

added his Word, to be a light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their path, accompanied by the promise of the Holy Spirit to apply both the word and work of Christ to their enlightenment and salvation. The instrument that God was pleased to appoint for the carrying of his salvation to those whom he had chosen, was what the Apostle Paul calls "the foolishness of preaching." This foolishness may refer both to the matter and manner of preaching. Consider—

I. To the unbelieving the doctrine of the gospel has always appeared foolishness. It teaches the futility and inadequacy of human efforts; it counsels us to divest ourselves of self-righteousness, and to trust to the merits and sacrifice of another; it requires us to humble ourselves that we may be exalted, to mortify the flesh that we may truly live, to deny ourselves that we may have abiding pleasure, to seek for life at the hands of one who died, and as it were through the gates of death; it teaches us that by a second birth and childhood we are to arrive at true manhood, at "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." All these things appear foolishness in the eyes of the godless and unbelieving. The gospel runs counter to the natural thoughts and desires of men, cuts off all opportunities of boasting, and leaves no "poor, blind and naked" suppliants at the footstool of mercy, dependent upon the favour of God for all that we have, and all that we hope to obtain. All this is sufficiently distasteful to the proud heart of unbelief. Need we wonder that human wisdom should often turn away from "the foolishness of preaching"? or should often encounter the mortifying teachings of the gospel with opposition and persecution? It is not until the Spirit of God opens our eyes to see our state and need, that we can relish gospel truth, and receive the gospel offers. We then realize its adaptation to our wants, its suitability to our case. It is only then that we can glory in the cross of Christ, and count all earthly things but loss that we may win Christ, and be found in him, not having on our own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is by faith in him. Then how precious are the truths of the gospel to the believer, however humbling, and destructive of vainglory! He prizes them as life, knowing that, under the grace of the Spirit, they are the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. Wherever, therefore, we observe a tendency to refuse the great principles of divine truth, or to refine away any of its facts or teachings, there we may be satisfied that we behold the working of sin, of the opposition of pride and self-righteousness, the action of the same spirit of alienation from God, and distaste to what is divine, which led the Greeks of Corinth to regard the preaching of the Cross as foolishness.

II. But the manner of preaching is also foolishness to the unsanctified. It is not, and

ought not to be a display of human wisdom or of the power of oratory, but the simple and powerful because heartfelt unfolding of divine truth. The preacher comes not to display himself, but Christ and Him crucified. He does this not with the seductions of rhetoric that he may astonish the hearer with his own power; he uses human learning and oratory in subservience to one great end,—that he may the more clearly unfold, and the more forcibly impress the truths of the Gospel. He comes not that he may surprise and delight by profound speculations, that he may charm by artful graces, that he may move the fancy by quaint figures and curious allusions; his object is simple and grand,—that he may hold forth Christ. Is it a wonder then that preaching should be a weariness to those who have no taste for spiritual things, whose hearts are wholly occupied with the present world. Learning, eloquence, and a graceful style are by no means to be despised; but they can occupy only a subordinate place to the exhibition of divine truth, because the preacher knows that it is not by human eloquence and wisdom that the sin-hardened heart is to be softened, and savingly enlightened, but by the Spirit of the Lord, using and applying the revealed word as the instrument of salvation. It is not wonderful that the preaching of the word should appear as foolishness to the unbelieving. They perceive that of itself it is totally inadequate to the work proposed,—The enlightenment and salvation of men; and being ignorant that this is but the dead instrument which acquires all its efficiency from the energy of the living agent—the Holy Spirit,—it is not surprising that they should hold it to be weak and vain. But we know from the testimony of the word of God that it is the divinely appointed instrumentality for the moral regeneration of the world. It is the "weak thing" which God has chosen to confound the mighty, that there might be no human glorying in his presence, that the power and efficacy might be seen to be of God.

There is not at the present time, the gross opposition to the Gospel, which has sometimes been manifested; but the same spirit is shewn in other ways. Men acknowledge that the Gospel is good, and that it tends to human well-being; yet they cannot love its spirituality and self-denial. From one part of the Church, we hear the cry that too much time is given to preaching; from another that preaching should be abandoned altogether as an integral part of public worship, and reserved as the special province of those who, by their extraordinary talents may be able to fascinate the crowd. Now it may be conceded that sermons are sometimes dull, that they are sometimes clothed in bald and unchaste language, that preachers sometime err in the matter of tediousness, and speak longer than may conduce to profit and edification. But is the preaching of the word therefore to be