

wonderfully proved in the marvellous knowledge He had of Scripture. Have you ever traced it? Reckon how many books He quoted from, how many characters He mentioned, and we shall find how He must have been using those years of folded wings.

And then for the busy, active one, His own life tells of wings let down very often. Whole nights of prayer (Luke vi: 12), and prayer before every fresh work (e. g., Luke ix: 28), and also in the midst of His words, He would pause to listen, as Jehu xii: 27.

Among the many voices which we may expect to hear as we stand, take just one, for He Himself fixes its date.

In the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me.—(Ezek. xxix: 17-21.) A New Year's day message! A message which touched both past and future. He looks back upon service that had been done for Him which had not been paid for, and He promises, "I have given Him the land of Egypt for his labor, because they wrought for Me, saith the Lord God." That is to say, that *He forgets no service*, and that each service has its sure reward. This the just and all-seeing Lord we have to begin the New Year with! He stands and meets us with this word, "I forget nothing! and I reward everything wrought for me."

Then the New Year's voice for the future, "In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them." New Year brings promise of new fruit, from the only One who has the power of life in Himself; He promises, "I will cause to bud forth," and then He yet again promises an opened mouth. This is what we may expect. New fruitfulness and new utterance. O, all the dried and parched ones, here is new vigor, "I will cause to bud forth." O, dumb and silent ones, here is new hope, "I will give thee the opening of the mouth!" The long silence to others, which was His choice for you, is changed now into charge of speech.

Some missionary ones will read this. Take it as your voice on the first day of the first month. He means it for those particularly who were scattered among the heathen. You have been silent, and only a "sign" to them, but He has the opening of the mouth yet for you, and coming power to speak to them in their language. Dumb Ezekiel in the foreign land is like many a missionary, hindered from speaking the language. But though dumb to man, he was not dumb to God, and now the yoke of silence is lifted, and by your voice, "they shall know that I am the Lord."

So the dried ones and the dumb ones may take courage! He provides for the future. And the disheartened ones need not fear, for their work in the past is all recorded, and each shall have "his own reward according to his own labor."

#### EXPANDED WINGS.

What is the sequel of the folded wings?

"I heard behind me a voice of great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place. Also the noise of the living creatures that touched—kissed—one another."—(Ezek. iii: 12, 13.)

That is what follows the folded wings. Great rushing after great rest. Swift going after the quiet rush. After the patient and reverent folding, then the fuller expanding which had the glory of the Lord in its sound! After the surrender of will and work, then fresh charge of more commissions.

The "rushing" that springs from resting is what will alone have the sound of His "glory" in it. When they had listened and heard His voice to them, then their voice was all of His glory, and the Word "rushing" links itself with Pentecost, where both folding and expanding were learned.

And it was also a united sound. "The wings touched one another." Our gathering close round Him draws us

close to each other. There is to be fellowship both in the folding and in the flight.

When we have had our clear directions from Him, then we shall not interfere with anyone else. Our work shall not clash with theirs, but it shall be like the flight of the sea-birds. As you watch them over a sunny sea, their wings flashing and reflecting back its light, is it not wonderful that in their ceaseless wheeling and curving there is no clashing with the rest? Each knows and keeps its own curve. And surely what is by only instinct in them, may be by intelligence in us?

When God gives wings, He means them for us. He means us to fly in the open firmament of Heaven; and folded wings are His preparation for swifter, farther flight. When they were free to use their wings again, "The sound of the cherubim's wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when He speaketh" (ch. x: 5). Do you think it is time lost to pause in the work? But He is not a Master who wastes His servants' time, and instead of the times of hushed wings and listening being lost, the freshened sound of the next flight shall be heard even "to the outer court." Your voice shall reach further than before, and hearts will be reached you despaired of. And is not the outer court of the heathen world being filled with the sound of the wings of those who had yielded all, and put obedience to Him before any outer service? They gave their best, their fullest powers, the wings of will, of work, of intellect, and stood before Him with their best resigned to Him. And then He gave them back what they left with Him, and is now causing the wings they resigned to be heard even "to the outer court."

This is just what He does. When we say unreservedly Yes to His test question, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with mine own?" Then He pours new blessing upon the offering, and gives back the powers we yielded.

The Lord's own silent thirty years ended in three years of miracle-working life, and were crowned by a Death which is still reaching to the outer court in voice of Atonement, reconciliation and life.

It was wonderful in the case of St. John! His folded wings on Patmos made him hear the voice of the ascended and crowned Lord. "I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And He said, 'Write the things which thou hast seen.'" We owe Revelation to St. John's folded wings.

If folded wings are to prepare for expanded wings, what are those which we may have and use?

There are three sets of wings which every Christian may soar with.

First, the wings of the sparrow. The sparrow was the leper's bird.—(Lev. xiv: 4.) And the Christian who would soar best and freest has to begin very low, and to start with the wings which link him with the leper. For that is what he was, an unhealed leper. And however long he lives, he can never get beyond being a healed leper. But he may take the healing, for what no earthly power can do, the Priest's hands can do. And the healed leper takes the sparrows, the cheapest, most valueless of all the birds, and he kills one, and the other is sprinkled with the blood of the slain one, and then is set free, is allowed loose into the open field, to soar free and unfettered in the open firmament.

These are the wings that tell of ATONEMENT; they are sparrows', for it is the worthless who win the freedom. It is not by merit, nor by worth. "Not of works, lest any should boast."

As the leper looked up to that little soaring form, he would say, "That is my picture. I deserved to die. But yet, even I may soar and sing, for I am touched with the blood of One who died for me. I live by the life of Another. My only right to live is because Another has died. But it is my right, my inalienable right, for He never can die again, and I take it, and dare to soar high and joyous in the presence of Him, and use my blood-bought freedom