

## PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1. *The opponents of the gospel resist its progress.* Never can any good work proceed with any hope of success, but it is sure to meet opposition. Satan ever was and ever will be in opposition to those who are the benefactors of mankind; and it would have been a very strange thing if he had allowed the disciples to go on teaching and preaching without raising any opposition. Several things have taken place which have resulted in a widespread interest in the gospel among the people. The gift of the Holy Ghost, the marvellous cures wrought by the apostles, the death of Ananias and Sapphira, the courage, earnestness and fidelity of the apostles, the beautiful exhibitions of love and self-denial among those who had believed the gospel, the wonderful change in their character, all combined to call the attention of Jerusalem and the surrounding country to the gospel through which all these things had been accomplished. This general interest in the gospel awakened jealousy and envy in the minds and hearts of the Jewish leaders. They felt that they must either accept the doctrines and teaching of the gospel, which they had all along denied, or else they must stop the progress of the gospel. We see illustrated here the two effects of all good influences, saving some, making enemies of others. While the multitude thronged to hear and to be healed, the rulers were filled with indignation and aroused to bitter opposition.

2. *The Lord's deliverance of the apostles.* The powers of darkness were allied against them, but the Lord was on their side. Greater is he that was for them than all the powers against. The Lord will never desert his witnesses, but will be near to care for them. Joseph and Daniel may be confined for months in a dungeon, but deliverance comes at last. Peter may have thought that he was forsaken of the Lord, but the angel comes and bids him go forth. God has his own way to deliver his children from trouble, we cannot foresee his plan, but implicit trust and confidence in God in the darkest hours brings a blessed opening. On the very night they were imprisoned the Lord sent his angel to open the doors of their prison and restore them their liberty, giving them the command that they go on preaching the gospel. This miraculous deliverance of the apostles would convince beyond doubt, not only the apostles, but the disciples of ...

divinity of their mission, of the special providence God exercised over his people, of the omnipotence of him in whom they trusted, and the result would be that they would be wonderfully encouraged and strengthened in their work. It would make a deep impression on the minds of the opponents of the gospel of its truth and divinity, and reveal to them how useless it was for them to oppose it.

3. *God delivers from trouble and danger that we may serve him more faithfully.* There is no prison so dark, so strong, but that our God can both visit his people in it, and if he deems it proper bring them out of it for future service. Our Lord did not deliver them out of the prison that they might be simply set at liberty, or that they might escape out of danger. It was that they might with more boldness and fidelity go on with work to which they were commissioned. Our release from danger and our restoration from sickness are not granted us that we may enjoy the comforts of life, but that we may by greater devotion and increased fidelity seek the honor of God in the advancement of his cause. In obedience to the command of the angel and in fulfilment of the purpose of their deliverance, the disciples went at once to their great work of preaching the gospel in the temple.

4. *Faithfulness to duty.* Faithfulness ever implies a trust of some kind as to which it is to be exercised. The trust committed to the apostles was given in the words of the Lord, "Go preach the gospel to every creature," more immediately in the words of the angel "Go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." Their fidelity to the command of the Lord led them to preach to the people at Jerusalem, fidelity to the words of the angel took them to the temple at early dawn. Their faithfulness was the outcome of their faith in Jesus. Faithfulness springs from faith. Without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ it is in vain to expect genuine faithfulness in the things of God.

5. *Man's paramount duty is obedience to God.* "We ought to obey God rather than men." This is the announcement of a great principle in a few words. It was understood, adopted and appreciated by the apostles. It was the basis of their steadfastness and consistency, the cause of their zeal and courage, and the source of their joy and strength. It