

## Pastor and People.

### LIFE'S GENNESARET.

No land in sight ; a wild, strange storm about me roars ;  
Darkness intense, and clouds ; no star in azure soars ;  
Waves beat against my skiff ; my toiling oars are vain ;  
My life the idle buffet of the angry main.

A mountain shrouded deep, and One who watchful prays ;  
He knows my deepest peril, my tumultuous ways ;  
His eye no darkness dims. To me in midnight gloom  
The pathway seems bereft, the lurid waves my tomb.

A flash of light : One walking radiant in the storm.  
My fears increase, I dread the spectre's mystic form.  
When lo ! a voice. "Good cheer. 'Tis I. Be not afraid."  
He stood beside me, and the storm-tossed waves were stayed.

O timid soul ! How slow to learn thy Saviour's power.  
He's near thee in the storm, in midnight's darkest hour.  
Be not afraid. Thy skiff shall life's rough billows ride,  
And all the storms be calm with Jesus at thy side.

—Rev. Dwight M. Pratt.

### ON PREACHERS AND PREACHING.

BY REV. I. A. R. DICKSON, B.D.

#### NO. II.—THE MINISTER'S WORK.

The minister's work ! Is there any need of saying anything on that familiar theme ? At the first blush one would think that there was not, but on second thoughts, recollecting what ministers actually do, or are expected to do, we see that it is necessary to say something.

Under the liberalizing influences and tendencies of our age the sphere of the minister's work has been greatly widened, so that it now covers an exceedingly large field, and takes up into it many things that do not properly belong to it, or are perhaps in a marked degree unfriendly to its high character and its good success. It has in many instances broken out beyond its proper bounds, and invaded the provinces of others, and not always to the advantage of either the ministerial office or work ; nor yet to the best interests of the provinces it has thrust itself into. The liberty it has to do this, if it give heed to its commission, may be questioned.

The minister's work is clearly defined, and the province in which he is to labour marked out as with a line of light so that there can be no mistake made respecting it. His commission is : "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; (and the encouragement in this work is) and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom ; preach the word ; be instant in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

These two passages mark out the sphere of the minister's work, and what that work is. It is a purely spiritual work. The instrument with which he is to labour is the Word of God. The object he is to seek is the discipling of the people—converting them to the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the building up of them in the knowledge and love of Him and so leading them to the enjoyment of a new life, a life of holiness and of the fear of God.

This is the great work in which he is engaged, and from which he may not go down. Every step down is a loss of spiritual power and of saving might. Every deviation from his path of duty so plainly pointed out is a denial of Christ's kingly authority and rule. Every neglect to fulfil this ministry may be a loss of souls. Every faithful minister will strive to keep close to his Lord's will. How much depends on this as to the evenness and sweetness and spirituality of the minister's mind, and the light in which he will look on things, and the encouragement he has in his work no one can over-estimate. He must fill his mind with the thought and purpose of God concerning his duty. He is an ambassador of Christ, with a commission in terms that are clear as a sun-beam. His one supreme object in life is to be saving men from sin and helping them to holiness ; and that through the preaching of the Word of God.

When that is admitted—and who does not admit it?—it relieves the minister from much that he either takes upon himself, or is put upon him by the opinions of men. It gives him a certain course to pursue—one in harmony with his own feeling, and one too agreeable to the thoughts of the best men. The minister is pre-eminently a "man of God," 1 Tim. vi. 11, who is sent of God to rescue the perishing. And any work inconsistent with that is unbecoming to him. Hence disquisitions on philosophy or science, or poetry or politics, or economics or art are out of place in his work. He may know any, or all of these, and they may not injure him ; but he will be always exceedingly careful to make them entirely subordinate to his work. They will never be allowed to obscure the Word of God, or hide the cross of Christ, or charm with a deceitful message the soul of man, or hinder the truth from contact with the heart and conscience. They will be used only as a means to bring out the meaning of the truth. What a mass of pure rubbish, keeping close to the Word, rids us of ! It sweeps away that empty sensationalism that seeks the ear and the crowd—an exceedingly depraving and destructive passion—and it puts in its place that seriousness and earnestness that come of listening to God, and that through his

thought sees the peril of sinful, immortal souls. Were ministers at all times seeking to save men there would be very little chaff mingled with the wheat : very little of that corroding vice found in them, the desire to please men so as to be applauded by them for other reasons than seeking to bring them to a sense of their sinfulness and need of a Saviour ; very little of that increasing and mischievous evil, namely, finding the Bible unfurnished with topics of discourse so that all kinds of subjects from other quarters are descanted upon. Subjects unworthy of a minister's consideration at any time.

Oh, that the Lord were here in body again to cleanse His temple of these triflers ! these mistaken men that instead of Christ preach another Gospel, and so mislead souls to their doom !

If any man is particularly anxious to create a strong mind for scientific enquiry or inspire a passion for poetry, or cultivate a love for art, or a taste for the science of government or economics, let him preach the truth that goes down into the depths of the nature ; that cleanses the eye so that it is made to see, that improves the taste so that it approves the things that are excellent, that strengthens the judgment so that it discerns the right, that sets the heart and mind in line with God's thought on all questions. There is no higher wisdom than that.

Dr. Joseph Parker, speaking recently on the "Modern Sermon," said this : "I believe that with strikes, elections and competing methods of government, as such, the preacher has nothing to do. What he has to do, and to do at all risks, is to create an atmosphere which cannot be breathed by injustice. . . . Atmosphere is God's way, partisanship is man's." With this we agree.

God's thought strikes deeper than man's thought, it cleanses and rectifies the nature, and makes it strong for the true and the good and the beautiful as nothing else can. It is extreme foolishness, therefore, for any preacher to turn his light into a farthing candle illuminating a small room, when it might shine as a planet in the spacious firmament.

Speak God's word in God's way, and God will own it. The source of all the mischief in the ministry of the Word lies here : men seek great things for themselves, they are not willing to seek only God's glory ; their own glory is too often a prime element in their motive. We must preach Christ's cross for Christ's sake, otherwise our preaching is powerless. And even if it do create a stir it is as the noise of a cannon's roar soon forgotten ; it has in it no abiding force.

In 1839 Robert Murray McChesney wrote to William C. Burns : "If you lead sinners to yourself and not to Christ, Immanuel will cast the star out of His right hand into utter darkness. Remember what I said of preaching out of the Scriptures ; honour the word both in the matter and manner." Alongside of this may be placed an observation made to D. L. Moody when he had as a young convert addressed a Sabbath school where there was a great deal of interest manifested and in which he had had, I dare say, a good deal of self-assertion : "Young man, when you speak again, honour the Holy Ghost."

There is another region out of which the Gospel preacher will, to a large extent, be kept, that is the region of controversy. How much good is done by that ? Not much. The truth laid down and left to do its own work under the power of the Holy Spirit is the most effective mode of working. Controversy often engenders a bitter spirit which may become chronic. When the Disruption had brought to a close "The Ten Years Conflict," in the first Assembly of the Free Church, Dr. Guthrie said : "I am glad to get rid of controversy. I wish to devote my days to preaching, and to the pastoral superintendence of my people." Robert Traill, one of the old Puritan Presbyterians, says : "It is found by experience that as it fares with a minister in the frame of his heart, and thriving of the work of God in his soul, so doth it fare with his ministry both in its vigour and effects. A carnal frame, a dead heart and a loose walk make cold and unprofitable preaching." "Above all men he should be careful of his heart and intentions, that all be pure and spiritual. No man in any work he is called to is under so strict a necessity of dependence on the influence and assistance of the Holy Ghost both for gifts and grace." If the minister is to speak as the oracles of God he must first live as the oracles of God dictate.

The dignity of the minister and his good influence lie in his recognizing in the clearest way that his business is to win souls from sin to God. He is a fisher of men, not an entertainer of men merely. Not a pleaser of men merely. His work is to preach the truth so as to be instrumental in saving men. That seen, sets out the province in which he is to labour, clear from every other, and gives him one of the largest and grandest fields in which he may employ his powers. He is a soul-winner. His work concentrates on the salvation of men from the thralldom of the devil. That demands the finest gifts, the noblest abilities and the greatest grace. The strongest man spiritually, intellectually and socially will find here scope enough for the use of every talent, without wasting his strength in other directions.

If he will be a politician, or a scientist or an artist or any other thing beside a Gospel-preacher let him choose between them and give his strength either to one or the other. To be an apostle and preacher of God's Gospel demands all a man's talents without dividing them with any other apostleship. The resolution of the apostle's should be that of every minister in reference to his work : "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He who so resolves will not fail of good success.

## Sabbath School Teacher.

### INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

Dec. 21, } JESUS' PARTING WORDS. } Luke 24 :  
18, 9. } 44-51.  
GOLDEN TEXT.—If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself.—John xiv. 3.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

On successive occasions the risen Lord appeared to the disciples both in Jerusalem and in Galilee. His last days on earth were not spent in public teaching. He did not again address multitudes. His appearances were confined to the disciples, not the eleven merely, but to other of His acknowledged followers. While He was in Galilee He appeared unto five hundred brethren at once. Though He did not make open public appearances as He was wont to do before His crucifixion, there were repeated occasions when He met with His disciples, so that their faith might be strengthened, and that as eye witnesses they could be able to give their testimony with full conviction that the Christ who had been crucified had risen from the dead.

**I. Farewell Words.**—In giving His parting counsels to His disciples, Jesus referred to what He had already taught them. He refreshed their memories and impressed His truth on their minds. These truths were the Gospel of salvation. When the events he had foretold came to pass, the disciples were bewildered and confused. Their faith had received a severe test. If they had only had a clear comprehension of the truths He had taught them, there would have been no room for doubt or misgiving. Not merely did His own words prepare them for His death and resurrection, but the entire Scripture had clearly predicted the same events. "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets and in the psalms concerning Me." In these words we have the strongest of all testimony that the Sacred Scriptures have been given by divine inspiration. Jesus here gives them His sanction. The three-fold division, the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms, covering the entire Old Testament, was familiar among the Jewish people. While reminding the disciples of what He had said, and what the Sacred Scriptures contained concerning Himself, Jesus "opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." By the Holy Spirit, He purified their spiritual vision that they might see more clearly than they had ever before done, the wondrous things of God's law. The sum of what He had said and the great central truth revealed in Scripture was that it was necessary for the manifestation of the divine glory and the salvation of sinners that the Messiah should suffer the death of the cross, thereby making atonement for sin ; and that He should rise from the dead the third day, in testimony that His redemptive work was complete and an evidence of its divine approval. The disciples were now commissioned to proclaim Christ and Him crucified as the Gospel, the good news of God for man's salvation. It is a world-wide Gospel. An essential part of it is that repentance and the remission of sins should be preached in His name. Repentance and remission of sin is the first part of the divine process of salvation. Repentance means true and heart-felt sorrow for the commission of sin, and the settled resolve to forsake it. Wherever there is true repentance of sin there is also its remission. It is God, not a priest, that remits, that is, forgives sin. The remission of sin implies justification. The punishment is remitted because the repentant soul by faith accepts Christ's atoning sacrifice, and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit delivers the soul from the power of sin. This Gospel of the blessed God is destined, as it is fitted, for universal diffusion. It is to be preached in Jesus' name among all nations. The work was to be begun at Jerusalem by the disciples to whom Jesus personally gave his commission. They were the first of that long and unbroken line that should age after age proclaim the blessed message till all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. They were to begin at Jerusalem. That was the scene of Christ's suffering, and there first should His glorious triumph be proclaimed. Thence it was to extend in ever-widening circles until the wide world should be embraced in its beneficent sweep. These disciples to whom He spoke could henceforth bear personal testimony to the reality of the truths they proclaimed. They could speak with the double force of what they had seen and what they in their souls had experienced. They had been with Jesus from the beginning, they had heard His doctrines, they had seen His miracles. The facts of His death and resurrection were indelibly impressed on their minds. Their testimony could not be shaken. They were "witnesses of these things." The word translated witness in the New Testament is martyr, a word that was afterwards used to designate one put to death for bearing testimony to the truth. And several of these witnesses whom Jesus addressed were faithful unto death, receiving a martyr's crown. The promise of the Father is understood to refer to the gift of the Holy Spirit, foretold in the Old Testament. They were then instructed to await at Jerusalem the fulfilment of this promise. In obedience they waited and, after ten days of patient expectation and devout worship, they were endued with power from on high. To them was entrusted miraculous power, speaking with tongues, and divine guidance in the proclamation of the Gospel.

**I. The Ascension.**—And now the last counsels are spoken : Jesus led his disciples along the road they had often traversed together before. They leave the city behind them and climb the slope of Mount Olivet, and when near the village of Bethany "He lifted up His hands, and blessed them," His last solemn benediction. That blessing rested on them through all their subsequent life and labours, and was a source of unfailing strength and inspiration to them. Christ's last act on earth before His ascension was like His whole life, a benediction. While thus engaged "He was parted from them and carried up into heaven." The risen Saviour was now the ascended Lord. His humiliation life had ended. He had gone whence He came, to the bosom of the Father. The work of redemption, to accomplish which He had left the heavenly glory, He still carries on in His exaltation. At the Father's right hand He is His people's all-prevailing intercessor. He is head over all things to His Church. When Jesus disappeared from the sight of the disciples, angelic messengers told them of His second coming. "And they worshipped Him." In this act there is full acknowledgment of the divine nature of the Lord Jesus. To worship Him was to acknowledge Him as God. Henceforth to them He was the supreme object of their service, adoration and love. "They returned to Jerusalem with great joy." Their sorrow had been turned into joy. Their doubts had been dispelled, their faith was firmly fixed on the Risen Redeemer, and now they looked forward joyfully to the work before them, and the glorious reward that awaited them. While they met by themselves in Jerusalem, they still went up to the temple joining with warm devotion in the daily worship of God.

#### PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

The Old Testament Scripture testifies to Christ. The law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms have Him for their theme.

Christ still opens the eyes of the understanding of every sincere truth seeker.

Christ's atoning death and resurrection from the dead are the central truths of the Gospel.

The obligation to preach the Gospel to all nations rests on the Christian Church, and all who profess Christ's name share this responsibility.

All true Christians are witnesses for Christ.