

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Letters to a Young Preacher.

LETTER III. CALL TO THE MINISTRY.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—

In order that a minister may labor comfortably and usefully, it is necessary for him to be satisfied that he is pursuing a course which Heaven approves. He must, therefore, be persuaded in his own mind, not only that he is a partaker of grace, but also that God has called him to the work in which he is engaged.

Unquestionably the ancient prophets of the Lord were divinely called to the exercise of their office, (Jer. i. 1-5, Am. vii. 15). The same thing is equally certain with reference to the apostles, (Matth. x. i. 5-7). So likewise it is expressly stated, that "The Lord appointed other seventy, and sent them" to preach, (Luke x. 1, 9). In unison with this He has given a command to "pray the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest," (Matth. ix. 38). The enquiry of the apostle, "How shall they preach, except they be sent," (Rom. x. 15), viewed in connexion with these facts, distinctly conveys the sentiment, that they only who are sent of God can be true and useful ministers of Jesus Christ.

The question, then, naturally arises, Wherein does this call consist? On this point it appears to me that too high ground has been sometimes taken. Some men, whose minds have been very strongly exercised at the time of their conversion, have been disposed to question the piety of such persons as have not passed through exercises equally strong. In like manner there have doubtless been instances in which sent-servants of Christ have been very powerfully impressed with a sense of their duty to preach the gospel. Such men are liable to err by concluding, that all who are sent of God must necessarily have impressions as powerful. Accordingly, I have heard the sentiment advanced, that no man ought to preach, if he can help it, or resist the impression. But if this principle were carried to its legitimate results, it would follow, that no man ought to obey the call to repentance, or to discharge any other duty, if he can help it, or withstand the impulse on his mind. It is, therefore, obviously inadmissible.

Paul does, indeed, say, in reference to his own case, "Necessity is laid upon me." He seems, however, at the same time to commend a ready compliance with the call; for he adds, "If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward;" and he says of himself, "I was not disobedient," (1 Cor. ix. 16, 17, Acts xxvi. 17-20). Peter likewise directs the elders, with reference to "the flock of God," to "take the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly," and "of a ready mind," (1 Pet. v. 2). Hence it is evident, that when a man is convinced, and his brethren are satisfied, that it is his duty to preach the gospel, he ought not to wait till he is irresistibly impelled to it. In some instances men who have entered upon the work of the ministry late in life, have regretted, as have also others connected with them, that they had not earlier complied with the call of God.

The apostolic directions given to Titus, shew, that where there are in the churches men possessing the qualifications requisite, they ought to be set apart to the gospel ministry as *elders* or *bishops*—"Ordain elders in every city—if any be blameless," &c. He adds, "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God," &c. (Titus i. 5-9). It should be borne in mind, however, that he who has not a lead of mind to the work, lacks an essential prerequisite. In Paul's instructions to Timothy on this subject, he commences by saying, "If a man desire the office of a bishop," (1 Tim. iii. 1-7). The Greek word (*epetatai*) denotes *earnestness of desire*, like that of a covetous man for riches, or of a true pilgrim for the heavenly country, (1 Tim. vi. 10, Heb. xi. 16). If this arise from an idea that the office is one of ease, emolument, or honor, such unhallowed desire may be justly regarded as a decisive reason why he should not enter upon it, or be admitted to it. But such an ardent and abiding desire that God may be glorified, the cause of Christ advanced, and sinners saved, as renders a suitable man willing to forego worldly advantages, and endure trials, may be reasonably considered as evincing a divine call. "The love of Christ constrains" the true ministers of Christ to labor for Him, and for the salvation of souls, (2 Cor. v. 14, Acts xx. 22-24). A man thus influenced, and on whom the requisite endowments are conferred, has no reason to doubt, neither have others, that he is called of God to the gospel ministry.

Cases sometimes occur in which individuals are positive that the Lord calls them to preach, when it is manifest to their brethren that they are destitute of several of the qualifications required in Scripture. In others, men of sterling worth, and endowed in a good degree with the necessary gifts and graces, feel oppressed with an apprehension of their unfitness for so arduous a work, and endeavor to repress and conceal their fervent wishes to labor in the Lord's vineyard. In cases of the former kind, faithfulness requires that ministers and other brethren should express their convictions with frankness and decision. Much caution, however, is requisite; for some men whose first efforts were unsatisfactory, have subsequently become acceptable and useful preachers. In the latter case, however, all concerned should strive to afford encouragement. Profitable gifts should be sought out, and called into exercise. In connexion with prayer that men may be sent, means ought to be sedulously employed to facilitate their entrance upon the work, and their usefulness in it, (Acts xiii. 2, 3, Col. iv. 17).

In conclusion I remark, my dear young Brother, if you would have satisfactory and continued evidence of your heavenly call to the Christian ministry, you must be careful to maintain a close walk with God, a lively sense of divine things, and an ardent desire for the salvation of your fellow men. As the "assurance of hope" is obtained and retained by "diligence," so in proportion as you live under the constraining influence of the love of Christ, prompting you to zealous and indefatigable efforts in His service, for the everlasting welfare of undying souls, will it be manifest, both to yourself and to your hearers, that you are indeed called of God to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Yours in gospel bonds,  
CHARLES TUPPER.

Tremont, Aylesford, Jan. 8th, 1861.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Uses of Misfortune.

All persons dread misfortune. Prosperity is what we all desire, and what we all strive to seek. Yet misfortune holds as useful a place to say the least, as what is termed "good fortune." In some instances, its ministry is crowned with better and higher results. There are few who are able to bear in a becoming manner, the long continued smiles of fortune; or who, under such circumstances, would know how to appreciate its privileges and opportunities. The worse thing which can befall some persons, is so called good fortune. While on the other hand, adversity has brought with it untold wealth.

The ailing child often refuses the bitter nauseous curative; and sometimes full grown children are quite as unwilling when sick, to take the doctor's prescription, unless it proves sweet to the taste. Yet who does not know something of the excellent nature of the tonic derived from the bitter gums and herbs? And again, who does not know that sometimes that which is most unpleasant to the taste, is the most salutary in its effects upon the human system? Better be bitter to the taste and sweet to the stomach, than sweet to the taste, and bitter to the health.

In contemplating the uses of what is popularly termed misfortune, many high religious considerations might be appropriately suggested and urged. But want of space, even if there were no other reasons, would preclude the writer from going into these at the present time. His object is only to offer a very few thoughts in this article, and to confine himself to considerations of a social and domestic character.

One of the uses of misfortune regarded in a social point of view, is this, that by it, we are enabled to determine who are our friends and who are not. In prosperity, we are unable to ascertain who are our friends. When all runs smoothly in our daily business affairs, all with whom we associate are ready to confer their smiles. Then, the varied expressions of friendship, cost but little or nothing. Smiles are cheap—companionships rise up spontaneously—and the word spoken in approbation of ourselves and our business, is attended with no fear of sacrifice. Mutual recognitions are considered honorable. Proffered services incur no risk, and so on to the end of the chapter. But when the tide of our affairs is changed and the sun of our prosperity is eclipsed, a change comes over the face of the entire class of manifestations to which we have just referred. Then, more or less of cost and sacrifice attend such exhibitions of friendship. Those however, who were really true, and noble, and generous, and unselfish toward us in the bright and sunny day, will continue so in the dark and cloudy season. True, the number be-

comes exceedingly dwindled. Their numerical force is small. Yet they contain all that possessed real intrinsic value as friends, when the apparent force was much larger and stronger. They, few though they are, are the only real grains of wheat in the whole social field. But as they lay mixed up together with the tares and chaff, we could not see the positive state of the case. The threshing, and winnowing, and sifting, have pointed out the differences. The bushel of fine wheat is not the less valuable because of the different processes through which it has passed. Indeed, it is now all the more valuable for the thorough sifting which it has had. I need not pause to apply these figures, as the reader will doubtless make the application as he reads.

Again, misfortune has its uses in leading to a more correct knowledge of men and the world; while its tendency is to call into exercise more of the spirit of generosity and charity in the feeling with which we look upon those who make up the great company of unfortunates of all grades and classes.

In misfortune, our stand-point of view is so changed that we are rendered capable of a truer and more impartial view of men, than under other circumstances. Our estimate of different phases of human character, depends very much upon the relative position which we ourselves occupy to them. The apparent, if not the real distance between them and us, is lessened. Before, the apparent distance was too great for us to see them clearly. Now, we are led to feel more truly than before, that the great class of which we speak are our brothers, belonging to the same great family to which we belong. This knowledge softens our natural asperity of feeling—subdues our prejudices—expands our charities and ennobles our humanity.

These things are among the uses of misfortune. Scores of other uses might be legitimately brought forward, but I have no space for further considerations upon the subject. There is a great and a good God above and around us, who has the control of our circumstances, and he has ordained the present life to be one of discipline and instruction. May its disciplinary character qualify us for this world and the next.

Dorchester, Jan. 10th, 1861.

Rev. Dr. Forrester's reply to "An Enquiry,"—C. M., Jan. 9th.

To the Editor of the Christian Messenger.

SIR,—In reply to the enquiry addressed to me in your paper of this week, I beg to state, that no party in a School District, is legally entitled to erect an additional School-house in the District without the concurrence of a majority of the rateable inhabitants thereof; and if they should do so, the Commissioners would be going right in the teeth of the letter and spirit of the law to grant to said school any share of the public money. There may be a few places out of Halifax and of our larger County towns where there are more than 75 schoolable children, and where it would be desirable to have two or more school-houses, or where the district might be advantageously divided; but where there is not that number of children, it is not only impolitic but ruinous to the advancement of the education of the District to erect more schools than one—even though a number of the scholars are obliged to travel two miles and a half. There is no matter connected with our educational condition that so imperatively demands a thorough revision as that of the School Districts. It would, in my opinion add amazingly to the efficiency of our Common Schools were they reduced one third their present number.

I am respectfully yours,  
ALEX. FORRESTER.

Truro, January 12th, 1861.

For the Christian Messenger.

Examination of Rev. Dr. Tupper's Exegesis of Luke xviii. 7, 8.

"And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?"

Dr. Tupper's exegesis are generally correct; but occasionally we are compelled to withhold our assent. I respect his judgment—admire and love his spirit. But as I regard his exegesis (See C. M., Jan. 2.) of the above passage as singularly inept and forced, the work of friendly and brotherly criticism will not, it is believed, be deemed inconsistent with the kind feelings I entertain towards him.

The Dr. understands the expression—"though he bear long with them," as referring, not to God's "own elect," but to their *adversaries*. Your correspondent demurs to this explication.

1. It is not absolutely necessary, even allowing the Greek word *makrothumeo* (Dr. Tupper's grand, indeed only difficulty) to be here used in its most ordinary sense. Dr. T. admits that God does "bear long" with his people, but alleges that it appears incongruous to connect this idea with that of avenging them. That may be; and yet it may be perfectly consistent. If God does both, where can be the incongruity? Certainly not in connecting those ideas, for in His plan and work they are connected; but in supposing we can trace out and understand all the links and methods by which this connexion is maintained and regulated. That God does "bear long with" his people, will be seen from the following passages, in which the same Greek word used in the text, (or the noun derived from it) occurs. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise (as some men count slackness) but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."—2 Peter iii. 9. "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should believe on him to life everlasting."—1 Tim. i. 16. "And account that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation."—2 Peter iii. 15. Of course it results in salvation to his people only. Christians need the Divine long-suffering; for there remains in them much sin and imperfection—of faith, love, humility, patience and holiness; they are not yet prepared to receive the full answers to their prayers; but when patience has had her perfect work in them, God will speedily avenge them on their adversaries. The scripture truth that God is long-suffering towards the wicked does not necessarily clash with the fact that He is so towards his people. The very fact that he does not immediately avenge his people, shews that he bears long with their enemies. He is long-suffering then to both, but with a different design and result. God "bears long with" his people as a father with his child—that they may gain knowledge and strength through Christ,—may recover from sin and unbelief, and by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit become perfect in holiness, and thus be prepared and ripened for the highest glory. He "bears long with" the wicked; but it is until the measure of their wickedness becomes filled, and then by impentence and unbelief are fitted for destruction.

2. Dr. T.'s exegesis is harsh, and introduces confusion into the passage. I admit the principle the Dr. states,—that a "pronoun relates, not to an immediate antecedent, but to one more remote, or to one understood or implied," but dispute its application to this passage. The principle should not be resorted to, except when the nature of the case, or the context compels or requires it. Its application here may indeed remove an apparent inconsistency, but it introduces a difficulty of much greater magnitude. Dr. T.'s exegesis refers "them" v. 7, (*autois*), not to the word "elect," (*eklekton*) to which it naturally and grammatically has reference; but to their *enemies* who are nowhere named in the passage or context. It is unquestionable that "them" (*autois*) in verse 8 refers to "elect." See now what confusion it makes to explain "them" at the close of v. 7, as referring to the "adversaries" of the elect and the same word in verse 8, as referring to the "elect," themselves! It seems to me that the very strong opposition existing between these two references, and that too within the space of about half a dozen words, and without the least intimation of change of reference, is fatal to my venerable and worthy brother's exegesis. Rather than admit such harshness and confusion in the construction, I would much prefer taking the word rendered "bear long," in its most usual acceptation with all its alleged incongruity. "Them" in those two verses cannot, without violence, be made to refer to any other word than "elect."

3. This reference is the most direct, simple and natural. There can be no objection brought against it, except what may be alleged from the use of the word translated "bear long." It has been seen that it is used to express God's long suffering towards the righteous as well as towards the wicked, though in different respects. But as the word properly means to be long or slow minded, what should hinder us from taking it in the sense to delay or to wait long? That for a time the Most High does delay to avenge his servants on the wicked is frequently and plainly intimated in Scripture. (See Ps. 74, 10, Rev. vi. 9-10). That He will nevertheless when that time expires, speedily avenge them is no less plainly declared, (See Rom. xii.