

## II. PAUL'S CALL TO MACEDONIA. I.

*The nature of the vision.* Visions are not rare occurrences in the Holy Scriptures, but this one in which Paul sees the figure of the "man of Macedonia" marks a distinct advance in its nature.

Heretofore, either angels have been God's messengers to His servants with commands, or He has revealed His instructions in the forms of parable or imagery. Paul here sees a man and hears a call from a human voice. Christ would have Paul directed to Macedonia, not as prophets or apostles were at other times, by angels or messages from heaven, but by a human cry for help.

2. *The Invitation*—What must have been the thought of Paul as he heard the cry "Come over into Macedonia and help us." All Europe lay behind that cry, and Paul recognized in it a divine summons; "and the very next sunset which bathed the Hellespont in its golden light shone upon his figure seated upon the deck of a ship whose prow was moving towards the shore of Macedonia."

Let us learn that the Gospel is the best aid to a cry for "help." Wherever we go this man of Macedonia confronts us. By his appeal to Paul as the representative of christianity he tacitly admits, that there is no other source of help. And if christianity is not a help,—it is nothing. Blessed be God the church has had its eyes opened to see in every individual and in every nation of individuals the type of this Man. He represents a large population calling us to deliver, "their land from error's chain."

Whatever the misery from which men suffer sin is at the root of it and their cry is "save us from its guilt and power." Many are the remedies which have been tried to ameliorate man's condition and in so far as they do that they are good. But amelioration is not cure and no remedy which aims at healing from the outside will ever be permanently effective. "The soul of improvement must begin with the improvement of the soul." Whatever else we try to do to better the condition of men, let us put the gospel first.

3. *The Reception*—Luke here joins the company and together they proceed on their mission. On their arrival they are met by what seems a set back. The *Man* is not waiting for them; and in Philippi they "abode certain days." There is no cordial welcome,

such as Peter had at the house of Cornelius, no one expects them.

Well for us that Paul was not a man easily daunted or discouraged. Slights and scorn, silence and virulence, contumely and contempt were all alike to him where Jesus was concerned and his cause advanced.

When at last an opportunity came it was in an obscure place and to a small congregation. But Paul was like his Master. No man could make more of a great opportunity than Paul and certainly no man was ever less disposed to neglect what might seem to be a small one. In this thought there ought to be great encouragement to us as teachers. Let us give our best preparation and speech to our classes when they are small and feeble. Christ gave some of his grandest thoughts and most sublime teachings to audiences of one. Do not be discouraged when you have "only one," rouse yourself to the opportunity, for in that "one" you may sow seeds that will bear fruit in the conversion of a continent to Christ. Had Paul let that small opportunity slip unimproved, what might our condition have been today.

Let us not despise the day of small things.

Wisdom sees the great in the small. What could be more trivial than the heaving of the lid of a tea-kettle. Yet in that motion lay the germ of ocean steamers, railways and mills. It has been ascertained beyond doubt that to discriminate the colors of the violet, not less than 707 millions of millions of movements must have been communicated to the fibrilla of the retina.

In fact it is the hardest of all things to say what is really little, many things which appear so turn out to be possessed of an importance beyond our foresight and run on to issues over which we have no control. For example—Cromwell was actually on board a ship in the Thames, one of a company set upon emigrating from the country which afterwards he ruled; when lo, before she could get off, down came an "order in council" forbidding them to sail. Had the monarch been prescient, how gladly would he have let them go. Cromwell turned back to his fens, to become thereafter the victor of Marston Moor, and Naseby and Worcester battles, and to give that sharp Whitehall lesson to Royalists, which a wit of the last age said has made kings ever since awake with a creak in their necks on Charles the martyr's day.