

Again, Christ's word abides, and passes not away in the forces which it exerts. It is the power of God himself, the expression of His thoughts, the instrument of His purpose, the channel of His grace. The Epistle to the Hebrews says of it, "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." And St. Peter, "Being born again—by the word of God, which dwelleth and abideth for ever." And St. Paul, "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." And our Lord, "The word which I have spoken, the same shall judge him on the last day." It challenges the intellect, and certainly no book in the world has been so bitterly attacked, so gallantly defended, so profoundly studied, and so universally read. It compels homage, even where it may not secure conviction. Those who attack it, admire it; and those who reject its claim to be the message of God, praise it as the supreme effort of humanity.

Once more: Christ's word abides in the results, of which we here this day are a visible, though an insignificant proof. "The Church is the offspring of the word"—the Church with all she is, has, and performs. "As Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word." The Church in her grand totality, as Christ's body, in her individual membership, shared by each separate Christian, in union with his Divine and immortal Head. You and I, my brethren, I say, are witnesses to it this evening.

That word has made us what we are, and given us what we possess. It defines our authority, sanctions our organisation, imposes our responsibilities, assures us our grace. Each of us for ourselves, in the secret of our own consciousness, knows what the Bible has done for us; each of us also sadly confesses how much more it might and could do, if we gave it the leisure it desires, and yielded it the obedience it deserves. For, indeed, it is the very presence and voice of Christ to us; when it is dark and stormy visiting us on the tossing sea, and saying, "It is I, be not afraid"; finding us out in the temple, whither we have fled from those who oppress us, and saying, "Dost thou believe on me?—I am He"; filling our solitude with a sweet and holy companionship, as near, as real, as blessed as if His very bodily presence were with us in the room; chiding us with wholesome reproof when self-love or laziness are tempting us; giving us God to our exceeding joy, when all that makes life happy seems utterly and irrecoverably gone.

It not only lights us to the grave, but across the grave; while it nerves us to be up and doing, it calms us to sit still and wait. It is ever beyond us and above us; yet its divineness is human; to our fickle changeableness it is the immovable assurance of the Divine faithfulness. The frivolous chattering of shallow unbelief or the cold scoffings of a defiant impiety dash on it like the white spray of the waves against a cliff of granite; but still it lives, and abides, and justifies itself, and never passes away, and never can pass away, while God is in heaven, and speaks from heaven to man.

And one result, yet to be named, is this British and Foreign Bible Society, which, in common with all missionary institutions of the Church, is the handmaid of that word which animates the hope it expresses, and inspires the activity it exerts, about the efforts of which we are met to-day in this august cathedral—mother church of that great Church of England which, with all her faults and shortcomings, has not yet forfeited her claim to be the one Church in the world which in her Articles so emphatically and nobly confesses that what is not read in Holy Scriptures, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation; which in her ordinal requires that daily, in her public services, at least four portions of Holy Scripture be read in the English tongue to the congregation, these not including the Psalms nor the Canticles, which amount to half as much again.

You will not think me too much encroaching on your time, if I conclude my sermon with a brief statement of the work and effort of this great Society, of which the operations lie truly and essentially at the foundation of