

are His own appointment. And He, in mercy to the wants of man and the lesser animals, makes the seed sown to germinate; and nourishes the tender plant with rain from heaven, and strengthens it with the genial warmth of the sun. And so, brethren, it is with the Word of life. Thousands possess that precious Word without being blessed thereby. To thousands the Gospel is faithfully preached,—and yet it proves to them only a savour of death unto death; for the Word of life has no vitality in itself; the preaching of the Gospel has no power in itself; but, when God blesses that Word sown by His ministers in the hearts of His people, *then*, and not *till then*, does it bring forth the fruits of a holy and religious life.

The seed of Divine life must be sown in the heart, and the heart must be prepared for it; even as the earth is prepared for the seed sown in it: and *afterwards* it must be *cultivated* and *refreshed* with the *dews of Divine grace*; or the plant of godliness, that springs up in it, will make no shoots upward, nor bear fruit to God's glory, and the good of men. But still it is all of God; just as much as the rich and yellow harvest is all from God. The souls of men flourish and are fruitful, as they are privileged to feel the beams of the Sun of righteousness, and to partake of the refreshing dews of Divine grace.

The ministers of God, however able, or however devoted, cannot, of themselves, bless the souls of their people. The state of mankind by nature, as described in the Bible, is such that nothing *but the Almighty power of God* is sufficient for this great and most difficult work in which we are engaged. Men are said to be "*dead*" in trespasses and sins. What power has mortal man to raise the dead? Men are described as in themselves "*blind*." Who but God can open the eyes of those born blind?

Their hearts are said to be "*hard and stony*." Now what