

Christ, as implied in this discourse throughout, to promote God's kingdom among men, to carry out the Great Commission, and any descent from this holy calling, any half-heartedness in fulfilling its demands, any stepping down to selfish or merely local designs, cannot fail to be accompanied by all sorts of abuses, so that there must be a return to truly missionary endeavor, to the spirit of the Saviour in coming down and dying for our lost race, before there can be a rectification of disorders and a production of men and women completely devoted to this supreme and only worthy mission.

Turning to the schools of the prophets it is noticeable that changes have taken place in traditional beliefs and in the teaching that is given. Advanced scholarship has produced distrust of some of the old views and modified many of the old statements. And precisely this is to be expected from time to time in view of the depths, heights and breadths of divine revelation. As one is credited with saying, "the Bible is no end of a book." The very conflicts that are waged around it attest to its wealth of truth, truth that hungry humanity is eager to grasp. Much light has already broken from it and much yet remains to stream forth. Some would be pleased to have theology in "crystallized and unchangeable forms; but the Bible is too large and too emphatically a living book, a book designed for too many generations to make any hard and fast expression of its import possible. Others again would cut themselves almost entirely clear of what the past prayerful study has reached, and of what has operated so splendidly for the saving of men and the new-making of nations, as if there were no teachers sent from God until they arrived upon the scene. And ordinary folk are tossed up and down in their minds, they are grieved and perplexed and unnerved for effort by these destructive critics. But between these two extremes, hyper-conservatives and hyper-progressives, the mass of Christian scholars have their place, I think, men who recognize that there is yet a vast deal to be learned, whose minds are open to receive light from any and every quarter, and men, too, who are cognizant that there is no real progress without a true conservatism. This ought to be reassuring. It is the iconoclast, moreover, the smasher of beloved tenets, who draws most attention. A hundred preachers who preach according to the old standards are not particularly noticed, but let a gifted and scholarly young brother who has caught some new and perhaps true glimpse, a glimpse which a yet clearer discernment and a better balanced mind would profitably relate to what are accounted the orthodox teachings, let him rush forth as the antagonist of his ninety-nine brethren and straightway he becomes the cynosure of eyes. The press readily puts itself at his service, and for the moment the state of things in religion appears to be the inexperienced to be vastly worse than it really is. With a crowd at the heels of such a preacher or professor, many of the more staid and sober are needlessly in tears. The disturbance will pass, of course, and some contribution be made, possibly, to the ever-enlarging total of the truth that is grasped. Every time is a transition time, but the present seems, perhaps only because it is our own time, to be a time of exceptional disquietude. Such emphasis has been placed of late, and rightly too, upon the law of heredity and the effect of environment, that there has been an unwarrantable and baneful belittlement of the heinousness of sin and a corresponding misconception of the nature and value of the atonement. Crime is listed with disease and the life and death of Christ are deemed to be nothing but exemplary. The might of the old heredity is proclaimed to a forgetfulness of the far greater might of the new heredity secured through faith in Jesus. From undue exaltation of the reason and inner consciousness, the mysteries of inspiration, of incarnation, of crucifixion have led to teachings that strike, unless we are mistaken, at the very foundations themselves. Since God has his dwelling-place among us, the issue, let us be persuaded, will be blessed, leaving us with better knowledge of himself and of his will. But meanwhile the effect is somewhat paralyzing. Doubt is awakened and indifference, that indifference which is of the worst type since it poses as tolerance or liberality. There is a subtle connection, I believe, between the present teaching of men and books that attract notice from being far out of the beaten track, and the decreased attendance at Theological Seminaries. There is not enough of personal contact with the Bible itself among the people at large, and the Holy Spirit is not sufficiently honored by the many to neutralize the delinquencies of the few. If the book which has produced the institutions and civilization of which we are justly proud is refused its proper place in our common schools, where early and lasting impressions are made, serious damage is unavoidable. Most loudly are parents and children and the teachers of every grade and sort, summoned to the study of the Word of God for themselves, to a place at the feet of the Great Teacher himself, the One who takes the devout peasant away ahead of the scholar in an understanding of what is central and vital, in case the scholar depends too much upon his erudition and leans too largely to his own understanding. Only let the Bible be duly exalted, let old preachers and young preachers, old school men and new school men, conservatives and radicals, whether young or old, maintain humility and docility, so becometh all, let both preserve the upward gaze. Knowing that the Holy Spirit is the true enlightener, let those who are not theologians and scholars and those who are, keep their hearts fixed on God and their lives running obediently in the paths opened before them by daily use of the Bible and by daily prayer, then shall the cause of Christ flourish and the due quota of men be forthcoming to lead safely in matters pertaining to the soul and eternity. There will be improvement in the quality as well as in numbers.

Passing from churches and schools to the households of the people, where the character of schools and churches is so considerably determined, it may be said, and cannot be said too often as a stimulus to improvement, that not enough regard is paid to home religion. Life is less simple and more intense than it used to be, so that now there are more things clamoring for time and thought. New encroachments urge curtailment of family prayers and home instruction in religion. If to the Sunday School and meetings of the church the Christian nature of the young is largely left, as if multiplied agencies outside the home made painstaking effort within it less essential, then general declension will not be long in making itself evident. If the pastors in these

pews were each to speak to us upon the influences of their early lives a large proportion would refer touching, I doubt not, to the effect of the family altar, and ascribe much of the good they have done to the workings of that benign agency. Few will question the statement that family worship is not so well sustained as once it was. Along with boasted advance, over which speakers get eloquent sometimes, there have been some backward steps, so that further advance must include reversion to some of the former ways. Religion's biography is very instructive just here. The case of James Paton is representative, like that of William Burns as pictured in "The Cotter's Saturday Night." In referring to his old home Dr. John G. Paton has written in his thrilling autobiography: "No hurry for market, no rush of business, no arrival of friends or guests, no trouble or sorrow, no joy or excitement, ever prevented our kneeling around the family altar, while the high priest led our prayers to God and offered himself and his children there." And see how the sweet aroma of those boyhood days remained with him. "Never," he wrote when his hair was white and appearance patriarchal, "never, in temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is more near, more visibly walking and talking with men, than under the humble roof of that and oaken wattles. Though everything else in religion were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory, or blotted from my understanding, my soul would wander back to those early scenes, and hearing still the echoes of my father's cries to heaven, would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal, he walked with God, why may not I?" Dear parents, what legacy is there that we can leave our children at all comparable with that? I remember hearing the late Dr. A. J. Gordon in one of his spiritual addresses on missions, suggesting as it did the strong flow of a majestic river. In alliterative way he named three needs: More missionary money, more missionary activity, more missionary mothers. Praise God for the present activity of women in moral and religious movements. But unmistakably they make not enough of their chiefest opportunities, opportunities unequalled in this working-day world, if ever they abbreviate home effort that the more may be done beneath the public eye. So the farther we go in our mornings' investigations, the more apparent does it become that after all the procuring of harvesters is a personal matter. It is to begin at our own firesides. Veilily I speak for God in reminding you of this. And if some fathers and mothers return to their families to give the go-by to some minor affairs in order that there may be more of watchful piety in their households, that they may get nearer their boys and girls with the tender yearning of the Christ himself, then there will be a harvest of glory to the Redeemer from this hour in this beautiful sanctuary.

But notice now, provided you have patience for anything further, Christ's specific command relative to this destination. Those already joined to Christ are to offer prayer that workers may be multiplied. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he send forth laborers into his harvest." This necessarily involves a constant calling upon God to add day by day to the number of the regenerate. There must be a continued importunity for the salvation of those in our homes, for Sunday School scholars, for husbands and wives, for neighbors and friends, for people near by and far away—that sincere, sustained and agonizing prayer which ensures as an attendant a thorough-going consistency of life and wise and zealous use of means looking to conversions. This again will bring with it requests for all who feed the flock of God, for teachers of every sort that their teaching may make, directly or indirectly, for soul-securing and establishment in sound doctrine. It will remember the writers of books and those having the conduct of the religious press that printed pages may be leaves for the healing of the nations. In a word there must be ceaseless petition-making for the replenishment and enlargement of the converted hosts, and for all employed not only to turn people to God but to facilitate them to diligence in blessing yet other souls.

Then the text indicates, in the next place, that the Lord of the harvest is to be appealed to that he may assign the converted to their respective places of labor. In those primitive days, days of comparative simplicity, without the division of labor begotten of modern life, days of beginnings, the "laborers" were to be chiefly heralds, announcers of the coming kingdom, preachers of repentance and faith, men who were to call the spiritually poor to the ample supply in Jesus Christ. The sphere for heralding was the immediate neighborhood, the very towns and villages desolated from the tower provided by the hills of Nazareth. Since that time, by the love and wisdom and power of God, the gospel has spread widely, until all natives have heard something of the glad tidings, while some have been marvellously transformed thereby. But much more remains to be done than has yet been accomplished. Simplicity has been displaced by complexity, and there are many more ways now than then of helping to bring in the Kingdom of God. Therefore according to the great breadth that inheres in Christ's teachings, so that there is no such thing as outgrowing them, the word "laborers" includes all sorts of workers in the world's vast fields of Christian enterprise. The innumerable engagements of the men of today and tomorrow are all to be articulated with the true end of all endeavor—the redemption of mankind. When a person surrenders to Christ, if not required to leave the calling followed at his discretion, that calling is henceforth to be contributory to the winning and edifying of souls, all being made sacred that before was all secular. Preachers are needed and Bible translators and teachers. Many besides are to toil in offices and fields, in shops and sewing-rooms, that the others may, through the prayers and gifts of the larger number, devote themselves entirely to the preaching, translating or teaching. And who will say that one class is more important than the other since both are essential. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" is a prayer for every one and for every day. Before God's command to "Go," whether to Tekkall as a missionary or to a workshop to get something to help and a missionary, comes his command to "pray." Only after prayer do we know our path.

The age requires lawyers, merchants, artisans, farmers of pronouncedly Christian stamp. No man is half a man who is not a Christian and doing what he does with the

all-dominating purpose of exalting the Name that is above every name. See how the text makes prominent who the Proprietor is, as though there were danger of making a mistake: "Lord of the harvest . . . his harvest." Havoc is wrought when a servant acts as if he were master. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he send." Mark it well: the assignment of men to their respective places is God's affair. The pastor cannot appeal to a young man to shape his course with the pulpit in view, unless indeed he has been so praying over the case as to be impelled by the Holy Spirit to this very thing, God using him to show the youth what the divine will is. You cannot pick up any one at random and say that the schools can mould him into a preacher. I cannot set apart my boy to the gospel ministry. I can offer him to God, I can say in all sincerity, as on my knees I fall, Lord take him and use him as thou wilt, lead him into the place of thine own choosing. Make him a preacher of the Word if it please thee, but if thy plan is otherwise, employ him where thou seeest he can best promote thy glory. Thy will be done. If that son comes up to preach, I rejoice. If assured that he is led of God into something else, and if seeing that he does honorably there, I ought not to rejoice the less, although somehow we incline to esteem it best of all to be a pulpit ambassador. My brethren, care is needful lest we trespass upon the divine prerogative, presuming to select persons for this station and that. God has definite plans, not for a scattered few, but for each and for all, and it will never do to be luring into the ministry those designed for something else, nor to be taking away from it those whom God beckons to it. Doubtless those meant for physicians or merchants sometimes stray into the pastorate. More frequently, however, for selfish and temporal reasons, those whom the Lord would have in the pastorate get scattered around in other vocations. It is a pity to miss the right place, or to get the right place and there do poorly, since their need be neither, prayer giving us access to infinite wisdom and power. How great, then, is the sin of neglecting prayer or of making little of it. The multiplication of laborers for the waiting acres that stretch far away on every side is somewhat and somehow in our hands. Weighty responsibility, we say. Yes; but why not rather say, magnificent opportunity. Oh for grace to rise as a body to the greatness of our privilege. Dark and dead it all is when the Master is little resorted unto. The home atmosphere, meant to be heaven-like, is other than sweet and wholesome. Greed and over-reaching obtain in business. Society is corrupt. Men in political life serve not for their country and their God but for themselves. Sabbath desecration increases. The churches languish, they grow worldly, conversions do not occur in them, by pittance is money doled out, and benighted heathen get little from those bidden to take them the Bread of Life. How many will lay the lesson to heart this day that a lost race may be brought home to the bosom of God.

Finally, prayer is to be offered not only for births into the Kingdom, and for the assignment of the regenerate to their respective posts, but also that needed pressure may be employed to bear men forward to the spheres that they ought to take. Observe, will you, that strong expression, "Pray that he send forth." It is cast forth or thrust out, implying urgency and propulsion, as though there were much to hold men back from entrance upon the undertaking. And true is it that restraints are many and mighty. Who is sufficient for what is exacted of the Christian, whether missionary or merchant? Terribly bitter is the enmity of the world against God and his messengers. What a thankless task it often is, so far as men are concerned, the effort to extend the spiritual kingdom in hearts and communities. How the flesh shrinks from privations that often wait upon the fulfilling of this high commission. The burdens of others have to be made our own; their sins, when learned of by closeness of touch, press us down; their ingratitude for choicest labors on their behalf is apt to take away all our spirit for sustained attempts. Therefore importunate prayer is necessary, continually necessary, that the power and tenderness of our Lord may just bear us forth, bear others forth, in spite of everything, to the doing of that which we and they were born to achieve. Tarrying to count the cost, to take an inventory of the little we have of our own to do with and of the much that must inevitably be encountered, turning over in our minds the hardships that may arise and the improbabilities of any great success, we get weaker and weaker, while souls keep perishing and the purpose of Christ's dying goes not on to its glorious completion. Hence love's own compulsion must thrust us out, leaving us no other reliance than the promise of divine guidance and sustaining. It may escape our appreciation that a great deal which overtakes us in our lives, some of which is painful to bear, is in answer to our asking that the Lord send forth laborers. Some mere incidental of living is absorbing our thought, means are used as though they were ends, making it necessary that by vigorous treatment we be shaken out of the wasteful way. Our own plans are ruthlessly upset that the neglected plans of God, which ought to be ours, may be taken up with. A thrusting force is exerted upon the neglectful and half-hearted, upon the fearful and hesitating, in the reading of the Word of God with its story of sin and redemption through pastor's sermon and missionary's appeal, by the affliction that draws the mind to higher concerns, in the drying up of the earth-fountains from which so much was expected, by the hedging up of the way on this side and on that, and from the strong and patient action of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the divers opportunities and experiences. May the folly of resistance be exchanged for the wisdom of surrender. "Pray," "Go," and "Lo I am with you alway." The call of the morning, then, is a call to prayer,—prayer in the closet, around the family altar, by the wayside, in the house of God, everywhere,—to an upending of united cries to-day and in the days to follow for a baptism of the Holy Spirit and a revival of pure and undefiled religion. With general response to the call there shall dawn a fairer, gladder day than we have seen for long. Then shall we have Christ's eye and heart and live his life, then shall he see of the travail of his soul.

"Send forth thy laborers, Lord, to call
The thoughtless young, the hardened old
A scattered, homeless flock, till all
Be gathered to thy peaceful fold."