

able upper room. 'These all continued in prayer and supplication,' we read in Acts, i. 14; and then in Acts, ii. 1, we read, 'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.' And what followed we know well. Upon them it was that the Spirit descended; upon them it was that the floodgates of Heaven first opened; and in their midst it was that the Church of Christ was actually born, and came first to glorious life.

4. Observe those bands of Christian men filled with the life and fire of Pentecost, who went forth on every side from Jerusalem after 'the persecution which arose about Stephen.' 'They went everywhere,' we are told, 'preaching the Word.' And incalculably important was the work of those heart-touched men in the spread of Christ's kingdom in the world. The work could not have been done, humanly speaking, without them.

5. Observe that band of living, and loving, and praying men, of whom we read in Acts, xi., the 'men of Cyprus and Cyrene,' who came to Antioch and spake to the Greeks there. For what was the high honour put by God upon them? They became the founders at Antioch of the first truly Gentile Church! No Apostles at first were there: they were just a band of plain heart-touched people, and yet 'the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.' And this Church, established by this heart-touched band, became the Missionary centre for the Gentile world. Antioch became to the world what Jerusalem had become to Judea and the Jews. And,

6. Observe one band of men assembled together soon after at this same Antioch. Barnabas, Simeon or Niger, Lucius, Manaen, Saul, were some of their leading names. They are worshipping God together, and fasting; and on a sudden the Holy Ghost speaks: 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them.' And thus, from that band of fasting and praying men there went forth the very first formal and appointed Mission to the Gentile world. What do we not owe, therefore, to bands of heart-touched men? And then,

7. The various Missions which were sent forth from Antioch into the heathen world were not composed of solitary men, nor yet of two men only together; but they were nearly always bands of men. The Mission companies grew as they went on. Fellow-workers gathered round the great leaders as they went, and thus formed Mission bands. The companion-warriors cheering on the leaders, and the leaders training their companion-warriors to become leaders in like work when they should have been called away.

And you will see, if you observe,

8. That St. Paul in his very lowest conditions seems ever to have had with him a band of like-minded men. At the end of his Epistles not only does he salute members of the churches to which he writes, but he sends salutations from those around him. And in that which was probably his last Epistle, when he had just said, 'Only Luke is with me,' he adds a few verses later, 'Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.' And what may not the Church owe to the encouraging conference, and prayers, and friendships of these faithful bands of heart-touched, loving men! While St. Paul upheld them, how would they also uphold St. Paul, and strengthen his faith to the end!