

PREACHING.

"It was God's good pleasure, through the foolishness of the preaching, (thing preached) to save them that believe," writes Paul to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. i, 21,) having already written that "The world through its wisdom knew not God." Note the insertion of *its* in the R. V., for many foolish tirades against wisdom have been founded on its absence. Nevertheless mere head knowledge, curious arts, magnificent architecture, all the refinements of an highly civilized life, wealth, wisdom of schools,—none of these could save; but the simple story of the cross, the apparent folly of faith in a crucified redeemer—these were the power of God unto salvation.

It is needless to explain that by foolishness Paul does not mean folly, but as in the case of Agrippa before whom Paul preached of a suffering and risen Christ, what the world deems foolishness is God's loving wisdom. "With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian," Acts xxvi, 28, R. V., exclaimed half scornfully the proud king to the earnest prisoner; that is a simple story you are telling, Paul; with such child's play you surely do not expect to make me a Christian! The preaching of the cross is, to them that are perishing, foolishness: and yet by this foolishness it is God's good pleasure that they who believe are to be saved.

The design of preaching therefore is to present salvation to faith. Will the accredited preaching of the O. T. and the N. T. afford us any insight into the purport and nature of this great Salvation?

The only O. T. examples to which in the N. T. the word "preach" is applied are the cases of Noah and of Jonah. 2 Pet. ii, 5: Mat. xii, 41. Of the substance of Noah's preaching we have that simple word "righteousness." Jonah's was in design the same, for the king hearing of the weird judgment cry: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed," exhorted: "Cry mightily unto God, yea, turn every one from his evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands;" and we read "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way: and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not." Righteousness and judgment were the themes of the O. T. preachers thus designated in the N. T. Enoch, the tenth from Adam, pro-

phesied or preached, and in Jude, xiv, 15, we have his themes. They are the same as those of Noah and Jonah. John—the voice in the wilderness—came preaching, and his themes were, "Repent. The kingdom of heaven is at hand." He further pointed to the Lamb of God—the greater than himself, who taketh away the sin of the world and baptizes with the Holy Ghost and with fire. The first recorded preaching of Jesus was (Math. iv, 17,) "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and that which is generally called the sermon on the mount is one continued teaching of righteousness, so heart searching that all who have endeavored to take in its meaning must have repeated the experience Paul records, Rom. vii, 9, and asked "Who is sufficient for all these things?" The Apostles take up the strain (Acts iii, 19-26) "in turning every one of you from your iniquities," and the great preacher Paul declares his commission in these words (Acts xxvi, 18,) "To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light." The effect of a great preacher's work in modern days has been thus described by a true hearted poet:—

"The flow of emotion deep and strong
 Troubled the land as it swept along,
 And left a result of holier lives,
 Tenderer mothers and worthier wives.
 The husband and father whose children fled,
 And sad wife wept when his drunken tread
 Frightened peace from his roof tree's shade,
 And a rock of offence his hearthstone made;
 In a strength that was not his own, began
 To rise from the brutes to the plane of man.
 Old friends embraced, long held apart
 By evil counsel and pride of heart:
 And penitence saw through misty tears,
 In the bow of hope on its cloud of fears,
 The promise of heaven's eternal years—
 The peace of God, for the world's annoy,
 Beauty for ashes, and oil of joy."

What works this mighty change? The gospel, *evangel*, the good tidings which angels sang on Bethlehem's plain and which Paul declared to be "the power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth." For therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith," as it is written: "But the righteous shall live by faith." (Rom. i, 17.)

On strictly scriptural grounds we have reached the conclusion that the end of gospel preaching is salvation from the curse of sin, both in its condemning and in its corrupting power, and this by faith, for the word of hearing does not profit, when not united by faith