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MIGHTY IN THE SCRIPTURES.*

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Mighty in the Scriptures.—ACTS xviii., 24.

THE Scriptures are for the weak as well as for the strong. They contain milk for babes as well as strong meat for them of maturer years. It would be difficult to say how small an amount of Scriptural knowledge might be effectual to the generation of a true religious life and a holy walk with God.

One word of saving truth may be blessed to the renewal of a soul. He who has learned but to say with the publican, God be merciful to me a sinner; or whose ears have heard that priceless declaration that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life, has caught the kernel of the Gospel. And if he has faith to trust it, the promise is his, and it shall be fulfilled to him in all its gracious meaning. However narrow his conceptions however weak his understanding, he shall experience what the wise and the learned and the great of this world fail to attain.

But though a single spark of heavenly truth may thus shine with a divine light, which shall savingly illumine and guide him whose eyes have been opened to behold it, there is given us in this blessed volume not a spark

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merely, nor a series of sparks to glimmer in the midst of our darkness, but a blaze, or rather a flood of sunshine, which converts night into day. We have here afforded us not one radiant point, though this may indicate the direction in which we are to flee from the wrath to come, but a whole heaven of brightness, lighting up the entire earth with its splendor, and shedding its brilliancy on all the complex relations and manifold experiences of human life, imparting to every earthly object the glow of Heaven, and enfolding all that is human in the drapery of the divine.

The Bible is the record of God's great scheme of redemption; and this is as broad and as vast as all that He has purposed to accomplish in and through this world, and on behalf of the race of man made in His own image and redeemed by His own incarnate Son. It embraces all that He has done and all that He designs yet to do for the working out of His own divine ideal for man and for the world. It contemplates not merely the restoration of the primal innocence lost by the fall, which was but the undeveloped germ of what man was designed to be, but the full unfolding of every human capability and power in perfect harmony with the holy will of God, so that all individual life and social relations and national institutions, the entire sphere of human activity shall be pervaded and controlled, shaped, directed and quickened by the pure and blessed Spirit of God, which shall be breathed into all, and make all just what God would have it be. The Bible is God's one sole agent for bringing these divinely intended results to pass. His entire supernatural scheme of grace from first to last is bound up with His revealed Word. Men are sanctified only by His truth, His word of truth. The scattered rays of light reflected from God's works in nature and from His pencillings on the human heart serve a most important providential purpose in preserving the nations from absolute darkness and keeping alive those ideas of God and morals on which teachings of revelation may be grafted. But God's direct and positive agency in redeeming men is recorded in and accomplished by His inspired Word.

While the Scriptures are perspicuous in the matter and method of individual salvation, so that he who runs may read; and each individual person is authorized and warranted to come to the Scriptures for himself to learn the will of God, what he is to believe and what he is to do, and is not dependent upon the authoritative interpretation of any man or body of men, it is nevertheless obvious that the whole counsel of God contained in the Scriptures is not to be caught up at a glance. It is not to be reached and understood by any limited and partial examination of disconnected passages, any more than the whole magnificent plan of God in the material creation, and the possibilities wrapped up in the properties of nature and in the physical forces of the world can be scanned by the hasty observer. The most ignorant and untutored barbarian discovers enough to preserve life. All that is necessary to a bare existence is easily ascertained and procured. But what there is in the world to minister to utility, convenience and comfort man is only slowly learning from age to age, and he is improving the arts of life accordingly. So what there

is laid up for man in the Scriptures, what blessed results shall be unfolded from it in the experience of mankind, comes only gradually to be known. New questions are arising in every age, of which the Bible must furnish the only true solution. New applications are to be made of its principles, as these are wrought more and more into the texture of human society. As the ideas suggested by the Gospel and introduced amongst mankind come to be more widely diffused, and more fully comprehended, revolutions are wrought in the relations existing among men, and changes in institutions and usages. In the new aspect thus assumed by human affairs, new aspirations arise, fresh progress is made, and a further stage is reached in the unfolding of God's great plan. And with each step of advancement the latent meaning of that divine Word, by which this onward movement is conditioned and directed, comes more plainly out to view. The Bible is the most wonderful book ever written. There is no other volume to which such persistent and ardent study has been given by the ablest minds from every conceivable point of view, and these studies have borne rich and ample fruit. The realm of Biblical science has been widened by the labors of eager and keen investigators, just as the realm of physical science has been in the very same manner. And the field seems as boundless in the one case as in the other. In each alike the progress made, instead of exhausting the theme or approximating its final limit, only widens the field, suggests new possibilities and yet more accelerated advancement.

Thus there has been a steady progress toward a more exact comprehension of the system of truth taught in the Scriptures. A new body of ideas was given to the world by the introduction of the Gospel of Christ. These had to work their way into the minds and hearts of men. Much profound thought and study were given to them before those exact forms of statement were reached by which they were correctly defined and imperfect or erroneous conceptions were guarded against. This result was only attained after numerous periods of religious controversy, in which false or inadequate statements were sifted, inaccurate or perverted representations were set aside, and the great historic creeds were successively formulated, as the embodiments of one grand doctrine of the Word of God after another. These stand forth amid the centuries as so many way-marks set up to indicate the progress which the Church was making in its comprehension of the truths of Scripture. Discussions and controversies finally crystallized into these creeds and symbols, in which the doctrine of the Trinity was brought out, or the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ; or the doctrines of sin and grace; or that of justification by faith alone. Standing at the end of this protracted period of progressive advancement, we can avail ourselves of the results achieved by all who have gone before us, and can profit by their labors and their struggles. What is systematic theology, but the elaboration of those truths, which have become the inheritance of the Church through the studies and the conflicts of all past ages, which have drawn them forth from the treasury of the Word. In pursuing this study we gain an insight into the

teachings of the divine Word, which has been won for us by the learning, acuteness and piety of all who have preceded us in its investigation. It is not a mere system of philosophic truth elaborated by the human intellect. Its supreme value and importance consist in the rigorous exactness with which it is deduced from the Bible, and the completeness of its correspondence with its authoritative and inspired teachings. It is only then properly studied, when this correspondence is seen and traced at every point; when it is throughout compared with the utterances of Scripture, and inquiry is made at every step whether it is based on a "Thus saith the Lord": so that an acquaintance with theology becomes in fact and in form an acquaintance with the Scriptures.

And the study of the history of the Church is made tributary to the same end. The kernel of the whole matter consists in tracing the unfolding of the power of the Word of God amongst men, their increased comprehension of Scripture truth, and adoption of it and conformity to it. In following down the stream of history we see how the contents of the Bible were more and more opened up to the understanding of the people of God and more and more exemplified by them: and from this manifestation of the truth in its living power we gain ourselves an increased knowledge of its real meaning, its true character and its endlessly diversified applications. We obtain a broader view of what the Bible contains for man and what it is capable of accomplishing in man, by seeing it in actual operation on human hearts and lives, on social relations, on forms of government and legislation and the institutions which are established among men, and perceiving how its all-pervasive and reconstructive force infuses a new divine and heavenly spirit into the old forms, or else abolishes them to make way for that which is more consonant to its own nature.

But the system of truth deduced from the Bible and the operations of Bible truths upon men, whether as individuals or in masses, are not after all the Bible. These show us how men have understood the Bible, and what the Bible thus understood has accomplished, and what agencies it has set in operation. But the Bible is larger and deeper and broader than men's comprehension of it; and what it has already wrought is not the measure of what it is capable of effecting. These studies help us to understand the Bible, but they cannot be made a substitute for the Bible. The Scriptures themselves in their entire compass and extent must be made the direct object of study, if we would ascertain the fulness of their meaning and know the divine counsels as they are therein revealed. The Bible rests upon and presupposes a system of doctrinal truth, as the landscape rests upon the underlying rock, which it clothes with pleasing and endlessly varied forms of verdure and fertility. The Bible is no mere body of systematic divinity. It contains and is built upon such a system clearly and sharply defined. But the actual form of this divine revelation is not that of abstract logical statements, but of diversified embodiments of truth, whose lessons are most skilfully adapted to every capacity and every various taste. There are history and biography, and poetry

and prophecy, and law and proverb and epistle. There are types and anti-types; there are precepts and promises, and exhortations and examples to serve both as patterns for imitation and as beacons for warning.

As the Most High has condescended to employ human language as the medium of conveying His revelation to men, and has clothed His own divine thoughts in human forms, the meaning which He intends must be ascertained by the same laws of interpretation which are applied in the case of human productions. The great Hebrew legislator, the psalmists, prophets and Apostles, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself were men and spoke as men, and wished to be understood by men. Their speech must therefore be such as men employ and such as men can understand, and must be interpreted accordingly. As they lived in an age remote from our own, and in a distant land, with usages and surroundings very different from those to which we are accustomed, we must know something of the history and habits and circumstances of the time if we would have any intelligent comprehension of the frequent allusions made to these things or the language employed respecting them.

They spoke and wrote in languages foreign to us and which are no longer living tongues. Hence, if we would really stand face to face with inspired men, and hear their very words, and catch their thoughts in their full glow and their exact meaning direct from themselves, without the inevitable loss and possible error of getting at them at second hand through the medium of a fallible translation, we must master the original languages of Scripture. Master them, I say; not merely attain to such a smattering of them that we can drag our way painfully along through sentence after sentence by dint of grammar and lexicon and hard work; but so that the language becomes to us a transparent medium of thought, and we can think the thoughts of the inspired writers, and grasp their ideas in their full force, and feel the pulses of their life as it burns and glows in the words they utter, and thus put ourselves in the very attitude and state of mind of the original auditors or readers of these inspired discourses or these sacred books.

And as the volume of divine revelation has been transmitted to us through the hands of copyists for a long series of ages like all the works that have come down to us from antiquity, each fresh transcription involving not only in negligent but even in the most careful hands liability to mistakes, we must learn from sacred criticism how these errors of inadvertence or of design can be detected and removed, if we would not perchance be tying our faith to the blunders of transcribers, instead of feeding our souls upon the pure and unadulterated Word of God.

Furthermore, we have in this marvellous volume not merely one single inspired treatise, but a number of such treatises written through a long succession of ages and under a great variety of circumstances. They are written by peasants and by kings, by illiterate fishermen and by men trained in all the wisdom and learning of their age, by prisoners in their lonely cells and by prime ministers in the court of monarchs; by those who were surrounded by worldly glory and prosperity and by those who were suffering impoverishment and

exile. And yet the same Divine Spirit breathes through them all. They form intimately related and connected parts of one continuous and complete revelation. The most perfect harmony reigns throughout the whole. All is combined in one indissoluble unity. It is the one Word of God ministered through all these saintly men. It expresses perfectly the divine will. The mind of God is written on every page; but there is no monotony, no tiresome uniformity. It is the sweet melody of blended voices, each uttering its own notes and performing its own part, but all combining in one grand symphony. Here is the complete revelation of the will of God for man and respecting man. And yet each separate book of Scripture has a distinct character of its own, its own author, and theme, and occasion, and plan, and purpose, and peculiar fitness for the particular auditors or readers for whom it was immediately designed. All this must be sought out and carefully weighed, in order that its special character may be understood, and we may know why it is just as it is in materials and arrangement and execution and may perceive its adaptation to the circumstances and to the end in view. It is only when it is thus studied in its connection and its relation that its full force and meaning can be apprehended.

And we shall thus discover how the varied aspects and forms of truth are brought out by passing through the medium of various minds, each under the infallible guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit lifted above all error in the conception and the presentation, and yet each surveying it from his own special point of view and influenced by his habits of thought, by his past experience and training, and by the particular aim which he at the time had before him. Thus we have the one perfect life of Christ, mirrored forth as it impressed itself on four different evangelists. We have the doctrine of the Gospel set forth as it was conceived by Paul and by James and by Peter and John, as the pure white light direct from heaven is refracted into the various colors of the spectrum. We have the purpose of God respecting Israel set forth by the superb galaxy of the prophets; each fitting into his own place and fulfilling his own commission in the plan of God, and by their joint labors weaving a beautifully diversified pattern, which when viewed in its completeness is seen to be the execution of one all-controlling design, harmonious in its several parts, and in harmony too with the foreseen and foretold developments of God's providence.

And from Genesis to Revelation, from the earliest to the closing page of this Book of books we trace the gradual and consistent unfolding from age to age of God's great scheme of grace and redemption. The primal promise to the trembling pair whose sin had forfeited paradise contained the germ of hope, which was afterward developed by successive revelations in promises and types and prophecies with growing fulness and clearness until the Son of God, the promised Seed, the great Redeemer came, and by His death upon the cross vanquished the arch-enemy of man and rose triumphant from the grave, commissioning His disciples to publish the news of mercy and of salvation to all mankind. And thenceforward the work of grace goes on with ever in-

creasing power, widening and deepening as it advances from Pentecost to the final consummation, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ, and the counsel of God touching the world's redemption shall be complete.

It is not necessary to pursue this line of remark further. Enough has been said even in this cursory and hasty manner to indicate the breadth and amplitude of the contents of Scripture and how various are the points of view under which these may be surveyed. The fields of study opened before him who would acquaint himself with the Bible are wide and large, and they demand careful and earnest attention. The various departments of instruction provided in this institution concentrate upon the Scriptures. Their object is to train men in the knowledge of the Word of God, and then to show them how that knowledge may be most effectively employed for the purposes for which it was given. It is, in other words, to prepare men to be "mighty in the Scriptures"; and the first element of this power, or an indispensable requisite to its possession, is an intimate acquaintance with the contents of the Word of God. If no man can be a skilful physician who is ignorant of medicine and of the healing art; nor an efficient and trustworthy lawyer unless he has made himself familiar with the principles and the practice of law, it is equally absurd to imagine that any one can handle the Word of God with ability and power, who has not by diligent and careful study gained an intelligent comprehension of what is embraced in that Word and penetrated as far as in him lies the fulness of its meaning. How can he as a faithful steward bring forth from his treasure things new and old, and make the most available use of the mysteries with which he has been put in charge, if he actually does not know what these treasures are and has never even surveyed them except in the most superficial and desultory manner? A smatterer in physic may play the part of a quack and may deal successfully with simple cases where the remedies are obvious. But who would trust their lives in his hands in a serious disorder whose causes were obscure and in whose treatment profound knowledge and a high order of skill were demanded?

The feeblest Christian who is altogether "unskilful in the word of righteousness" and knows only the doctrine of faith and of repentance and the blessedness of forgiven sin, can tell others what a Saviour he has found, and his humble efforts to bring others to the saving knowledge of Christ may be crowned by the divine blessing. But because a child may scatter grains that shall grow, shall the whole work of sowing the field and cultivating it be entrusted to children? What sort of tillage would that be, and what kind of a harvest could be expected? And is the Lord's work to be done in this shiftless, ignorant manner? He has provided us with the instrument for doing His work in His inspired Word. This we are to use in the most effective manner possible for the promotion of the Lord's glory and for the accomplishment of His merciful and holy designs. And how can we use it except in the most bungling and haphazard manner, if we are ignorant of its construction and of its adaptations? A minister who is learned in everything except the

Scriptures, is deficient in that which is the prime necessity of his holy calling. And a theological student who knows every book but his Bible, has missed the very kernel and heart of his divinity course and has utterly failed to secure the end for which it was all designed.

The simplest and most elementary form of acquaintance with the Bible, and which is necessarily presupposed as the basis of more advanced and profound study, is familiarity with the letter of the English Version. This is the form of the Scriptures with which we come most constantly in contact : and this is the form which we must hereafter most frequently employ. It is impossible to overrate the importance of having ready command of the letter of the Bible ; of having it so stored in the mind as to be able to make prompt and pertinent application of it on all occasions. As the practised jurist knows his Blackstone from end to end, and is ever ready to prove his point by an appeal to this unquestioned authority, so he who is commissioned to preach the Word, should have it in homely phrase "at his fingers' ends." If he is called upon to establish a doctrine or to guide an awakened sinner, or to comfort a sorrowing mourner, to cheer a desponding saint, to enforce a neglected duty, to direct the language of petition to the throne of grace, to enkindle or stimulate devout affections, he should be able to draw forth the appropriate message from the treasury of the Word, and to point his every utterance with its authoritative declarations. It is not philosophy, it is not eloquent speech, it is the word which has come directly from the mouth of God which tells on human hearts and constrains their homage and obedience. Nothing can make up for the lack of this free and ready familiarity with the very words of Scripture, a familiarity which is only to be acquired by the copious and constant perusal of the sacred volume. Not as though everything was accomplished that is important and essential toward a knowledge of the Scriptures, when this is gained. But it is in every way most desirable in itself, and it will be a valuable stepping-stone toward a higher and a more profound knowledge of the Scriptures in those various lines of study which have been already suggested.

Knowledge is power : and a very essential preparation for an effective use of the Scriptures is a thorough knowledge of them. And yet great learning may be wholly inoperative and unprofitable. An increased acquaintance with the Scriptures increases in direct proportion a man's capacity for employing them with effect. The more profound and thorough his knowledge of the Bible, the more clearly he can discern and the more readily he can lay hold of the power that is in it. He has a firmer grasp of the instrument and he can direct it more intelligently and give it a wider sweep. And yet the most eminent scholars are not always the men of greatest influence. A person may be very proficient in the theory of music and yet be a most indifferent musician. And so it is possible to have a great amount of Scriptural learning without being "mighty in the Scriptures." Power is shown by the effects which it produces. The Bible is God's great instrument for accomplishing the regeneration and salvation of mankind. He alone is mighty in

the Scripture who is capable of using it and does in fact use it with effect for doing the work for which it was designed.

And in order to this he must have a strong conviction of the world's need of the redemption announced and offered in the Bible. If this need does not exist, there is no sphere in which the Bible can operate and there is no occasion for employing it. If men do not require salvation, why should we be concerned to engage the power of the Bible to save them? The Scriptures explicitly teach and everywhere assume that men are by nature estranged from God and are under His wrath and curse; that they are lost and ruined in sin from which they are unable to deliver themselves, and that they are in imminent peril of everlasting perdition. But if no just sense is entertained of the alienation of the world from God and of His displeasure against sin, if this is but feebly credited or not at all, if sin is explained away as only imperfect development; if the fall was but a necessary transition from a state of unconscious innocence to one of intelligent moral action, if all that man needs is a higher culture, to which the race is steadfastly pushing its way, then a redemption, an atonement, a divine salvation are quite uncalled for, and the Bible is of no more use than as a book of excellent practical morals. It might exert salutary influence, but there is no occasion for its transforming power or its divine saving energy.

If, however, the Bible doctrine of the state of man by nature be true, then his most imperative need is salvation. No question is comparable in importance with that of reconciliation to God and restoration to His favor. And he who is thoroughly penetrated with a sense of this great necessity for himself and for his fellow-men, will feel that no slight remedy can meet the case, that nothing can avail but a divine remedy and an almighty Saviour.

A further requisite in him who would be "mighty in the Scriptures" is a strong conviction of the adaptation of the Bible to meet the needs of men; that the Saviour whom it reveals, is an omnipotent Deliverer from sin and woe, and that the salvation which He effects is precisely that which man requires. The great problem is how to bring the Gospel to bear upon lost men. Here on the one hand is the mighty task to be accomplished—sinners justly condemned are to be set free from the righteous sentence already passed upon them, a revolted world is to be brought back to God; and on the other hand there is the power capable of effecting it, the redemption wrought out by the Son of God as this is set forth in the Scriptures. He to whom these things are realities, cannot in thought sunder the Bible from its great end and aim. He cannot occupy himself merely with its literary charms, with the interest of its narrative, the beauty of its poetry, the fire and genius of its prophets. Nor can he content himself with the abstract deductions of theological science, speculating on these high themes as he might upon problems in astronomy that are of no immediate practical bearing. The doctrines of theology concern the great facts of Redemption on which is built his personal hope of salvation, and on which rests all the hope of the salvation of the world. The Bible and the Bible alone furnishes the true remedy for every human ill, the

corrective for all the woes and the evils that afflict mankind. This is not to be set aside or superseded by any of the man-devised methods for the elevation of men or the improvement of their condition. No mere palliatives can work a radical cure.

And the Bible is to do its work amongst men simply by being proclaimed through human instrumentality. It is by the foolishness of preaching that God has ordained that His purposes of grace shall be achieved. These rich treasures are conveyed in earthen vessels: men are sent to declare the Word of God ; and it is by this Word thus ministered that the work of the world's salvation is carried forward. They are made mighty in the pulling down of the strongholds of the great adversary, in destroying the works of the devil and defeating his machinations and subtle devices, and in upbuilding the cause and Kingdom of their Divine Lord. They are to win bloodless victories, not by carnal weapons, but by the sword of the Spirit, the word of truth, subduing stout-hearted opposers and bringing them as willing captives in the chains of love. They are to transform the world, establishing the reign of peace and holiness, banishing vice and crime, removing the evils and disorders which infest society, and so sweetening and purifying all human affairs and all the intercourse of men that the kingdom of Heaven shall be set up here on earth.

This is to be done not by the force of genius, not by human wisdom or power, but by men "mighty in the Scriptures;" who can so set forth the truth of God that it shall win its way to men's hearts—who can so develop and apply the principles contained in the sacred Word to all human things that the true divine ideal shall be made to appear and shall be actually brought to pass in every particular. The Word of the Most High must be brought into saving contact with individual hearts and lives, to reform, to relieve, to purify and bless ; to convict hardened transgressors, to lift the burden of guilt from trembling penitents by the power of the atonement, to succor the needy, to strengthen the weak, to encourage the timid, to guide the straying, to lead to holiness and to Heaven. From out of this Word must be brought the solution of all those problems hitherto insoluble which have vexed moralists, philanthropists, legislators and social philosophers from the beginning.

It is sometimes said that the pulpit is relatively at least, losing its power : that a large percentage of the population in cities, and even in the country, do not frequent the churches, that the wealthy stay at home on Sunday or pass the day in visiting, that the laboring classes are drifting away from Christian influences; the Sunday newspaper is taking the place of the sermon, and there is a clamor for Sunday so-called sacred concerts, and for opening reading-rooms, libraries and museums on Sunday because church services have ceased to interest the masses. It is further said that when leading pastorates become vacant in large and influential congregations, where commonplace discourses will not answer, it is very difficult to fill them. Also that ministers formerly possessed a unique position in society which they hold no longer. The clergy once ranked as the chief of the learned professions ; special weight and influence

was accorded to them, and their sermons were the most customary style of popular discourse and had great prominence among the sources of public instruction. With the diffusion of education, however, and the increase of intelligence, the minister is not now so far above the level of the mass of his congregation as formerly; and he finds formidable rivals in attractive lecturers and eloquent speakers who address the public on every variety of subjects, as well as in brilliant or learned writers, who in the columns of daily papers, as well as in magazines, reviews and that multitude of books with which the press is teeming, both frivolous and useful, discuss themes of interest to the public, and supply the material which makes up the current of their thoughts.

I do not assent to all that is said in this line; much less do I yield to the gloomy vaticinations in which some are disposed to indulge. But there is enough that is plausible or true in such representations to call for serious consideration on the part of those who are looking forward to the ministry. It certainly is no time to lower the qualifications for the sacred office. It is no time for candidates for the ministry to content themselves with slender and superficial preparation. If the general community is rising in intelligence, the ministry cannot maintain their relative position without rising too. If there are so many claimants for the popular ear and so much that obtrudes itself upon the public thought, the Gospel will be shut out and fail to get a hearing unless those who are charged with its proclamation take proper measures to secure attention for it. Dull and sleepy sermons, in which there is no life and freshness and no vigor of thought, uttered in humdrum tones will not fill the churches. What then is to be done? Some resort to tricks of advertising, sensational themes, fantastical manners in the pulpit, and perhaps may thus succeed in gathering a gaping crowd. But buffoonery which is sickening and disgusting everywhere, is most of all out of place in the house of God.

The only solid way of attracting an audience in church or anywhere else is to give the people something that is worth listening to, something that is food for thought, something that will reach their hearts and do them good. There is nothing that men everywhere need so much as the Gospel; nothing else that will be so comforting, helpful, stimulating, soul-satisfying. And now the problem for Christian wisdom is how to convince men of this need, and how to present the Gospel to them so that they shall experience in the largest measure its blessed effects. The immediate work of the ministry is to lead the unconverted to repentance and faith, and to promote the edification of believers. But individuals form communities, constitute society and make up the State. Individual life cannot be separated from these complex relations into which men jointly enter. The risen Saviour enjoined it upon His followers not only to "preach the Gospel to every creature," dealing thus with each individual man, but likewise to "teach all nations," extending thus their commission to men in the mass. Christianity should lead the thought of the world. It should lay its firm grasp upon every form of human activity and subject all to the law of Christ. All commerce and trade, all the business

and occupations and intercourse of men fall within the sphere of Christian duty and should be conducted in a Christian spirit. The various classes of men, and the relations which thence arise between the poor and the rich, employers and the employed, are not to be left to selfish greed and mutual defiance and distrust, but brought under the application of the golden rule. There are problems in sociology, problems in political economy, problems in statesmanship and international relations, problems in philanthropy and in the work of moral reform, problems in popular education, upon which the light of the Gospel should be thrown, to which the earnest, patient thought of the best Christian mind should be given, and the solution wisely worked out on the basis of Christian principles. The whole wide sphere of human life in all its forms and conditions is to be purified, regenerated and reconstructed under a power emanating from the Bible. The law is to go forth from Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem, and is to rule the world. The dominion under the whole Heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. And what is needed to bring about this consummation, is the labor of men "mighty in the Scriptures," who shall apply the principles of the Word of God to all human affairs and bring the efficacy resident in that Word into due operation everywhere.

There is more implied, however, in this pregnant phrase "mighty in the Scriptures" than we have yet considered. They who are thus described are not merely armed with the power of the truth, and this truth applicable to all human affairs, alike to those of individual men, of communities and of nations, and enforced by the authority of God, from whom it has emanated, and in whose infallible Word it stands recorded. They have a potency beyond this, mighty as it is, inasmuch as they are attended by the immediate, almighty agency of God. The Word ministered by them is not left to work its way unaided through the world. The truth has its own aptitudes to convince the understanding and to arouse the conscience. But besides this innate power of the truth, it is accompanied by the demonstration of the Spirit and His omnipotent working on the hearts of men. The heralds of the Lord are bidden to blow the gospel trumpet, and at the blast the walls of the city of the enemy fall down flat. They are bidden to prophesy over the dry bones, and the dry bones live and stand upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. Christ sends His servants forth to preach the Word; but the results are not made dependent on their learning or eloquence. The promise is "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." The ministers of Christ are His instruments, His organs. He speaks through them; He acts through them; He exerts His power through them. They are the channels through which He pours that mighty influence which shall bear down all opposition and which shall accomplish to the full His glorious purposes in the world. They are mighty in the Scriptures to achieve marvellous results, because the mighty God of the Scriptures works for them and works in them.

I remark finally, that this distinction of becoming "mighty in the Scriptures" demands the utmost personal consecration on the part of him who

would attain it. God does not honor sloth and negligence. It is the hand of the diligent that maketh rich. It has been wittily said that while God uses the foolishness of preaching to save men, He has no use for foolish preaching. The fact that the power is of God and not of us, does not make it a matter of indifference how we perform the task assigned us. God can work without means and above means, but His ordained method in grace as in nature is to work through the appropriate means. A man need not expect success in the ministry with a lower amount of devotion to his high calling than would be necessary to success in any inferior occupation. The Apostle Paul's instruction to Timothy was "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them." He who would attain the highest possible efficiency in preaching the Word, must think of nothing else, must give himself wholly to this alone. A man of divided purpose, or who has but little interest in his work, will accomplish little. It is the man who has but one single aim, and bends himself to it with all the energy of his nature, who has it ever on his mind and in his thoughts, who subordinates everything else to this one design, who seizes on every opportunity that offers for advancing it, and neglects no means within his power that can contribute to it, who will be successful, if success is at all attainable. It is so in temporal things; it is so in spiritual things. This is the uniform law of the divine administration. The promised aid of God's Spirit is no apology for indolence; it is the highest of all incentives for increased exertion. The argument of the Apostle is valid in the ministerial life as in the Christian life: Work, for it is God that worketh in you. If every effort you make is thus multiplied by an infinite factor—if every endeavor is invested with infinite potency—if God works with you in every labor you perform, then you may work with a will, knowing that your labor will not be in vain in the Lord.

SOUL REST (*Ye shall shall find rest for your souls.*—JER. vi., 16).—Rest is the distinguishing mark of the good old way. Nothing gives rest but the Gospel. It gives this in proportion to the strength of our faith and the character of our service. I. In the good old way, rest is found in pardon by an atonement, in believing the Word of God as inspired and taking it as an authoritative guide, in trusting all our affairs with God, in obeying all God's commandments, and in holding close communion with Christ. II. This rest is *good* for the soul. It satisfies, produces a sense of safety, creates content, with a desire for progress, delivers from legal fears and supplies motives for holiness and service. III. This rest ought to be enjoyed now by every Christian. He ought to get beyond the sorrow of repentance to rejoicing. This would recommend religion. He ought to take an excursion to Heaven and brighten his countenance. This would tend to spread religion. Having drunk well of the waters he should invite other thirsty ones to come.—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*