

Associational Sermon.

THE CHURCH'S DUTY AND PRIVILEGE TO EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM GOD.

THE ASSOCIATIONAL SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE N. S. EASTERN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION ON MONDAY, JULY 12, 1875. BY REV. JAMES MEADOWS.

My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him. Psalm lxxii, 5.

Without occupying time by any introductory remarks, I invite attention to my subject, the theme of which, is the Church's duty and privilege to expect great things from God. The Church should expect great things from God:—

I. Because of great promises. Peter says, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises."

(1.) We have the precious promise of the divine presence. This promise has been precious to God's people in all ages of the world. We see it beaming forth in the garden of Eden, where God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Enoch enjoyed this promise during the three hundred years that he walked with God. (Gen. 5, 22.) God appeared unto Isaac and said to him, "Sjourn in this land and I will be with thee and bless thee, for unto thee and to thy seed I will give all these countries, I am the God of Abraham thy father; fear not, for I am with thee." (Gen. 26, 3, 24.) Jacob heard the voice of the Lord in a dream saying, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whether thou goest." (Gen. 28, 15.) To Moses and Israel God said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." (Exo. xxxiii, 15.) "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them. The Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else; and my people shall never be ashamed. Thus shall they know that I, the Lord, the God am with them."

Just before Christ left his disciples he said, "Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii, 19, 20.) "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you. If a man love me he will keep my words, and my father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him. And where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Of the Spirit it is said—"He shall abide with you forever and guide you into all truth."

In the Book of Revelation the Redeemer is seen standing in the midst of the golden lamp-stands with the stars in his right hand. These passages, with many others, establish the glorious truth that God has been, is, and will ever be, with his people.

The promise of the divine presence is applicable under all circumstances. In times of fierce trial, and severe affliction, God has promised to be with his people. He says—"When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Even in the midst of wars and dire calamities, when nations of the world tremble with fear, the church can sing: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." This promise is not only applicable to the church as a body, but to every member of that body. God's gracious presence is not only to be enjoyed in the house of prayer, but in the home circle, the store, the workshop, the field, and even out in the highway we may realize that God is with us. We, my brethren in the ministry, should never forget this promise. Let us remember that Christ still holds the stars in the right hand of divine power, and love. I know a minister who, after toiling hard all day, retired at night wearied in mind and body, felt the presence of Christ so near that he was about stretching out his hand to shake

hands with him, and so bid him good night, but in the act of doing so, he said no. I will lay my head on his breast and sleep in his loving arms. This is our privilege, my brethren, we may, after toiling for him, sleep in his loving arms. It is the gracious privilege of all God's people even those that are less than the least of all the saints; may enjoy the presence of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

From this promise then, the church should expect great things from God. But further we have the great and soul-stirring promise of Victory. The promises of victory is included in the promises already considered. If God is with his Church it certainly insures victory. For fear however, that we short sighted beings should fail to see this, God has given to us distinct promises of victory, thereby giving us "line upon line and precept upon precept." That the Church might expect the entire submission and destruction of her enemies, He says:—"The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Behold all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded, they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. They that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. Thou shalt fan them, and the whirlwind shall scatter them, and thou shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty or the lawful captive delivered. But thus saith the Lord. Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away; and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered and I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine; and all flesh shall know that I the Lord, am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer the mighty one of Jacob. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

From the above promises we may rightly infer the church will be victorious over sin, the world, and the devil. The Church will detest sin as God does until she becomes victorious over every form of sin; for she must mortify the deeds of the body, and rise to perfect purity. God says—"Be ye holy; for I am holy," and at last she will be presented a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing but will be holy and without blemish. What evil stains may be on her at present—however much entangled with sin now; engaged in this holy warfare; sin of every description shall be slain. Not only the giant sins of intemperance and blasphemy, but the little daily sins of life, and God's people will "look forth as the morning fair as the moon, clear as the sun." The world too, must be subdued. The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paganism, popery, and the multifarious forms of infidelity, must fall before the victorious march of the church.

The commercial world also, must be conquered, it must lie at the Church's feet, she will rise triumphantly over it and realize with her great Head, though in the world she is not of it. The devil shall be subdued, "God will bruise the devil under your feet shortly." Though harassed by him now—beset on every hand by his wiles, yet even he shall be led captive at the chariot wheels of the Church.

(3.) Again we have the great and precious promise of rest.

Rest generally follows victory. The conquered may be led to prison, to hard labor and misery, but conquerors return to rest. The victorious army marches home to rest. It is received with every demonstration of respect and honor. Triumphal arches are erected, banquets are given, and medals of merit are bestowed upon them for victories gained. The army of the Lord also shall return to rest. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. Yea, saith the Spirit that they may rest from their labors." Like the victorious army the Church shall march the golden streets of the new Jerusalem, amid shouts of acclamation to receive the reward merited through the blood of the Lamb. We should beware of settling down in a state of ease in this life, rather give heed to the voice which says, "Arise ye and depart; for this is not your rest."

II. The Church of God should expect great things because He has made great provision for her. In the glorious plan of salvation ample provision has been made for the complete accomplishment of the divine purpose. In that plan God designed to save a countless number from all

nations, kindreds and tongues. A people, in the midst of whom he would dwell through all eternity. Having opened up this gracious design in his revelation to men, the life, death, resurrection and ascension of his Son, He has been pleased to commit the prosecution of this glorious work to his Church, assuring her, as we have already seen, of his presence, victory and rest. And he has provided all that is necessary for the church to accomplish this work.

(1.) He has provided the men. Ever since the war began, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; an army of the Lord has been found, always ready to do battle with the powers of darkness; God has never left himself without witnesses. True there have been periods, when that army has been small and almost invisible to the eyes of the world. Yet it has been large enough to carry on the work of the Lord in that age. Some times, however, the soldiers of Christ are more numerous than even its leaders suppose.

Elijah faced the enemies of the Church with flashing sword and glistening helmet, apparently alone, and when discouraged by the unequal contest he fled for his life to Mount Horeb. When questioned by God what he did there, his answer was, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." He thought he stood alone, he could see no one but himself battling for the Lord, and being discouraged he was anxious to die and leave the field to the enemy. But what does the Lord say:—"I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal and every mouth which hath not kissed him." If those seven thousand had not bowed the knee to Baal, to whom had they bowed it? Had they not often bowed before the throne of grace, and sent up their petitions into the ears of the Lord God of Hosts? And may we not suppose that the glorious victory won by Elijah on Mount Carmel, was due just as much to the faithful prayers of the seven thousand as to the immediate campaign of the great prophet? We must not forget, my beloved brethren, that the pioneers in the army are as necessary as those who command—the soldier who bears the rifle and bayonet is as needful as the captain who wields the sword,—so in the army of the living God. The pioneer who is often lost to sight while preparing the way in the wilderness, cannot be dispensed with, and the soldier who discharges the arrows of prayer into the ears of the Lord of Hosts, whether it be the decrepit old mother in Israel, or the faithful deacon—is just as necessary as the captain or general who wields the sword of the Spirit in the pulpit. I need not remind you this morning that darkness followed light and light darkness, until the coming of Christ when darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people. And ever since Christ commissioned his faithful few to go forth and subdue the world, there have been periods when the army of faithful ones seemed almost cut off. But to-day the army of Prince Immanuel occupies a position never occupied before. It has reached an eminence from which it will never be hurled. It numbers to-day its tens of millions, stationed in all parts of the world doing battle with the powers of darkness in every form. Even in our own denomination we have an army of two millions of faithful soldiers, with their fifteen thousand able leaders. Our Colleges, Seminaries, and Theological Institutions are well equipped with a noble army distinguished for piety and learning, second to none in the land. Surely with such an army of faithful soldiers we should expect great and glorious results.

(2.) God has provided the material. He has provided the weapons. An army can do but little, no matter how able, or how thoroughly disciplined—without weapons. Swords, spears, rifles, cannon and shot are all prepared and are consequently necessary for the equipment of an effective army. So the Army of God must be equipped. It must go forth clad in the divine panoply (Eph. vi, 13-18). "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, yet they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." And the strongholds of popery, paganism, and infidelity cannot be overthrown without the valiant use of the weapons provided by God.

The wealth has been provided. No king can equip an efficient army and send it forth to battle without wealth. Millions of dollars are needed, sometimes, to win one brilliant victory. God's army cannot fight without wealth, God knew it and so pro-

vided for it. It is only necessary to see this provision for us to take our stand on some mountain peak and glance over the rich fields of waving, shining green pasture covered with flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, orchards and gardens loaded with choice fruits, the bountiful provision of our wise and benignant King. In the distance we behold the sea bearing upon its bosom a thousand sail, awaiting the King's command. But, is all this provided for God's army? Hear what he says—"The silver and the gold are mine. Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine." There is not a gem in the earth nor a pearl in the deep that is not the Lord's. The gold, silver, iron and coal mines alike belong to the Church's General. In a word the earth is his, and the fulness thereof, the sea and they that dwell therein. Infidels may gather this, and misers hoard it up; but it must flow into the treasury of the Lord. The Lord holds the key of the treasury, and when he needs a million or two million of dollars for any purpose he has only to reach forth the hand and take it. He metes it out to his army as he sees they need it. At times we long for more; but it is only when we break the ranks and attempt to out-run our Leader. When we march as God marches and fight as He would have us, we have enough and to spare.

God could, of course, in a month or a day, endow our Colleges and fill our Foreign and Home Missionary treasuries to overflowing, but it would be paying us in advance, and the motto of the Great King is, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Let us remember then that all we have, and are, belong to the Lord, and when he wants our gold or silver, He will take it whether given willingly or not.

III. The Church should expect great things, because of great foretastes. Great blessings bestowed upon the Church or great victories won by the army of Christ are foretastes of greater blessings or victories awaiting it; great blessings have been poured upon the Church during the past year or two, and it would seem as if God were saying to her now, "Lift up thine eyes round about and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.—Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations, spare not lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left." There are times when God says to his Church, "Be still," and he keeps her in the valley, but it is only for a season, and on purpose that he may show her great things. As soon as she is prepared to see them he says, "Come with me from Labanon my spouse, with me from Labanon, look from the top of the Amanah, from the top of Shenir." And as she rides up in her chariot of love, she sees the past, enjoys the present and, with her eyes of faith, scans the future. The past gives her joy, the present fills her with delight, but oh, how the soul swells with rapture as it views, by faith, the future. She sees earth's teeming millions lying before her, no longer slaves to sin, no longer trodden down with the iron heel of barbarism, no longer groaning beneath the yoke of the devil, but redeemed, and rejoicing in the liberty of the sons of God. She sees the blood-stained banner of Prince Immanuel floating proudly from every mountain height, and from the plains of Burmah, the deserts of Africa, the wild regions of the North, the Isles of the sea and the mountains of Siam,—yes, even from the degraded, wretched, spongy Burmese; she sees a glorious host, conquered and led willing captives of the King of Kings. In the distance beyond she sees the conquering host basking in the sunlight and glory of heaven. And while in this exalted position she hears the one universal triumphant song—Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." In this connection we could almost sing,—

"There is a delightful clearness now,
My clouds of doubt are gone;
Fled is my former darkness, too,
My tears are all withdrawn.
Short is the passage, short the space,
Between my home and me;
There, then behold the radiant place,
How near the mansions be!"
Should not the Church, having these promises, provisions and foretastes, expect

great things from the Lord. Would it be possible for God to give greater and more encouraging promises? Could he make more ample provision? Should not past blessings lead us to expect greater blessings in the future? What are our expectations this moment my brethren? What do we expect to be the results of our Home Missionary enterprise? The cry is often raised, "Nova Scotia for Christ." Do we expect it? Some of us are laboring with poor feeble Churches, and are ready to cry at times "By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?" Do we expect to see them rise, and flourish like the garden of the Lord? What are our expectations as regards our foreign field? Two years ago the enthusiastic cry was raised "Siam" or "The Karens of Siam for Christ." That has proved a failure and the cry comes forth to-day, "Telooqoo for Christ." Do we really expect that the millions who inhabit Coconada and the bank of the beautiful Godavery, would become willing subjects to Christ. What are our expectations with regard to our educational enterprise? Some are afraid that the little "Child of Providence"—now a full grown son or daughter of the Highest, which has been supported by prayer and free-will offerings for years, is about to be swallowed by a Provincial University. Do not past blessings on our College at Wolfville, speak of larger blessings in store for it? Have not its professors and teachers enjoyed rich foretastes of God's loving kindness and goodness during the past years? Methinks I hear them answer, Yes. Then let us expect a great and glorious future for it and them. Let me remind you, my beloved brethren, that whatever our expectations may be, the Churches' highest expectations can be only realized by waiting upon God. "My soul wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage and he shall strengthen thine heart, wait, I say on the Lord—they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Not being a classical scholar, I asked the learned President of Acadia College the meaning of the word wait in this verse. In a letter just received he says:—"Wait generally means trusting, hoping. After quoting Conant, Hengstenburg and others, he says:—"The lesson of the passage seems to be the blessing of restful silence with the Lord. That is the position the Church must occupy if she would obtain great things from God. Trusting, hoping with a "restful silence" in the Lord.—Silence is often more eloquent and powerful than speech. A rare illustration of the power of silence is in the story told of Aminias who appeared as an advocate for his brother Eschylus, who was accused and likely to be condemned to die. Aminias, having performed great services, and merited highly of the commonwealth, in whose service he had lost one of his hands, cut off in the field, came into the court in his brother's behalf and said nothing, but only lifted up the stump of his arm, the sight of which so moved them that, without a word said, they freed his brother immediately. The silent tears of a loving mother will often pierce the obdurate heart of a wayward son. We need not, however, repeat instances like these, when we have the most powerful illustration in the silent eloquence of that blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel. If we would prevail with God, my brethren, let us grasp these promises and provisions and clothe ourselves with them as with a garment, bind them about us as a bride doth, and leaning on the bright foretastes received, enter the Audience Chamber of the great King and prove him in restful silence and see if our expectations will not be fully realized.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

HANTSPORT SABBATH SCHOOL.

DEAR SIR,

It was my privilege to be present at the last quarterly review of the Baptist Sabbath School of this place. Certainly it was one of the best that I ever witnessed. It would be difficult to say who performed their part best, where all did so well.

From the Superintendent down to the "little ones" who were so noble and distinct in their beautiful recitations, everything was equal if not in advance of the best schools which it has been my privilege to visit.