

Sunday Reading.

For the Christian Messenger.
Canticles iv. 16.

Awake I oh wind so fierce and strong,
Thou north wind of adversity;
Thou wildest gales but bear along,
The trials that shall perfect me.
Yes, faith shall strengthen, courage grow,
Beneath those trials rightly borne,
The roseate hues of hope shall glow,
More bright than flushings of the morn.
Thou too, oh sweet south wind, and mild,
O'er my heart gently move;
That there may be, nor rude, nor wild,
But pleasant fruits for Him I love.
Love, joy, and peace, and gentleness,
Shall flourish 'neath the genial rays
Of the mild Sun of Righteousness,
And meekness, temperance, crown my days.

Christian Missions.

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE NORTH
BAPTIST CHURCH, HALIFAX, ON
SABBATH MORNING, FEB. 14TH,
1884.

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"Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Acts xvi. 9.

Four hundred years before 'the vision' of our text, a warrior arose in Macedonia, who is known to history and to fame as Alexander the Great. His ambition was to unite all nations into one vast empire with common laws and languages—all flowing from one throne. In the work which he had undertaken and to which he gave himself with such fiery zeal he built better than he knew. By the rapid spread of the language in which the glorious gospel of God's Son was first given to man, he helped to fill the world faster with the wonderful word of life. But our attention is directed in the passage before us to a greater than Alexander. Contrast their methods. By the side of Alexander such legions gathered, as swept every thing before them which dared to lift itself in opposition; by the side of Paul there are only two or three disciples who have joined him in this daring enterprise of crossing the Aegean, and capturing the nations of Europe for Him who said 'Go ye into all the world.' Paul might have rested on what he had done in Asia, or have been satisfied with confirming the faith of those disciples who had already through his words received the Lord Jesus Christ into their hearts as Saviour and Lord. But his heart had been filled with a burning desire to tell others what the Lord of life had done for him, and he could not keep still. The fire was in his bones, and constrained by the great love of his Saviour he must move on. Like Alexander, the apostle could not be satisfied while there was another kingdom to be won. The hero of battles won his victories by the sword and by the might of his own strong arm, but the herald of the cross knew that he should be victorious 'not by might nor by power but by the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.' And he never flinched or faltered. His faith was strong.

The circumstances in connection with the text are not uninteresting and may no doubt be instructive. If you look at the verse which immediately precedes it, you will find that the apostle 'had gone through' Phrygia and the region of Galatia and was forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia. The intention of the apostle and his companions evidently was 'to preach the word in Asia' but they were not allowed to carry their intentions into effect. God interfered to prevent it. Paul had no doubt prayed to be directed aright; but to keep faith in exercise he was permitted, in the first instance to determine wrong. Then you read 'After they were come to Mysia they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not.' In this you see that they were as men only feeling their way, it seemed to them, that Asia being closed Bithynia presented the most desirable field of labor and accordingly they took measures for entering that province. But again they are proved wrong. They were not to go thither. Where then was their field of labor? They seemed to be shut in on every side. But the suspense does not last long. Their destination is revealed, in a vision. Paul sees a man of Macedonia crying unto him 'Come over and help us.' And away he goes with most blessed results.

In connection with the truth revealed here, we can learn three things:

1. In the divine supervision under which the apostle moved, the Christian learns that God guides him.

2. In the cry of the Macedonian the Christian learns that the world needs him and calls for help.

3. In the blessed results of the apostle's labors, the Christian learns, that success attends him.

These three inspiring truths, so admirably illustrated by the case in hand, will occupy our attention.

1. God guides the Christian.

The fact of divine guidance is fundamental to the scheme of redemption, and is demonstrated by all God's dealings with His people. In the earliest times His servants walked by His lead. The frequent promise that it should be so was verified by patriarch, prophet, king and people.

In the Christian dispensation the same fact obtains, if possible, greater prominence and distinctness. Christ promised the Holy Spirit to be an abiding presence, to instruct, guide, comfort and defend. And from that day to this He has been such a universal divine presence, not only superintending the lives of individual Christians, but moving in the forefront of the world's civilization and gradually fashioning it to the Christian model. And the early Christians verified in themselves the promise of the departing Saviour. Yielding their wills to the divine will, God worked in them 'to will and to do.' Coming into harmony with the divine plans, they were conducted by the hand of God along the lines of His choosing.

How nobly is this illustrated in the present instance. It is plain that Paul intended to evangelize the provinces of Asia Minor. He tried to go to one place, then another and was thwarted in each endeavor. In some way God made it known to him that the time had not come for planting the seeds of Christian truth. That intimation, however made, was enough. Not but that he might have pushed on into Asia, not that he was violently controlled; but his will, responsive to the divine will, yielded instantly and cheerfully to the divine wish. The vision of the Macedonian cleared up the mystery pointed out the field of future toil and conquest. The Lord was calling him to preach the gospel across the sea.

Such guidance is the blessed privilege of the Christian to-day. The promise of the Master is unrestricted. Fullness of the Spirit and guidance by His wisdom are peculiar to no class or age. They are the common inheritance of Christians in all ages. Not that it has ever been perfectly realized, because no will, save one, was ever always perfectly in accord with the divine will. Not that it is realized so uniformly or to such an extent at the present time as in the early days of Christianity. But it might be. The difference is not due to God, but to man. There is no reason on the divine side why Christians may not be filled with the Spirit, and enjoy His lead to-day as well as in the days of the apostles. And the necessary conditions are not hard to comprehend. A simple steadfast faith in God's personal and loving watch and care, a will ready to yield and obey, to be and to do whatever He desires, absorbed, so far as possible, in God's will and work, a cheerful obedience to every known wish of God, a conscientious cultivation of the spiritual life whereby it becomes quick to catch intimations of the divine Spirit, and grows sensitive to the heavenly impulses, these things insure guidance by the Spirit of God. As iron placed near a magnet becomes magnetic, so a soul in conscious fellowship with Christ becomes Christ-like. An indwelling spirit makes us Christians. But the second thought is,

II. The world needs the Christian and calls him.

As God's servant the Christian works for the world. All God's guidance of him is for the world's weal. Fearful is its want. In itself there is neither hope nor help, and out of its weakness and want comes the cry for rescue and relief.

Said the Macedonian to Paul, 'Come over and help us.' Ignorant, they

needed light, enslaved and suffering, they needed deliverance—living in darkness and dying in despair, they needed hope and salvation. And the Macedonian is the symbol of humanity.

In this confession of need the Christian hears the sad acknowledgement of the world's helplessness and want. And this want he sees everywhere, in his own family, the community, the land; among the ignorant, the oppressed, the immoral and the vicious, especially he sees it in the multimiform and nameless evils that riot in the superstition and brutality of the heathen nations. Nothing is clearer to his eye than that humanity is degraded, enfeebled and helpless in sin.

And in the call of the Macedonian, the Christian hears the pathetic cry of a suffering and despairing world. And help and relief he can bring. His ability is marked, his gifts peculiar. Said Peter to the cripple, 'Such as I have give I thee.' By the power of Christ he was able to afford not temporary and partial relief, but complete and permanent restoration. So, by the grace of the Master, the Christian can carry to the needy world the help it requires. He has instruction for its ignorance, light for its darkness, cure for its disease, hope for its despair, life for its death. And his help is sufficient and satisfactory. He is the dispenser of an infinite bounty. The storehouses of an unlimited supply are open to him, and from them he bears to suffering humanity, good of every name and good alone. And none but the Christian can do it. To all others has the world turned for help, and turned in vain. The history of humanity is a story of its wretchedness on the one hand and of its struggles for relief on the other. Every effort has been put forth, but no relief has come. At last to the Christian the world holds forth imploring hands and raises the beseeching cry, 'Come to our help, you alone can save.'

And when we think of the multitudes thus appealing—and regard their danger—the very thought is heart rending. We either boast of the missionary spirit of the church, or else we are so selfish and indifferent to any thing save our own ease and comfort, that we forget that 1,000,000,000 of our race have not yet heard that there is a Christ, and of every three persons on the surface of the globe two have never seen a Bible. Of the more than 31,000,000 of souls that will pass into eternity this year, it is safe to assert that more than 20,000,000 of them will die in utter ignorance of that gospel which Jesus Christ commanded His disciples more than 1800 years ago to 'teach all nations.' Appalling fact—to you and me the call comes. It is no trifle. It is not a thing that we can put away from us and treat as optional to heed or not as we happen to feel about it. The Christian must heed the call. The help he must render. His own good, man's salvation, and God's glory all depend upon it. And herein lies his duty. To refuse is to put himself out of divine guidance—outside of God's gracious plans for his own growth, and the world's profit through him. To the question, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' the Christian must ever unhesitatingly answer, 'I am his keeper—I desire and aim to keep him in all interests, material, social, moral and spiritual to the extent of my power.' And in a travelling world he beholds not only needy brethren, but a suffering Saviour. Working for it, he works for Him. In its poverty and destitution he sees Christ hungry, thirsty, naked, and hastens to his relief. In the homeless and restless sons of men he beholds Christ a stranger, and hurries to take Him in. In the multitudes of the discouraged, heart-broken, distressed, he sees Christ sick, and runs to visit Him. In the millions enslaved in heathenism, superstition and false religion, he sees Christ in prison and hastens with sympathy, comfort and release. No man can rightly bear the Christian name who refuses by prayer, by gifts, by words, by labor of the hand to bring the blessing of the gospel to the needy and suffering at home and abroad. Light, comfort, hope, salvation, he has to give. To this high service the world calls him. To this unspeakable honor God appoints him. And now finally,

III. Success attends the Christian.

He who is so guided, so willingly led, so ready to obey, and to work in all efforts. The Holy Spirit goes before and marks the way, calls him into it, helps him walk upon it, brings him on through all labors and difficulties to the desired end.

How true was this of Paul. His path to the sea ordered, God's hand beckoning him across it, how quickly and with what assurance of success he pushed from the Asiatic shore! He lingers not, turns not aside, but on to Philippi the chief city he hastens, impatient to make known 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' Quickly he is at work. He finds the praying place and makes it a preaching place. The hand was there before him, had brought him to the spot, and spoke through his lips. And the first speech for Christ in Europe was effective. One soul was converted, and around Lydia and in her house was speedily gathered a company of believers in Jesus. And so it is always. Willing work under divine guidance insures success. To be where and to do what God desires, must bring prosperity.

See what has been done by the people of God. You have seen what there was to be done.

The bible has been translated into more than 250 languages, nearly 7000 missionaries and over 40,000 assistant laborers in the field, in India, China, Japan, Syria, Africa, Mexico and the South Sea Islands, besides all that is done in Europe, schools, colleges and churches, planted at 10,000 points nearly 1,000,000 members in mission churches, and more than a score of grand missionary societies annually expending from \$15,000,000 to \$20,000,000, in the home and foreign field. Truly we can say 'What has God wrought?'

Take the progress of our own denomination in these Provinces. Thirty years ago there were about 16,000 church members. To-day there are about 38,000. The churches have more than doubled during that time. And this has been effected by the use of such means as you and I have employed and in the way we have employed them, but had the enthusiasm and zeal of Paul been ours, what might have been the result? Take another instance in Foreign work. Within two weeks the death of Dr. J. G. Oncken, of Germany has been announced in his 84th year. The study of the New Testament, convinced him that he ought to be a Baptist, and he with six other believers were baptized in the Elbe at Altona near Hamburg 50 years ago, the 22nd April, 1834. Prof. Sears then studying at one of the German universities administered the ordinance. The baptism took place at night because it could not be done safely by daylight. The persecution encountered would seem incredible when the country is considered, Protestant Germany—the home of Luther—whose 400th anniversary has been so justly celebrated if these facts were not known. But the work has gone on until now the German mission numbers 146 churches with about 30,000 members, not to speak of the large number of churches which have been gathered in adjacent countries. I might speak of the progress of Baptist New Testament principles—in Lutheran Sweden—also among the heathen of Burma, and Southern India, or on our mission fields; but time forbids. The success which has attended the efforts of God's people is an index of what shall be. Oh! if our hearts were deeply imbued with the Spirit of Jesus what would be done! Brethren lift up your eyes and see.

A pastor of large and varied experience said to the writer recently, that the times call for more doctrinal preaching. He believed that our people were very generally ignorant of our peculiar doctrines as a denomination. In fact, he said, the people want to know what the Bible teaches on all questions, and if our pastors are careful to give simply scriptural views, not theories, the people will be glad to listen and learn. These suggestions are worthy of consideration.

—Baltimore Baptist.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Ethical Culture and Spiritual Life.

There is a co-operation of man with God in all processes of our salvation from that Evil which is the death of the soul, and these processes are continuous. The Christian's warfare, the noblest warfare of all, goes on until the soul may have obtained that Kantian freedom of the will wherein it voluntarily and naturally chooses ever only the good. True Christianity is a life dominated by the love and practice of righteousness. The work to be done by us is to be done as though it were from ourselves alone, yet with a supreme reliance on God. The two halves of the perfect sphere are God working in us and men working with God in the onward march towards the realization of our destiny. That boundless destiny which is ours through Christ and which it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive of. I say through Christ, because through his universal and tireless love he has ever imparted and is ever imparting spiritual life to our very ungrateful world. This work has been going on from the beginning and through a thousand instrumentalities, all infinitely wise. For the Christ is God manifested to man.

Eternal Life may also be denominated the Spiritual Life. It does not appear that this is conferred by the Divine Love so long as the human will consciously chooses darkness rather than Light. Faithfulness to the Light of God in the conscience is most worthy and leads into the spiritual life. We are not at once, altogether and unconditionally saved by any one supreme act of God. The Spirit may yet be grieved, may yet even be quenched. Every branch in Christ that beareth not fruit is taken away. The Christ tells certain Jews who believed on him that if they continue in his word they shall be his disciples indeed, and they shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make them free. There is a co-operation of man with God in all the continuous processes of our salvation from that Evil which is Death.

If it mean anything Christianity means character. This is the thought of the Rev. Phillips Brooks of Boston, one of the great lights in Evangelical Theology. I heard him emphasize this thought four years ago in Boston Music Hall. Character can not always be estimated by man but by God. Men are not always capable of judging righteous judgment. In the all seeing eye of Justice which is the eye of God, the environment, the struggle, the Godward aspiration, are determining rather than the actual attainment. That ought to be an axiomatic consideration.

I know a man—and I have been for a long time intimately conversant with his course and character—who regrets exceedingly that at an early period of his life he received erroneous instruction from certain well-meaning but uninformed ministers of the Word. He was assured that this principal of Ethical life working within him from his earliest remembrance was not of God, did not pertain to the kingdom of the Christ. Now the fact was that this Ethical life asserting itself in him was a coal of fire off the altar of the Most High God. He was assured that these yearnings of his moral sense after actual righteousness in heart and life were vanity, that they must be ignored and the Word received unconditionally in their stead. The doctrine of justification by faith was pressed upon his attention—faith in Christ in its formal and external sense, not in its genuine and Divine significance, wherein it works along the lines of the Conscience and steadily uplifts and sanctifies the soul without doing violence to its God-born instincts and intentions.

In the case of this young man, the God in his conscience prevailed. The voice thoroughly known to be Divine was reverently accepted as guide. He was not disloyal to the Light so far as it was perceived. But unfortunately by loyalty to conscience he was led to reject the Word, because he had been taught to believe that its central doctrine clashed with the teachings of the Christ in his Moral Sense. For long years this young man was largely shut out from the blessed ministrations of the Christ in the Word, from the high and spiritual and incomparable Truth in the Word, from the greater fullness of Light in the Word. But the unwearied love of the Spirit, ever willing the supreme good of human souls, if they will not consciously reject the Truth did not by any means forsake him. By a peculiar and in its results certainly providential combination of circumstances he was led to examine carefully, honestly, critically, independently the New Testament Scriptures. The result was that through the grace of God he was led to see, to comprehend spiritually, that there was a splendid

harmony between the Christ in the conscience and the Christ in the Word. The one supplements the other. In and through all the Spirit of God works along the lines of law. It is written in the prophets, 'and they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me. Not that any one hath seen the Father.' All men who have in the spirit of reverence and love for the Truth learned from God in nature and in the conscience, naturally come to the Christ, when they understand in some degree his nature and his wisdom. For they gladly see in Him the Fullness of Light.

And although many a man has been taught of God measurably and clearly, yet no man, save the Son of Man, hath seen God at any time, that is, hath entered into the full realization of His perfect holiness, His Spiritual Being.

To this young man who had for long years lived in the darkness, yet not by any means altogether in the darkness, the discoveries above referred to were a day of rejoicing. It was a day on the Heights. The love and wisdom and justice of the Universal Father were abundantly conjugated and displayed. He breathed the air of spiritual disenthralment and he sang songs of praise and thanksgiving! Clearer light and an abiding and rational faith were vouchsafed. True Christianity, young men who may read this paper, does not require you to sacrifice your honest and God-given convictions. It does ask you to be exceedingly faithful to all the light you have. This Light in the conscience is a rare and spiritual force, worthy of conservation, pointing its finger ever toward that life which is hid with Christ in God. If you should say you do not know what I mean by this Light in the conscience, then I am sure I could not impart to you my understanding of it. It deserves to be said just here that while some souls come to God in ways similar to that above described, other souls come in quite other ways. We must not dare limit the operations of the Universal Spirit of God. The wind bloweth where it listeth.

Let in previous communications I may be thought to have given undue prominence to certain views of the Rev. Joseph Cook, permit me here to quote fully and verbatim from his Second Lecture: 'Let me make this clear by a single example. Horace Bushnell in his college days, was a most infidel. He doubted nearly every religious proposition that had been brought to his attention. A revival was sweeping through the college and he was nearly the last of the teachers who had not yielded to its influence. One evening, peeping up and down his room, in the desolation of his seclusion, he said to himself: 'There is one thing I have always believed. I have never doubted that there is a distinction between right and wrong.' Conscience has a direct intuition of the difference between motives. Certain motives conscience does intuitively perceive to be right, and others it intuitively perceives to be wrong. Horace Bushnell, by the blessing of heaven, bethought himself of his duty in a practical way. He asked: 'Have I ever yielded to this truth which I admit, that there is a difference between right and wrong? Have I ever thrown myself over the line between right and wrong, toward the side of the Right, with full purpose and will to do only the Right? There may be a God, or there may not be a God: there may be immortality or there may not be.' So anxious was his scepticism in this critical hour of his early life, that he was in doubt as to these supreme facts. But he knelt in his solitude on this reef of axiomatic truth. He gave himself up to the promptings of conscience and yielded utterly, gladly, affectionately to all he at that time had of light. And in the blackness of the darkness above him, howling foam of that ocean on which he was trying to find peace, a window of heaven was opened, and there came upon him the clear convictions that there is a personal God, that there is another life, and that God is ready to hear all who call upon him in sincerity and in truth. From that hour he never doubted on these points.

'Now how did he reach these convictions? I believe that he reached them much as we obtain the intense impression that there is beauty in the world, by cultivating the love of it and making ourselves impressible by it.

Make yourself personally fit to perceive beauty, and it will flame upon you from all quarters. Make yourself impressible by the Omnipresent God, and he will speak through your instincts. You say that man does not convert himself, and that I am now supposing that what God does is less important than what man does in the conversion of the soul. Not at all. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who worketh in you