

OUR VIEWS OF MISSION WORK.

THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT.

Rev. James Kennedy, New York.

Solomon, speaking from much practical knowledge and experience, has said: "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" In human life many of our highest attainments and achievements are simply the result of the frame of mind, or spirit, in which we seek the accomplishment of any object. If we act with indifference, fear, hesitation, irresolution or tardiness, then broken purposes and weak, defeated endeavors are sure to be the result; whereas a bold, courageous spirit, animated with zeal, earnestness and enthusiasm, will raise us above weakness, "sustain our infirmity," heal our wounds, deliver us from depression and fear, and enable us ultimately to triumph over all opposition. The state of our spirit, therefore, in all the struggle of life, is a matter of the utmost importance, and more especially in religion, in which faith, realizing a high state of spiritual exaltation, enables us practically to understand what is said of the saints of old, "Out of weakness were made strong."

Now it would, perhaps, be difficult to name any department of practical Christianity in which success is so impossible, unless our spirits be deeply stirred, strongly moved and exercised, as in missionary work. All the life, spirit, love, faith, zeal, courage and enthusiasm that can be

evoked, are necessary here, in the utmost proportion possible; and how such a spirit can best be attained, in all the Churches, is one of the most important questions of the age. To help to attain such a spirit the following suggestions may be found useful:

1. Is it not enough to arouse such a spirit, to consider *the awful spiritual condition* of the world, lying in the evil one?

Let us repeat the text, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 John 5:19), and will we not feel as did the apostle of the Gentiles, when it is said of him, "Now when Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred up in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:16). That beautiful Athens, gem of the Archipelago, capital of Attica, renowned for its magnificent buildings, its profuse adornment and grand historical monuments, could he not, gazing on the beauties of such a scene, and having access to her famous schools, extensive literature, and most distinguished philosophic sages, and mingling with a people of the most cultivated taste, and living so much at ease that they "spent their time in nothing else than either to tell or to hear some new thing," could he not find employment and enjoyment enough wholly to absorb his thoughts for a few days as he waited for his friends? Ah! the thought that the city was "wholly given to idolatry, was mad on

its idols," had heaped idols together, till it was true, in the words of an old writer, "The country was so full of deities that one might more easily find a god than a man," and yet confessed their ignorance by inscribing an altar, "To the unknown god," such a thought damped all ardor for earthly pursuit, quenched all wish to indulge his natural tastes, and concentrated all his energies in one great desire to save the perishing. Of what importance was her grand history, long line of statesmen and heroes, what was the eloquence of her Demosthenes or the glory achieved by Miltiades, or even the philosophy of Socrates and Plato! Oh, what was all that to a spiritual mind that only saw in the surrounding curious crowds, immortal beings, rushing down to destruction, and in constant peril of eternal perdition! The glory, riches, learning and worldly wisdom of the people in the midst of whom he stood for a time—perhaps the finest of all the Greeks—all counted for nothing to that stirred spirit, which only saw them in a state of rebellion against God and constant exposure to His wrath.

And, oh, when we consider how much more numerous the inhabitants of the world now are than in the days of Paul, and that millions are living and dying unspeakably more degraded and hopeless than the polished Athenians, will not our spirit experience a thrill of such pitiful emotion as will quicken us in the work of seeking the conversion of the world to God? Paul improved the impulse he now felt, preached to them every day in the forum the Gospel of Christ, and was honored with a good measure of success. Let us follow him.

2. The thought that the Gospel is the *only infallible remedy for all the evils* from

which the world is suffering should surely be sufficient to evoke a missionary spirit.

The world, or human family, "lying in the evil one," presents the idea of a universal possession by Satan, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." Now we know that, as of old, Satan is both *accuser* and *destroyer*, and even in this life it may be said of many of his devotees, "being grievously tormented of the devil." Therefore Paul, describing the work of our deliverance by Christ declares "That through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." And how is this unclean spirit to be cast out, how is this vile, enslaving, domineering oppressor and murderer to be dispossessed? Only, as we have learned, by the power of Christ put forth by the Gospel. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." The Gospel, therefore, bringing us the knowledge of Christ, is God's own divinely devised remedy for the removing of all human ills, and is always infallibly successful when rightly received and applied. And do not we claim, as professed followers of Christ, that we have ourselves tried this infallible remedy, and proved it to be all-efficacious and all-powerful as reported, and will we conceal this great, invaluable discovery, which is sure to heal, not slightly, but radically and forever, the wounds and bruises and putrefying sores wherewith poor humanity has been affected since sin and Satan have entered our mortal body?

3. The fact, also, that we are *put in trust* with God's remedy, for the very purpose of making it known, should also move our spirit.

As the great missionary, Paul, to whose intense glow of spirit we have already referred, speaks on many occasions of the "ministry he had received from the Lord," he invariably refers to the fact that he was made a minister of the Gospel for a strictly practical end and purpose. Thus, "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3 : 7, 8). And again, "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles may be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15 : 16). And for this purpose he declares to Timothy, "According to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (1 Tim. 1 : 11), and warns the young and beloved son and evangelist, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust" (6 : 20). And thus to give the Gospel to others was not only a matter of most solemn obligation, but became the ruling passion of his life, so that he is heard crying, "For though I preach the Gospel I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9 : 16). And lest any one should say, Well, I accept and receive the Gospel for my own salvation, while ignoring the claims of others, he throws our obligation into legal form and declares, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise; so, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Rom. 1 : 14).

Such obligation is acknowledged in other matters. When, by a fire or shipwreck, precious lives are imperiled, who would feel warranted to stand aside and say, "I am in no danger," if he could in any way help to save those who, without such help, would perish? No, no, the fire engine is put to work, or the lifeboat and rocket pressed into service, and wrought with a hearty good will, even strangers often assisting, because we feel that those in danger have a righteous claim upon our help, and that we are "debtors" to do all in our power to save them. And so far does this principle carry us that crowds will cheer and applaud those who, at personal risk, save those exposed to danger, and on the same principle will not allow even a suicide to die, if by any means, even by force, if necessary, he can be compelled to live.

Nor need we stop to inquire whether those to whom we are debtors, to give them the Gospel, are friends in whose safety we are specially interested. Ah, no! only are they human beings with precious souls. Dr. Guthrie was fond of telling an anecdote of a farmer who had driven into a neighboring town in one of his own farm carts, accompanied by a little child. Leaving the vehicle for a few minutes to go into a store the young horse took fright and madly dashed down the street. While many gazed at the dangerous position of the little one, a woman—herself a mother—followed after the maddened horse, crying at the top of her voice, "Save that child, save that child." A man who was acquainted with her cried at her, What are you shouting for, sure it is not *your* child? Giving him a look of supreme contempt she replied, "It is *somebody's* child," and went on crying, "Save that child," till the little

one was delivered from fits perilous position. And is not that exactly what God calls to in the furtherance of His kingdom, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice as a trumpet, and show my people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sins." By our mouth, in personal efforts, in teaching, by our example, influence and means, we can all lift up our voice as a trumpet, either by our own labors or through organized missionary agency; for it is one blessed feature of modern Missions that the humblest and the poorest can co-operate with the body at large, and thus do their proportion of the Lord's work. Some speak disparagingly of the place and power of wealthy persons in the Church of Christ. I bless God for them, and I know no nobler individual on earth than the person to whom has been given wealth and means and a heart to use them to the promoting of Christ's Kingdom. But blessed be God, the widow with her two mites is not shut out or excluded from the privilege and luxury of co-operating with the whole body of Christ in the noblest of all works entrusted to His followers. Oh for more enthusiasm in recognizing our trust of the Gospel of Christ.

4. Should it not also quicken us to the highest enthusiasm in promoting missionary work, that therein God confers on us the *high honor of being "laborers together with God"?*

While the obligations we are under to Christ's humiliation work on our behalf can never be measured, we surely should not be insensible of the wonderful favor of being asked to co-operate with Him in all His works of providence and grace. To hear Him say, "The glory that Thou hast given Me I have given them," and to be call-

ed by Him "laborers together with God," and while He alone giveth such increase as makes a glad harvest, "Paul may plant and Apollos water" should surely stimulate to holy and intense devotion. And in how many ways does our Lord associate us with Himself, as when He is represented as taking us into His counsel. "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me" (Is. 45 : 11), and "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" He hath also appointed us as His agents in one of the grandest of His works, namely, the reconciling of the world to Himself. "And hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. . . and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." This is an honor that never has been conferred even upon angels, but instead *we* have been called angels because of the mighty power which God has been pleased to put forth through human ministry. Thus we have "the seven angels of the seven churches." "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth." Therefore when the Ethiopian eunuch was to be converted Philip was the agent, and when Cornelius, with his family and friends, were to be savingly enlightened, it was "Send to Joppa for Peter." Besides, with such a ministry He gives "power over the nations," and as the four and twenty elders seen by John, were sit on thrones about the throne of God (Rev. 4 : 4), and assessors with Him "shall judge angels." "This honor is to all the saints," and who, in view of being made partaker of all this grace, would not with holy ambition pray that He might give us something

to do for Him, since He so munificently rewards the smallest act of devotion performed in His service? "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

5. But besides, surely the glorious things that *promise and prophecy assure us shall be achieved by the Gospel*, in the latter day, should fire our spirit.

Whatever God intends to give, He makes it beforehand the subject of promise, and whatever He intends to perform He foretells through the channel of prophecy; and therefore His covenant is a "covenant of promise," and the "testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." As in the case of Abraham, therefore, God does not hide from us what He is about to do in the Church and in the world. And to what purpose? Not only to comfort and assure us, but to push us forward in the way of duty and effort to realize the great things God has purposed and foretold. So it was in that early promise of salvation made to our race ere the gates of paradise were closed on fallen man. It was so when to Abraham it was promised and foretold, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," and when David sang, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee." So also when the rapt Isaiah cried, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," and Habakkuk records that oath-confirmed assurance, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." So also when John heard the prophetic shout, "The kingdoms of this

world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever," and when He and Peter both spoke with assurance of the blessed condition of our world in the latter day. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea." Who can read and contemplate the force of such promises and predictions, and not be moved to seek all the blessedness for the world they imply and secure?

6. And may it not be added that the present attitude of the world toward the Gospel should move us to all possible activity. "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God," is a literal realized fact in our day. Every truly Gospel Mission is crying, "We could greatly enlarge the sphere of our operations if we only had more men and means"; and there are coming to us every day petitions and requests for Bibles and missionaries which we cannot meet. The Word of God has free course and is glorified, and heathen tribes are literally stretching out their hands for the bread of life. Now men will freely contribute their money to meet the wants of famine-stricken districts, it may be thousands of miles away, to support for a little the life that now is; with what greater liberality should we seek to give to the perishing the means of eternal life. They are knocking at our doors, obstacles are in a great measure removed; and oh for that apostolic spirit that will regard "the wide door and effectual" as an invitation from God to "enter in and possess the land," and the whole world, as Christ's Mission field, that, cultivated by Gospel agency, will yield the fruits of righteousness.