learn that we are beset behind and before by His goodness. Many of us have felt a special providence of God in our own bed-chambers; we have met with His hand in connection with our own children. Yea, every day we are surrounded by tokens of His care.

"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." "I am sure God took care of me," said one;" for as I was going along a certain street, I slipped on a piece of orange-peel, and had what might have been a serious fall; yet I was not hurt in the least." To which his friend replied, "I am sure God has taken care of me; for I have walked along that street hundreds of times, and have never slipped on a piece of orange-peel, or on anything else."

Let us also believe in His providence with regard to the church of Christ: He will never desert His people; He will find men when He wants them. Thus it has ever been in the history of the saints, and thus it shall ever be. Before the Reformation there were many learned men who knew something of Christ's gospel; but they said that it was a pity to make a noise, and so they communed with one another and with Christ very quietly. What was wanted was some rough, bullheaded fellow who would blurt the gospel out, and upset the old state of things. Where could he be found? There was a monk named Luther, who, while he was reading his Bible, suddenly stumbled on the doctrine of justification by faith; he was the man: yet when he went to a dear brother in the Lord, and told him how he felt, his friend said to him, "Go back to thy cell, and pray and commune with God, and hold thy tongue." But then, you see, he had a tongue that he could not hold, and that nobody else could hold, and he began to speak with it the truth that had made a new man of him. The God that made Luther, knew what He was at when He made him; He put within him a great burning fire that could not be restrained, and it burst forth, and set the nations on a blaze. Never despair about providence. There sits tonight, somewhere in a chimney corner in the country, a man who will turn the current of unbelief, and win back the churches to the Old Gospel. God never yet did come to a point of distress as to His truth but what suddenly one came forward, a David with a sling and a stone, or a Samson with a jawbone, or a Shamgar with an ox-goad, who put to rout the adversaries of the Lord. "There is a lad here." The providence of God had sent him. This lad with his loaves was brought into notice. When they were searching for all the provisions in the company, this obscure boy, that never would have been heard of else, was brought to the front, because he had his little basket of biscuits. Andrew found him out, and he came and said to Jesus, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes." So, rest assured, that if you have the Bread of Life about you, and you are willing to serve God, you need not be afraid that obscurity will ever prevent your doing it. "Nobody knows me," says one. Well, it is not a very desirable thing that anybody should know you: those of us who are known to everybody would be very glad if we were not; there is no very great comfort in it. He who can work away for his Master, with nobody to see him but his Master, is the happiest of men. "I have only one hundred people to preach to," said a country pastor to me; and I replied, "If you give a good account of those hundred, you have quite enough to do." If all you have is very little—just that pennyworth of loaves and fishes—use that properly, and you will do your Master service; and in due time, when God wants you, He knows where to find you. You need not put an advertisement in the paper; He knows the street you live in, and the number on the door. You need not go and push yourself to the front; the Lord will bring you to the front when He wants you; and I hope that you do not want to get there if He does not want you. Depend upon it, should you push forward

when you are not required, He will put you back again. Oh, for grace to work on unobserved, to have your one talent, your five loaves and two fishes, and only to be noticed when the hour suggests the need, and the need makes a loud call for you. When brought into notice, the loaves and fishes did not fare very well; they were judged insufficient for the purpose: Andrew said, "What are they among so many?" The boy's candle seemed to be quite snuffed out: so small a stock—what could be the use of that? Now, I daresay that some of you have had Satan saying to you, "What is the use of your trying to do anything?" To you, dear mother, with a family of children, he has whispered, "You cannot serve God." He knows very well that, by sustaining grace, you can; and he is afraid of how well you can serve God if you bring up those dear children in His fear. He says to the colporteur over yonder, "You have not much ability; what can you do?" Ah, dear friend! he is afraid of what you can do, and if you will only do what you can do, God will, by-and-by, help you to do what now you cannot do. But the devil is afraid of even the little that you can do now; and many a child of God seems to side with Satan in despising the day of small things. "What are they among so many?" So few, so poor, so devoid of talent, what can any of us hope to do? Disdained, even by the disciples, it is small wonder if we are held in contempt by the world. The things that God will honour, man must first despise. You run the gauntlet of the derision of men, and afterwards you come out to be used of God.

Though seemingly inadequate to feed the multitude, the loaves and fishes would have been quite enough for the boy's supper, yet he appears to have been quite willing to part with them. The disciples would not have taken them from him by force; the Master would not have allowed it; the lad willingly gave them up to be the commencement of the great feast. Somebody might have said, "John, you know that you will soon be able to eat those five cakes and those two little fishes; keep them; get away into a corner: every man for himself." Is it not a good rule, "Take care of number one"? Yes, but the boy whom God uses will not be selfish. Am I speaking to some young Christian to whom Satan says, "Make money first, and serve God by-and-by; stick to business, and get on; then, after that, you can act like a Christian and give some money away," and so on? Let such a one remember the barley loaves and the fishes. If that lad had really wisely studied his own interests, instead of merely yielding with a generous impulse to the demand of Christ, he would have done exactly what he did; for if he had kept the loaves, he would have eaten them, and there would have been an end of them; but now that he brings them to Christ, all those thousands of people are fed, and he gets as much himself as he would have had if he had eaten his own stock. And then in addition he gets a share out of the twelve baskets full of fragments that remain. Anything that you take away from self and give to Christ is well invested; it will often bring in ten thousand per cent. The Lord knows how to give such a reward to an unselfish man, that he will feel that he that saves his life loses it, but he that is willing even to lose his life, and the bread that sustains it, is the man who, after all, gets truly saved.

This, then, is the history of these loaves. They were sent there through God's providence by a lad who was sought out and brought into notice. His stock-in-trade was despised, but he was willing to give it, whether it was despised or not. He would yield it to his Lord. Now, do you see what I am driving at? I want to get a hold of some of the lads, and some young men and young women—I will not trouble about your age, you shall be lads if you are under seventy—I want to get hold of you who think that you have very little ability, and say to you, "Come, and bring it to Jesus." We want you. Times are hard. The people are famishing. Though nobody seems to need you, yet make

bold to come out; and who knows but that, like Queen Esther, you may have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? God may have brought you where you are to make use of you for the converting of thousands; but you must be converted yourself first. Christ will not use you unless you are first His own. You must yield yourself up to Him, and be saved by His precious blood, and then, after that, come and yield up to Him all the little talent that you may have, and pray Him to make as much use of you as He did of the lad with the five barley cakes.

The Lad's Loaves and Christ's Power

The Lad's Loaves and Christ's Power

Henceforth those loaves do not so much suggest the thought of the lad's sacrifice as of the Saviour's power. Is it not a wonderful thing that Christ, the living God, should associate Himself with our feebleness, with our want of talent, with our ignorance, with our little faith? And yet He does so. If we are not associated with Him, we can do nothing; but when we come into living touch with Him, we can do all things. Those barley loaves in Christ's hands become pregnant with food for all the throng. Out of His hands they are nothing but barley cakes; but in His hands, associated with Him, they are in contact with omnipotence. Have you that love the Lord Jesus Christ thought of this, of bringing all that you possess to Him, that it may be associated with Him? There is that brain of yours; it can be associated with the teachings of His Spirit: there is that heart of yours; it can be warmed with the love of God: there is that tongue of yours; it can be touched with the live coal from off the altar: there is that manhood of yours; it can be perfectly consecrated by association with Christ. Hear the tender command of the Lord, "Bring them hither to Me," and your whole life will be transformed. I do not say that every man of common ability can rise to high ability by being associated with Christ through faith; but I do say this,—that his ordinary ability, in association with Christ, will become sufficient for the occasion to which God in providence has called him. I know that you have been praying, and saying, "I have not this, and I cannot do that." Stay not to number your deficiencies; bring what you have, and let all that you are, body, soul, and spirit, be associated with Christ. Although He will not bestow upon you new faculties, the faculties you have will have new power, for they will come into a new condition towards Him; and what may not be hoped for by association with such wisdom and might?

They were transferred to Christ. A moment ago they belonged to this lad, but now they belong to Christ. "Jesus took the loaves." He has taken possession of them; they are His property. Oh, Christian people, do you mean what you say when you declare that you have given yourself to Christ? If you have made a full transfer, therein will lie great power for usefulness. But do not people often say, "If I might make some reserve"? "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

What about that odd thousand that you put in the Funds the other day? What about the money saved up for a new bonnet?

Oh, that we had more real putting of the loaves into Christ's hands! The time that you have not used for self, but given to Christ; the knowledge that you have not stored, as in a reservoir, but given to Christ; the ability that you have not wielded for the world, but yielded to Christ; your influence and position, your money and home, all put into Christ's hands, and reckoned to be not your own, but to be His henceforth; this is the way in which London's need will be met, and the world's hunger will be satisfied. But we are staggered at the very outset by the lack of this complete dedication of everything to Christ. As these loaves were given to Jesus, so they were accepted by Jesus. They were not only dedicated, they were also consecrated. Jesus took the five

barley loaves, Jesus took the two little fishes, and in doing so He seemed to say, "These will do for Me." As the Revised Version has it, "Jesus therefore took the loaves." Was there any reason why He should? Yes, because they were brought to Him; they were willingly presented to Him; there was a need of them, and He could work with them, "therefore" He took the loaves. Children of God, if Christ has ever made use of you, you have often stood and wondered however the Lord could accept you; but there was a therefore in it. He saw that you were willing to win souls: He saw the souls needed winning, and He used you, even you. Am I not now speaking to some who might be of great service if they yielded themselves unto Christ, and Christ accepted them, and they became accepted in the Beloved? Only five barley cakes, but Jesus accepted them; only two small fishes, brought by a little lad, but the great Christ accepted them, and they became His own.

These loaves and fishes were blessed by Christ, as He lifted up His eyes, and gave thanks to the Father for them. Think of it. For five little cakes and two sprats Christ gave thanks to the Father; apparently a meagre cause for praise, but Jesus knew what He could make of them, and therefore gave thanks for what they would presently accomplish. "God loves us," says Augustine, "for what we are becoming." Christ gave thanks for these trifles because He saw whereunto they would grow. Do you not think that, having thanked the Father, He also thanked the boy? And in after years these words of gratitude would be ample recompense for such a tiny deed. Like the woman who cast in the two mites to the treasury, he gave his all, and doubtless was commended for the gift. Though high in glory today, Christ is still grateful when such offerings are made to Him: still He thanks His Father when, with timid, trembling hands, we offer to Him our best, our all, however small; still is His heart gladdened when we bring Him our scanty store that it may be touched by His dear hand, and blessed by His gracious lips. He loves us, not for what we are, but for what He will yet make us; He blesses our offerings, not for their worth, but because His power will yet make them worthy of His praise. May the Lord thus bless every talent that you have! May He bless your memory; may He bless your understanding; may He bless your voices; may He bless your hearts; may He bless your heads; may He bless you all and evermore! When He puts a blessing into the little gift and into the little grace that we have, good work begins and goes on to perfection. And when the loaves had been blessed, the next thing was, they were increased by Christ. Peter takes one, begins to break it, and as he breaks it, he has always as much in his hand as he started with. "Here, take a bit of fish, friend," says he. He gives a whole fish to that man, he has a whole fish left. So he gives it to another, and another, and another, and goes on scattering the bread and scattering the fish everywhere, as quickly as he can; and when he has done, he has his hands just as full of fish and as full of bread as ever. If you serve God you will never run dry. He who gives you something to say one Sunday will give you something to say another Sunday. Some very learned brethren are like the great tun of Heidelberg; they can hold so much wine that there is enough to swim in, but they put in a tap somewhere up at the top, and you never get much out. Mine is a very small barrel indeed, but the tap is down as low as it can be; and you can get more liquor out of a small tub, if you empty it, than you can out of a big vat if you are only permitted to draw a little from the top. This boy gave all his loaves, and all his fish—not much, truly—but Christ multiplied it. Be like him, give your all; do not think of reserving some for another occasion. If you are a preacher, do not think of what you will preach about the next time; think of what you are going to preach about now. It is always quite enough to get one sermon at a time: you need not have a store; because if you get a lot piled away somewhere, there will be a stale odour about them. Even the manna that came down from heaven bred worms and stank; so will your best

sermons, even if the message is God-given; and if it does not come down from heaven, but from your own brain, it will go bad still more quickly. Tell the people about Christ. Lead them to Jesus, and do not trouble about what you will say next time, but wait till next time comes, and it shall be given you in the same hour what you shall speak.

Christ's additions mean subtraction; and Christ's subtractions mean additions. He gives that we may give away. He multiplied as soon as ever the disciples began to distribute; and when the distribution ended, the multiplication ended. Oh, for the grace to go on distributing! If you have received the truth from Christ, tell it out! God will whisper it in your ear, and tell it in; but if you stop the telling out, if you cease the endeavour to bless others, it may be that God will no more bless you, nor grant you again the communion of His face.

Putting all this together, if we all would bring our loaves and fishes to the Lord Jesus Christ, He would take them, and make them wholly His own. Then, when He should have blessed them, He would multiply them, and He would bid us distribute them, and we could yet meet the needs of London, and the needs of the whole world even to the last man. A Christ who could feed five thousand can feed five millions. There is no limit. When once you get a miracle, you may as well have a great one. Whenever I find the critics paring down miracles, it always seems to me very poor work; for if it is a miracle, it is a miracle; and if you are in for a penny, you may as well be in for a pound. If you can believe that Christ can feed fifty, then you can believe that He can feed five hundred, five thousand, five millions, five hundred millions, if so it pleases Him. A great deal of misery was removed by the lad's basketful of barley cakes. Those poor people were famished; they had been with Christ all day, and had had nothing to eat; and had they been dispersed as they were, tired and hungry, many of them would have fainted by the way; perhaps some would even have died. Oh, what would we give if we might but alleviate the misery of this world! I remember the Earl of Shaftesbury saying, "I should like to live longer. I cannot bear to go out of the world while there is so much misery in it." And you know how that dear saint of God laid himself out to look after the poor, and the helpless, and the needy, all his days. Perhaps I speak to some who never woke up yet to the idea that, if they were to bring their little all to Christ, He could make use of it in alleviating the misery of many a wounded conscience, and that awful misery which will come upon men if they die unforgiven, and stand before the judgment bar of God without a Saviour. Yes, young man, God can make you the spiritual father of many. As I look back upon my own history, little did I dream when first I opened my mouth for Christ, in a very humble way, that I should have the honour of bringing thousands to Jesus. Blessed, blessed be His name! He has the glory of it. But I cannot help thinking that there must be some other lad—such a one as I was, whom He may call by His grace to do service for Him. When I had a letter sent to me by the deacons of the church at New Park Street, to come up to London to preach, I sent it back by the next post, telling them that they had made a mistake, that I was a lad of nineteen years of age, happy among a very poor and lowly people in Cambridgeshire, who loved me, and that I did not imagine that they could mean that I was to preach in London. But they returned it to me, and said that they knew all about it, and I must come. Ah, what a story it has been since then, of the goodness and lovingkindness of the Lord? You must not think that God picks out all the very choice and particularly fine persons. It is not so in the Bible; some of those that He took were very rough people; even the first apostles were mostly fishermen. Paul was an educated man, but he was like a lot out of the catalogue, one born out of due time; the rest of them were not so, but God

used them; and it still pleases God, by the base things and things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are. I do not want you to think highly of yourself; your cakes are only five, and they are barley, and poor barley at that; and your fish are very small, and there are only two of them. I do not want you to think much of them, but think much of Christ, and believe that, whoever you may be, if He thought it worth His while to buy you with His blood, and is willing to make some use of you, it is surely worth your while to come and bring yourself, and all that you have, to Him who is thus graciously ready to accept you. Put everything into His hands, and let it be said of you, "And Jesus took the loaves." It is a part of the history of the loaves that they assuaged a great mass of misery.

Jesus was glorified; for the people said, "He is a prophet." The miracle of the loaves carried them back to the wilderness, and to the miracle of the manna; they remembered that Moses had said, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee of thy brethren, like unto me." For this Deliverer they longed, and as the bread increased so grew their wonder, until in the swelling cakes they saw the finger of God, and said, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." That little lad became, by his loaves and fishes, the revealer of Christ to all the multitude; and who can tell, if you give your loaves to Christ, whether thousands may not recognize him as the Saviour because of it? Christ is still known in the breaking of bread. When the feast was finished, there were fragments to be gathered. This is a part of the history of the loaves—they were not lost; they were eaten, but they were there; people were filled with them, but yet there was more of them left than when the feast began. Each disciple had a basketful to carry back to his Master's feet. Give yourself to Christ, and when you have used yourself for His glory, you will be more able to serve Him than you are now; you shall find your little stock grow as you spend it. Remember Bunyan's picture of the man who had a roll of cloth. He unrolled it, and he cut off so much for the poor. Then he unrolled it, and cut off some more, and the more he cut it, the longer it grew. Upon which Bunyan remarks—

"There was a man, and some did count him mad; The more he gave away, the more he had."

It is certainly so with talent and ability, and with grace in the heart. The more you use it, the more there is of it. It is often so with gold and silver; the store of the liberal man increases, while the miser grows poor. We have an old proverb, which is as true as it is suggestive: "Drawn wells have the sweetest waters." So, if you keep continually drawing on your mind, your thoughts will get sweeter; and if you continue to draw on your strength, your strength will get to be more mighty through God. The more you do, the more you may do, by the grace of the Ever-blessed One!

These loaves had a record made about them. There is many a loaf that has gone to a king's table and yet never been chronicled; but this boy's five cakes and two little fishes have got into the Bible; and if you look, you will find the barley cakes in Matthew, you will find the barley cakes in Mark, you will find the barley cakes in Luke, you will find the barley cakes in John. To make quite sure that we should never forget how much God can do with little things, this story is told four times over, and it is the only one of Christ's miracles which has such an abundant record.

Let us put it to the test. You young people who have lately joined the church, do not be long before you try to do something for Christ. You that have for a long time been trusting Christ, and have never yet begun to work, arouse yourselves to attempt some service for His sake. Aged friends and sick friends can still find something to do. Perhaps, at the last, it will be found that the persons

whom we might have excused on account of illness, or weakness, or poverty, are the people who have done the most. That, at least, is my observation. I find that, if there is really good work done, it is usually done by an invalid, or by somebody who might very properly have said, "I pray thee, have me excused." How is it that so many able-bodied and gifted Christians seem to be so slow in the Master's service? If there is a political meeting, something about Liberals and Conservatives, how earnest you are! You are all there, every bit of you, over your politics, which are not worth a penny a year; but when it comes to souls being saved, many of you are mute as fishes. You go all the year round without caring even for the spiritual welfare of a little child. One of our friends gave a good answer to a brother who said to him, "I have been a member of a church now for forty years I am a father in Israel." He asked him, "How many children have you? How many have you brought to Christ?" "Well," the man said, "I do not know that I ever brought anybody to Christ." Upon which our friend retorted, "Call yourself a father in Israel, and yet you have no children! I think you had better wait until you have earned the title." So do I. It would be better that we had no professors of that sort, but that all our members, even were they much fewer, should be men and women constantly bringing forth fruit unto God in the conversion of others. The Lord set you all to work with this object!

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