

body, without work. It is a blessing and not a curse that he has to work, and it is an honor, moreover, to be working under God. But man works only in such a way as to leave Him the glory of his operations, who will not give his glory to another. Man works *before* and *after* the seed is sown and the crop is perfect. No man dare look upon his ripe fields and say, "my hand hath wrought all this." "He knows it" not. To God belongs the sole praise.

II. God's work in *grace* remains to be noticed.

He prepares the *seed* of the *word*. The seed sown is the "word of the kingdom." It is the message concerning a Saviour for sinners. There is much in the bible that is not peculiarly the gospel. We can scarcely call many of the historical parts of Old Testament Scripture the gospel. Nor can we call the philosophical discussions in the book of Job the gospel. These serve an important purpose. They may form a chain of evidence sustaining the divine authority of the gospel, or may be useful for the edification of believers. They are accessories to the gospel. They are not the diamond but the setting—not the heroic Deliverer but the train and attendant splendors—not the fruit but the foliage. They are not the sun but the first rays of dawn or the last of twilight. The truth that saves—the seed that grows into spiritual life is centered in Christ. Mere descriptions are not the seed. Tales, however lively are not the seed. Philosophy is not the seed. Bible history is not the seed. Prophecy is not the seed. These alone never saved any man. But they are accessories to what saves—to the truth of a Saviour, and when that is lodged in the heart by the Spirit it does what nothing else will do, what man cannot do, what wealth cannot do. It humbles—it grieves—it condemns—it comforts—it blesses. To others it appears as dead as a grain of corn, but to them it possesses a mysterious charm—a hidden power. It has tamed the savage heart. It has softened the hard nature of a heathen or a world. It has rent the mountain of pride in pieces. It is fitted to grow in every heart in the world—in men of every nation and every clime. It has made the flowers of paradise blossom in beauty amid the snows of Greenland. It has softened the hearts of Indian warriors in snowy solitudes, once reddened with blood. Nothing will do it but the "wondrous story," the amazing love of God in Christ, the mystery of redemption, the song of angels, the theme of glorified spirits. It is often heard without effect, because it enters the ear only or is poisoned with error, or bedimmed with superstition or clogged with ceremonies; but once let it enter the heart and it rends it as the lightning rends the stern rock.

The soil in which the word is sown is the wonderful heart of man. The heart of man! what a soil is there! Who can tell what a

world dwells in a single human heart? The intellect is too often but the slave of the heart. The power of the heart is unspeakable. It can love with a power that absorbs every selfish emotion. It can desire with a fervour that expires not with the breath of life. It can hate with the gall and bitterness of a demon. It possesses a power of self torture which often destroys its own life. Could we look into a single heart we should find there all the burning life to be found in the great world. A city with its crowded streets, its shops, churches, sales, banks, ships, splendors, riots, jails, poverty and riches is but the heart on a large scale. It begins in the heart. And O! the corruption! "Who can know it!" This is the soil for the gospel, and, if man is to be saved, there it must go. If not there, it is nowhere. No outside trifling will do, be it music or mummery. God strikes the centre. The spirit puts the truth in the heart.

The "spring" of spiritual growth in the soil of the human heart is secret and mysterious. The seed of truth may be apparently dead for some time. But it can never lose its vitality or its power. As the breath of God in nature makes the grain to shoot in the heart of the clod, where no human eye beholds it, so the breath of the Holy Spirit makes the truth to start into life in the heart of man. How beautiful! how sublime! how true! the words of Jesus, when announcing to Nicodemus the commencement of his kingdom and the absolute need of regeneration. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth, so so is every one that is born of the Spirit." It may be in the dead hour of the night "when deep sleep falleth upon men"—it may be in sickness or in danger when the word dropt from pious lips—from father, or mother, or friend, or pastor, or Sunday School teacher strikes root and grows—founding a greater and more durable kingdom than ever shone upon the plains of Shinar.

The gospel seed forming the kingdom of grace, love, faith, purity and peace, grows under the care of Christ. Means are to be used by men. Ministers must preach the gospel. Churches must exercise a wholesome and temperate discipline. Sabbath Schools must flourish, especially in these times, when in the state schools religion is driven out into the cold. Friends must remonstrate with the erring and the unexperienced. But these things cannot ensure growth. The seed may grow without them, and it may not grow with them. Experience sadly proves this. Growth is the work of God. The first of all powers in its production is the Spirit of God. The pious soul must cry "awake O north wind and come thou south; blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out." It is Pentecost power that must dwell in the church. But as in natural growth influences from the