

and the divine exaltation of spiritual fervor is also found in Eph. 5: 18, compare Acts 2: 13 (Farrar). (Isa. 11: 2; Joel 2: 28). "The fact related in verses 41-44 is the beginning of the accomplishment of this promise, but it in no way exhausts its meaning." (Godet). This does not refer to inspiration for that came to John at a later period (ch. 3: 2), but it means sanctification, or accepted consecration of the infant before, or at, birth, "the truth of high import in personal Christianity, of weighty bearing on the standing of the infants of believers in the church of God, and ministering precious encouragement to pious parents." (J. F. and B.)

**16. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God**—These words resume the thread of prophecy which had been broken for three centuries (Mal. 4: 6). John's preaching awoke a revival that stirred all classes and turned the thoughts of men Christ-ward.

**17. And he shall go before him—i. e. before "the Lord their God." (Zech. 14: 5).** Jesus was "Emanuel," "God with us." See Mal. 3: 1, where the Messiah is no other than Jehovah himself. **In the spirit and power of Elias**—From the last words of Malachi (4: 4-6; 3: 1) the Jews universally believed (as they do to this day) that Elijah would visibly return to earth as a herald of the Messiah. It required the explanation of our Lord to open the eyes of the Apostles on the subject (Matt. 11: 14; 17: 10-14). The resemblance was partly of external aspect (2 Kings 1: 8; Matt. 3: 4); and partly in his mission of stern rebuke and invitation to repentance (1 Kings 18: 21; 21: 20). (Farrar). **To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children—i. e. as in the original meaning of Malachi, to remedy disunion and restore family life.** (Farrar).

But Godet says: Nothing either in the ministry of Elijah or John the Baptist had any special aim in this direction. Such a result had no direct connection with the preparation for the work of the Messiah, and bears no proportion to the threat which follows in Malachi, "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Lastly, the parallelism of the passage requires that the term "the rebellious" should characterize "the children," and we cannot suppose that this would be true of any large number of Jewish families. The true sense, he takes to be, "the fathers" means the ancients, the patriarchs, who are ashamed of their degenerate descendants and regard them, in figure, with averted faces. These will again turn towards them with satisfaction in consequence of the change produced by the ministry of John (John 8: 56; Isa. 29: 22; 63: 16). "his view seems fanciful. Calvin and others interpret the expression to mean that he will restore the pious dispositions of the fathers to their descendants. But this is not what the words say. The hearts of the fathers are to be influenced. The majority of commentators take the first view mentioned. He would revive family affection by arousing both parents and children to a real anxiety about their salvation. **And the disobedient to the wisdom of the just**—The disobedient is a general term for all who are in rebellion against God. The "wisdom of the just" is that healthy appreciation of things which is the privilege of upright hearts. (Godet). **To make ready a people prepared for the Lord**—John prepares the people in such a way that they are disposed to receive the Messiah. (Godet). All would be ready to listen to Christ's offer of salvation when John had made them feel their need of it.

## PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1. *Religion makes happy and beautiful every home in which it dwells.* The charm of Burns' "Cottar's Saturday Night" lies in the simple, unaffected piety of the inmates. When love to God and reverence for holy things rule the heart they sweeten and enhance every affection. They teach kindness, forbearance, unselfishness, contentment and cheerfulness. There are no more powerful influences than the memories of godly parents and home religious teaching. Those holy children of priceless blessings who do not maintain family worship, ask God's blessing at meals, and talk with their families about the Bible and religious truth.

2. *God's angels are sent to minister to his people.* They frequently become visible, but their invisible presence is a fact beyond question. If we are on our guard against impropriety when in the presence of someone of high character or exalted position, how much more should we act circumspectly under the eyes of the holy beings who see the face of

God. On the other hand, this truth is full of comfort and encouragement. Our spiritual enemies are met and foiled by our spirit allies. They are present to avert evil in many forms, and are swift to do on our behalf the behests of our loving Father.

3. *God will answer every prayer as far as it is for his own glory and our good.* Adoniram Judson says: "I never was deeply interested in any object, I never prayed sincerely or earnestly for anything but it came, at some time, no matter at how distant a day; somehow, in some shape, probably the last I should have devised, it came."

"In spite of many broken dreams,  
This have I truly learned to say:  
The prayers I thought unanswered once,  
Were answered in God's own best way."

The answers always exceed our expectations. He gives abundantly. Among the treasures of an Oriental prince was an iron ball. Touch a spring and it opened, disclosing a silver