

Sunday Reading.

The Vanity of the World.

False world, thou ly'st. Thou can'st not lend. The least delight, Thy favors cannot gain a friend. They are so slight; Thy morning pleasures make an end To please at night; Poor are the wants that thou supply'st, And yet thou vaunt'st and yet thou vy'st With heaven; fond earth thou boasts, false world, thou ly'st.

The King's Search.

BY EDWARD G. TAYLOR, D. D.

Once upon a time there was a youth who lived in a small and wretched hut. It was more like a dungeon than a house; for his one contracted room had a mud floor, a dingy ceiling, begrimed walls, bare of all ornament; and the few straggling rays of light that entered the miserable abode only served to reveal more clearly its poverty. The furniture was scant, consisting of but a crazy stool and a rheumatic table; while the cupboard had in it but a few mouldy crusts. Everything about the hut was most forlorn; yet it was the best he had, and he knew not how to secure any better.

One day, there came a messenger to him in great haste, to say that a great king was travelling that way, and that he desired to visit him, and, indeed, to take up his abode with him. "He asks," said the messenger, "that you will receive him into your home, and also the grand company that is travelling with him." We may imagine the consternation of the youth in hearing such a message as this. What should he do? His poor hut was not fit for a king; and he had neither accommodations nor food for the royal company. Shall he offer his majesty the broken stool to sit upon? Shall he place before him his mouldy crusts? Shall he even let him come into a place so mean and forbidding?

In his perplexity, he resolved to make an effort to fix up his hut. He began to scrub his mud-floor; but the water only added to the trouble by making the earth soft and adhesive. He thought to scrape the dingy walls; but this attempt ended with making holes in them, which rendered them all the more unsightly. Nor could he renew or add to the broken furniture, nor increase the contents or quality of his larder. Ashamed to receive the royal guest into such poor quarters, there was, he thought, only one thing for him to do—to bolt his door against his coming, and to hide in a corner of his hut.

He had but time to do this, before

he heard the sound of approaching footsteps; and soon there came a knock at his door. He lay quiet, hoping that his visitor would think that no one was within. But there was another knock, louder than before, and a clear, strong voice said: "Open to the king."

Seeing that it was useless to hide away, the youth made answer: "I cannot open, for I have no fit place for a king."

The voice replied: "I do not ask for fitness; only for entrance. Unbolt the door and let me in."

"But I have no food to set before thee."

"I do not ask for food; only for willingness to receive me. Food in abundance I bring with me."

"But my hut is poor and dark and wretched."

"Full well I know it, and I come to make it large and light and beautiful. But I am not worthy to have thee come under my roof."

"I come not to seek worthiness, but to do thee good; to make thee rich and blessed."

"But I am as one naked; my clothes are but filthy rags."

"I bring thee a beautiful robe, fit for the son of a king."

"But—but—"

"Oh! say not 'but' to the offer of love. Make no objections. Open the door to the king."

With a trembling hand, at last, the poor inmate drew back the bolt and let the door fly open, and the glorious king came in. Not one word of unbraiding did he speak because the room was so unworthy; but, wonderful to tell, a magical change took place. The ceiling grew grand and high; the broken walls gave way for marble columns; the floor became laid with richest mosaics; the hut expanded into a noble palace; while the golden light streaming in, revealed a table spread with a sumptuous banquet, where was every kind of healthful and inviting food. Narrowness, darkness, filth, and poverty were gone; and breadth, light, purity, and riches abounded. And the youth, clothed in princely garments, sat down to feast with the king, while the attendants, whose names were significant of Pardon, Peace, Joy, and Righteousness, girded themselves to serve him.

It was the King of kings seeking a lost child. The hut is the dark and sinful heart. To it the King comes, not asking for feeling or preparation or worthiness, but simply to be admitted; he brings with him all that the heart can wish—preparation, light, joy, salvation, eternal life—for all these are in himself. The sinful heart needs but receive him; for it is written: "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.—Our Young People."

PRAYING BY MACHINERY.—The Rev. J. Gilmour has a painfully interesting article in the May number of the London Missionary Society's Chronicle, entitled 'How Buddhists Pray.' He explains how printed prayers are put into a wheel, and the devout turn the handle, and thus, as they think, offer hundreds of prayers in a short time. The Mongols have family praying-wheels, and often the aged grandmother, past work, turns prayers for the whole household. Sometimes above the tent is seen a windmill praying-wheel, which saves all hand labour, and makes a priest of the tempest and the storm. Clockwork is pressed into service, and is used to drive a cylinder filled with printed prayers. Temples have mammoth praying-wheels. Pilgrims from great distances drag the fabric round, and imagine that thereby they gain merit in the judgment of their gods. In this way the Mongols seek to cancel sin. Is not such superstition an appeal to Christians to send missionaries to the heathen, if only to teach them to pray as Christ taught His disciples?

The Four Hundredth Anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther is to be celebrated in November next, in Germany, and probably elsewhere throughout the Protestant world. The Emperor of Germany has already moved in the matter; he has issued a decree setting apart November 10th and 11th for such celebration, and says: "I pray that God may listen to the supplications in which I and all evangelists unite, that the celebration may be productive of lasting benefit to our Evangelical Church."

Convention Sermon.

The following Sermon was preached in the Granville Street Church, Halifax, before the Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, on Sunday afternoon, August 26th, 1883, by Rev. Henry Cross, pastor of German Street Church, St. John, N. B.

On Proving God.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, and pour you out the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."—MALACHI iii. 10.

The moral and spiritual condition of the Jews at the time these words were spoken was very distressing. They had departed from God's holy ordinances, and had wandered far in the ways of disobedience. The hireling, the widow and the fatherless, they had oppressed; they had turned aside the stranger from his rights; and being without the fear of God they had proceeded to rob him also by keeping back the tithes which were designed for the support of the worship of his house, and appropriating them to their own carnal purposes. Hence God says to this people by the mouth of his servant, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings." On these accounts the Divine blessing was withheld from their grounds and their labors, and famine, in consequence, with all its attendant ills, appeared in their midst. But how true and pleasing it is for us, who are so imperfect, to learn that "In the midst of wrath the Lord remembers his children in mercy;" and that "The Lord is slow to anger and full of compassion." Here we find that though Israel had wandered so far from Him, and had done it again and again, He still had respect to His ancient covenant with His people, and He here calls upon them to return to Him in true penitence of spirit, to bring all the tithes into His house, to yield implicit obedience to His commands, and thus to prove Him whether He would not, notwithstanding their past wanderings and great sinfulness, pour them out such a blessing that there should not be room enough to receive it. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out such a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

This certainly was a noble challenge to this people, and it is a challenge which is made to us. I shall be glad, indeed we shall all be glad, if in the remarks I shall make, the churches forming this Convention shall one and all be led to put God to the test.

I. I remark, first of all, that my text, viewed in the light of the context, teaches us this fact: That to prosper we must have the Divine blessing.

1. This is true in regard to temporal things. In the widest, fullest, and most comprehensive sense of the term, it holds good that "without Christ we can do nothing;" that "in Him we live and move and have our being;" and hence that our life, health, wealth, friends, times, as also those events which insure success to our worldly schemes and enterprises are absolutely in His hands, and entirely under His control. This truth is clearly taught in the Word of God, and strikingly illustrated and confirmed by the case before us. Thus writes the ancient prophet Samuel on this subject: "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail." (1 Sam. ii. 6-9). To the same effect are the words of David in 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth, is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come of thee,

and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." And, again, in the Psalm lxxv. 5-7: "Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another."

Now, in the light of such inspired statements as these, look at the condition of the Jews, as portrayed in the chapter out of which the text is taken? What of the kind could be worse? They were suffering from famine and pestilence; and this was the result of God's curse upon them, because of their sins. And not to have God's blessing is to be under his curse; there can be no middle portion.

I, therefore, assert it most emphatically that to prosper in your families, and in your business, and in your worldly plans and pursuits, you must have God's blessing. Without it, in vain will you toil, "rising early and sitting up late," in vain will you prepare your ground and cast into it the precious seed: in vain will you seek to reconcile your enemies, or to conciliate your friends; in vain will you watch your health, and guard your coffers: all this,—emphatically all!—if the Lord withhold his smile will avail you nothing. Like Lot you may for a while seem to prosper; but soon will you be convinced, as he was, of your painful mistake. The harvest may all but arrive at maturity, yet will it be "turned to a heap." The enterprise may all but succeed, yet will it fail. The coffers may appear to fill rapidly, yet will they melt away, and their treasured deposit take wings and disappear. But with the Divine blessing the single pot of oil shall multiply into many vessels full; the cruse of oil, though used from, shall not diminish, nor the barrel of meal waste. "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich; he addeth no sorrow with it, whilst riches profit not in the day of wrath."

2. And then, this proposition is true in regard to spiritual things. If God bless not the provision of his house, if he by his spirit render not the means of grace effectual, we, amid privileges the most exalted and abundant, shall have to exclaim, "My leanness, my leanness!" Our hearts will be cold, and our meetings for worship profitless. There may, for a time, be the outward signs of prosperity, but our state will be one of barrenness; we shall be really destitute of all those holy feelings, desires, and aspirations after God, those lively hopes and pure joys, that strong faith, and fervent love which are at once the truest marks, and sure attendants of advancement in piety, and in which, as the product of his own grace, the Father of mercies delights. The Bible will be a dry, sealed, uninteresting book, and the reading of it attended by no soul-stirring, purifying, transforming, elevating emotions. Prayer will be a task, and every other religious exercise, however much we may have once delighted in it, dull, tiresome, and unfruitful.

This, brethren is not mere assertion; but is, alas! too well sustained by facts both numerous and painful. Look, for instance, at the disciples of our Lord—I mean before the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost. How worldly—how narrow-minded—how sectarian—how unteachable they were! And look at them afterward! What a wondrous change had passed over them. They were broad in their sympathies and aims, they were ready to take possession of the world in the name of their Immanuel. How they contrast with their former selves, bold, defiant, godly.

And do not the history of the Church and sad personal experience teach the same truth? "By the grace of God," said Paul, "I am, what I am." With equal force and truthfulness these remarks will apply to every kind of Christian enterprise—to missionary operations both at home and abroad—to pulpit exercises, to Sunday School work—parental instruction and such like. To everything whose aim is to extend the kingdom of God. Apart from the Divine blessing, we shall, "labor in vain, and spend our strength for nought, and in vain," as ministers, teachers, parents, and labourers for

Christ in general. We may sow beside all waters;—we may be instant in season, and out of season;—we may unfold the word of life never so faithfully and clearly, and enforce its heavenly claims never so logically, powerfully and lovingly; we may speak of the glories of Paradise and miseries of hell. We may speak of the love of Calvary, and of the terrors of Sinai; we may speak of the ability and willingness of Jesus to save; we may speak of the evil of sin, the danger of impenitence, the solemnity of the judgment, and of the uncertainty of the present state of being—but all this will be to no saving purpose. Like Felix under the preaching of Paul, sinners may tremble. Like Agrippa, they may be almost persuaded to become Christians; or like Herod, they may hear the Word gladly, and do many things, yet all will here end. Not one will yield to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not one will be savingly drawn to the cross. Not one will be trained for the skies.

Of this, we have an apt illustration in Ezekiel's vision of dry-bones ere the breath of heaven passed over them. The prophet says (Ezekiel xxvii. 7, 8) "So I prophesied, as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them from above; but there was no life in them." In accordance with this are the words of Paul. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, and Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." And I think the little incident connected with Peter's early disciple life shadows forth the same truth—the incident is this—it was before Peter was called to the Apostolate, or rather it was at that time. Our Lord entered Simon's boat on the Lake of Gennesaret, and addressed the people as they stood on shore, and Luke says, "Now when he had left speaking, he saith unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your net for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master we have toiled all the night and taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done they enclosed a great multitude of fishes."

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation—but if it is to be effectual it must be accompanied with the Divine blessing. Apart from the Divine blessing, I care not how eloquent and learned our preaching may be. "It will be but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal," so far as any spiritual good is concerned. However diligent we may be in spiritual things, and however fervid may be our zeal, apart from the Divine blessing no real, lasting good will be accomplished.

II. Notice secondly.—If we are to have the Divine blessing so as to prosper, we must do the will of God.

1. We must, first of all, cultivate a spirit of dependence upon God. This is imperative. Apart from this God will not bless us. To do so would be to give his glory to another. He must be honored as Creator, Preserver, Redeemer. To him, as we have seen we are indebted for all that we possess, from the bread upon our table to the life which that bread sustains; and this we are required constantly to feel, and humbly and truthfully to acknowledge. Under this feeling we must lay our plans, till our grounds, and prosecute our daily business in general. Should our plans succeed, our grounds be fruitful, our business advance prosperously, and our worldly substance increase; the language of our heart must not be "My hand and my arm—my wisdom, and my industry; my forethought and my prudence, have gotten me the victory. This must not be our language, but gazing upon our possessions as they lie before us, we must say, "These are thy mercies Parent of good! From thee, the Father of lights cometh down every good and every perfect gift, 'The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.'"

And if in respect to temporal things, this feeling must be cultivated by us, and expressed in all proper ways, how much more so in regard to things which are spiritual? Such as soul prosperity, church prosperity, the conversion of sinners to God, the spread of Divine truth, and speedy triumphs of the cross of our Immanuel? Here particularly must we rely and deeply and constantly feel that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God, that whatever success attends our labors, whoever is converted, and whoever comforted, whoever is quickened, and whoever encouraged—whatever difficulties are removed out of the way of the progress of the gospel, and however widely and abundantly the light of life is diffused. "Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase." That be the talent, and learning and preparation and piety what they may, which we bring to the work, the entire glory of our success in that work is due only to him who mercifully called us into his vineyard, and who graciously crowns our poor feeble exertions with his approving smile. "And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

2. If we are to have the Divine blessing so as to prosper, we must live in close communion with God. This is the grand secret of success. The most happy and useful of believers, other things being equal are the most prayerful; hence as individuals and as churches, we must be, emphatically a praying people. Prayer must be, not a merely casual thing, an accident of our new and spiritual nature, but the element in which we exist—the very life of our souls. For—

"Only whilst we pray we live." No day must be begun, carried on, ended, without prayer; no plan laid, no engagement made, no step taken.—Prayer must precede, accompany and follow our preaching and our hearing; our giving and our receiving; our buying and our selling; our going out and our coming in; our meeting and our parting. The injunction is: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him." "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." From the field, the workshop, the parlour, the nursery, the study, the temple, there must be a well beaten and constantly frequented path to the throne, and to the very heart of our Father God. As we enter the pulpit, the pew, the class on the Lord's Day, and as on the other days of the week we go into the family, the social party, the world, our souls must be wet with the breath of prayer that falls in distilled dewdrops from the skies, fragrant with the odors of Sharon's ever-blooming rose, and radiant with the light of our Saviour's smile. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord."

Brethren, God more than once has been thus proved, and in every instance has been found to be "the faithful God." True he could give the blessing without prayer on our part, seeing he knows what things we need before we ask. But this is not his usual and revealed order of procedure. His command is "Ask," and his assurance is "Ye shall receive." "Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

3. It were to have the Divine blessing so as to prosper, we must dwell together in love. "Little children," said our Saviour, on a very memorable occasion, to his early sorrowing disciples, "Little children love one another." To the Ephesian Christian Paul gave a similar injunction: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." To the same effect is the Saviour's matchless prayer: "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee—that they also may be one in us; that the world may

believe that the glory given them as we are me, that thou them as these consist the import faithful desire is to be our Lord's fullness of fore, tend interfere people, to and unity from brot lest develo sentiments wards all grieves the windows o upon a s venes the prevails, t tion, and To do so v own level impossible blessing in prosper re individual Bible conso personally do collec teost, we "all with There wa erly love came a rushing m the house 4. And Divine be must reve This is gifts. God, not the gratifi our instr comfort teach us portant sinners must be lamp unite ment; writ mariner d as the ma science; over its heir his heritage traveller ney; we man doe green pa must pite cater da Brethren high sen of one be tians of c As me nation, I committe the reput "Preach Christ dw matters f church d the law prove m Lord," & I mig show the blessing churches all pious the migh God's he in the L can to earth; t the bound of our Z truths o world su purity; h express must br storehou ship con that to r and to g him wha III, M given in we shall as to pro "Bri storehou