

viages of the Roman Empire. Large and flourishing churches were planted in Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome. Indeed, at this early period, the conquest of the gospel had become almost commensurate with the dominion of the Caesars. Here, then, is a striking fact, which ought to impress the heart of the church. Here we see the gospel in the hands of a few men, in a short time, producing effects altogether disproportionate to any thing which has been witnessed in modern times. Why this gospel should have been, in the hands of the apostles, so emphatically "the power of God into salvation," and become comparatively inefficient under the administration of their successors, is a legitimate subject of pulpit inquiry. The fact, I apprehend, will not be questioned, that the preaching of the gospel does not produce the same powerful and speedy results, at the present day, which were witnessed under the ministry of Peter and John, of Paul and Barnabas; and an inquiry into the reasons of this amazing disproportion in the practical effects of the same system, may have a happy influence upon ministerial affections and effort, and thus stand connected with the best interests of the church.

The single point of discussion on which I would fix your attention, is this—*The inefficiency of modern preaching, when compared with the apostolic administration of the gospel.*

I would not here intimate, that the gospel is a dead letter, at the present day. Such an intimation would contain an injurious reflection upon the christian ministry and constitute a vain attempt to pluck away, from the diadem of Jesus Christ those living brilliants which are planted there by the power and the grace of the gospel. Every solitary conversion to God, and every powerful revival of religion, as well as the general pervading influence of the gospel, which impresses and controls society, are so many evidences, that the sword of the spirit has not lost its heavenly temper, and that the Bible is not divested of its saving power. But a literal Pentecost lives only in the page of the sacred historian—the scenes of Ephesus, belong to another age—and the mortal energy of the gospel, which, in the dawn of its triumphs, seemed destined at once to arrest, convulse, and subdue the entire population of the world, is greatly modified in its operations. Whence this melancholy change? What has arrested the march of christian truth in our world? Why did one sermon from an apostle's lips often accomplish more than is effected by a hundred or a thousand sermons, at the present day?

Many reasons have been assigned in order to account for this difference; and some of them are, no doubt, correct, and

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