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Rev. Dr. Riddle's Sermon

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS,

PREACHED AT PORTLAND, MAINE, SEPTEMBER 9, 1851.





Ground of Confidence in Foreign Missions.

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A

S E R M O N ,

PREACHED AT PORTLAND, MAINE, SEPTEMBER 9, 1851,

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

FOR

FOREIGN MISSIONS,

AT THEIR

FORTY-SECOND ANNUAL MEETING.

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BY DAVID H. RIDDLE, D. D.,

OF PITTSBURGH, PENN.

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B O S T O N :

PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN, 42 CONGRESS STREET.

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# S E R M O N .

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ISAIAH xli. 14, 15.

FEAR NOT, THOU WORM JACOB, AND YE MEN OF ISRAEL; I WILL KEEP THEE, SAITH THE LORD AND THY REDEEMER, THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL. BEHOLD, I WILL MAKE THEE A NEW SHARP THRESHING INSTRUMENT, HAVING TEETH. THOU SHALT THRESH THE MOUNTAINS, AND BEAT THEM SMALL, AND MAKE THE HILLS LIKE CHAFF.

THESE words illustrate “the wisdom of God in a mystery,” as distinguished from “the wisdom of this world,” that cometh to nought. In the estimate of this world, power is the great object of desire and idol of admiration. The philosophy of human enterprises is, that success is rationally to be expected, as the instrumental agency is adequately proportioned in power to the result to be accomplished. Is a great work to be done; a railway, for example, to be constructed? Physical power, and the pecuniary means of obtaining it, must be provided, in proportion to the obstructions to be overcome, the mountains to be leveled, the valleys to be elevated, and the rivers and ravines to be spanned. Is a locomotive to be propelled along the highway, or a vessel along our rivers or across the ocean in a definite time? The propelling power or momentum must be proportioned to the speed desired, or resistance

to be overcome. Again, is a community or nation to be moved and moulded anew, in political principles or social customs? Power, of a different kind, must be employed, proportioned to the amount of existing error, prejudice, force of habit, or indisposition to change, — mental power, reasoning, persuasion, eloquence, and the enginery for bringing this power into contact with the mind and heart.

Such is the wisdom of the world, and such is its philosophy of success. In carrying on his great plan, “according to the good pleasure of his will,” God seems resolved to demonstrate another and deeper philosophy of power. It seems good in his sight so to accomplish results by instrumentalities, that in every case “the excellency of the power,” the superadded element which alone philosophically explains the result, “may be of God,” and not of the instrument employed. “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.”

Look at the case presented by the text. A great result is to be accomplished. Mighty resistance is to be overcome, mountains are to be threshed and beaten small, and hills made like chaff. And what is the agency employed? “Thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel;” “few men,” according to one interpretation, “dead men” in another; powerless and inadequate on either or any interpretation. Where is the proportion which human philosophy demands as indispensable? On its principles, what prospect is there of success? Yet the voice of God says, “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel.” The philosophy of success here is the help

of the Almighty, supplying the obvious inadequacy of the instrumental agency. "I will help thee," — divine efficiency, working through human weakness. "I will make thee," or cause thee to become, "a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth; and thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills like chaff." The beautiful principle contained in this passage may be thus expressed: — *Want of proportion between instrumentality and results is no ground of discouragement in enterprises to be conducted by faith in God.*

This principle, illustrating the divine philosophy which governs God's great administration, would allow of a great variety of applications. We purpose on this occasion to apply it to the great enterprise in which we are engaged, and are here assembled to promote, *the work of foreign missions*; an application which all will grant is admissible, and by the divine blessing may be profitable.

I. Guided by the drapery of this passage, let us first contemplate *the inadequacy of the agency*, or want of proportion between the instrumentality employed and the result to be accomplished. For this purpose place in juxtaposition these two elements, a worm and the everlasting hills and mountains. What a contrast! What a sense of disproportion is at once produced! According to ordinary calculations, can a worm ever thresh these mountains, and beat them small, and make these hills like chaff? The reply of philosophy and experience is, No! It is impossible. To expect it is the acme of absurdity. Again, think of Israel as a people, in comparison



with the colossal empires and organized structures of power and opposition by which they are surrounded. What disproportion, estimated by human standards! Can these "few men," destitute of all elements of influence, inferior in science and wealth, wrestle successfully with the countless numbers and almost limitless resources of the rest of the world? Anterior to the event, who would venture to say that this nation, in the principles it embodied and was designed to perpetuate, would exist, and be wielding power when the whirlwind of ages had swept away these mighty empires, leaving only dust on the history and memory of their former greatness? Sense and human philosophy have here but one reply. "It cannot be."

Such is the contrast, figuratively presented, between the resources of the church, and the results to be accomplished in the enterprise of foreign missions. On the one hand are "mountains," whose massive and gigantic proportions it is difficult, with all our increased appliances of information, fully to realize, — mountains of error and iniquity, idolatry, superstition and false religion. "The strength of the hills" is here also "girded with power." Mighty systems, the growth of ages, the work of Satan and his auxiliaries, reared by the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places, exerting their powers of construction, in many instances without any counteraction for ages, like coral workers in the depths of the sea, systems interwoven with the philosophy and science, associations and social customs of different nations, with the memory of the ancestral dead, venerable for antiquity, proud

in conscious power, strong-holds where prejudices and passions are entrenched! Yes, brethren, great mountains! The hand that reared these emblems of strength and endurance, over the geography of the earth, has selected them as best adapted to convey the reality. Verily, even the Himmalayas and the Caucasus are only "figures of the true." Let any man carefully analyze the component elements of any one of these systems, Buddhism, Brahminism, Fetishism, Mohammedanism, or, worst of all, corrupted Christianity, "the mystery of iniquity," which began to work in apostolic times, and is coming to its grand climacteric in these last ages; let him try to unravel the manifold complications of caste, entangling in its web every grade and class of society, presenting at every point a fresh antagonism to the truth; and he will see the appropriateness of this figure to express the facts that meet us all over the field which "is the world," and be better able to measure the magnitude of the result to be accomplished. These great mountains we may not wisely, and cannot truthfully despise or depreciate.

And what, on the other side, have we of instrumental agency? "Worm Jacob, and few men," the very emblems of weakness and inadequacy. These words figuratively, but forcibly and fairly, represent the agency employed.

1. It is so intrinsically. The infinite Jehovah, who "sitteth on the circle of the earth," in thus designating Jacob, uses a figure indeed, but only thereby more impressively conveys the fact. By this selected phraseology he testifies the truth in the case, not only of ancient Israel, but of his people, the "true

Israel" of God, in all ages. They are wormlike in weakness, "few men," in themselves utterly destitute of resources adequate to the result described.

2. It is and should always be regarded so in their own estimation. The great model and representative of God's Israel, in his incarnate relations said, "I am a worm, and no man." This conveys the true sentiment of every Christian, in regard to his own independent resources. This is the right feeling of the church of God, when she recognizes her instrumental relations to the great work she is appointed to do. Her energies, irrespectively of almighty aid, are as disproportioned to the resistance, as a worm to the everlasting mountains. This is a sober estimate of human agency, without exaggerated diminution or affected humility, the very sentiment which God's word, in its great revealed principles and its record of his past operations, would lead us habitually to cherish. He would have us always know and feel the truth, just as it is; not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but soberly, as he has given us the measure of believing. "If a man," — and the same is applicable to any portion of the church, — "think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Let us allow no illusions to unsettle our proper conceptions of ourselves as God's instruments. "Thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel." Even the most cursory comparison of our weakness with the magnitude of the work produces this feeling. But this sense of inadequacy comes over us more overwhelmingly, as we measure the mountains to be threshed and beaten small more definitely and com-

prehensively. At the base of some gigantic pile of granite, upheaved by ancient convulsions, frowning upon us, and rearing itself as if in very mockery around us, what a sense have we of insignificance, of worm-like weakness, not so much as a deduction as an instinct ! What is man before Mont Blanc ? How does he feel amidst the awful immensities and everlasting solitudes of Himmalaya ? Judging from analogous but inferior circumstances of grandeur, in his own estimation he is less than nothing and vanity. Could the arm of all flesh concentrated into one, and with all its enginery, remove these mountains ? So when we contemplate, either in general or in detail, the granitic formations over the field of effort, the instinctive and irrepressible feeling, the feeling God would have us cherish, is one of withering insignificance and incompetency. We are worm Jacobs, even when called to “thresh the mountains ;” “earthen vessels,” even when filled with “the excellency of the power.” Shall the axe boast itself against him that smiteth therewith,” or “the thing formed” for a mere instrument say, “Why hast thou made me thus ?” The besom that sweeps the nations, is but a besom still.

3. This agency is so esteemed by others, especially the antagonist forces. “Weak things of the world,” or in the world’s estimation, “things which are despised,” yea, “things which are not,” have no existence amongst their elements of power or means of success. We may conceive how weak and contemptible were “Jacob” and the “men of Israel,” in the estimation of contemporaneous empires, Assyria, for example, or Babylon and her proud

monarch, Egypt and her immense resources of learning and enginery of power ; especially at this period, when apparently on the verge of annihilation, internally divided, and externally encircled by enemies, and just about to go into captivity. We can fancy them, as the best expression of scorn, using the language of God himself, "Worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel!" "What do these feeble Jews?" said one who represented the opposition in all ages. "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." Such too is the estimate of the world, even of its princes, at all times and even in our day, who judge of the probability of results by the standard of worldly calculation. "What do these feeble Christians?" How chimerical and wild, to the merely intellectual man, is the very conception of the missionary enterprise! Even when sincerity is awarded, it is the sincerity of enthusiasm, the very place for the most pertinent application of the epithet "romantic." How can men of reason and common sense, capable of estimating in other enterprises the elements of power and success, be seriously engaged in a work so visionary, or anticipate results so baseless. "The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad."

Nor are such conclusions unwarrantable, on their principles. If we consider the world numerically, what an emphasis is there in the expression "few men," as applied to the instruments of its subjugation? The materials of this contrast are now almost universally accessible and available. The contrast itself is familiar to all intelligent friends of

missions. What is Christendom, the whole of nominal Christendom, compared with paganism? On a map of the globe, marked according to its moral characteristics, what proportion does light bear to darkness, the portions where Christianity has penetrated and prevails, in any sense and form, to those under the unbroken dominion of heathenism or the lurid glare of Mohammedanism? How few the followers of the Lamb, compared with those of the Beast and the False Prophet?

What proportion, again, does evangelical Christendom bear to that which is nominal merely? And still further, what proportion of hopefully evangelical Christians are alive to the responsibilities and glory of this work? How few make the conversion of the world their paramount object, and every thing else subservient? How few know experimentally, as a living principle, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," or enter into the fellowship of his vicarious sufferings for the good of others, while acknowledging that "one died for all," thus placing all under equally tender obligations not to live unto themselves.

Considering missionaries as exponents of the faith and strength of Christendom, how "few men" are in the missionary field, though the number, thanks to God, in later years has swelled so greatly? How few lights yet twinkle, where thick darkness covers the people? How few proclaim God's covenant in "the dark places of the earth," "full of the habitations of cruelty?" Amidst this tempest-tossed ocean, few vessels indeed are freighted with the treasures of eternal life. Walking by sense,

and not by faith, and looking at the nations around them, the paucity of their numbers, often lessened by death, our stinted sympathy and tardy assistance, is it any wonder that they sometimes say, "What are these among so many? We are but as a drop in the bucket, or the small dust in the balance." Hear what Dr. Duff says: — "I speak the plain truth. Looking around over all these immense multitudes, comparing them with the smallness and utter inadequacy of the agency brought to bear upon them, it seems like the attempt, by means of a few twinkling tapers, to turn the darkness of the cloudy night into the meridian brightness of unclouded day; or with a few spades to go and at once level the Appenines and the Alps; or with a few buckets to go and drain the German and Atlantic oceans; or with a few pocket-knives go and cut down the Hungarian forests; or with a few squibs and crackers to go and assail the fortress of Gibraltar; or with a web of gossamer to go and capture the crocodile of the Nile or the whale of the ocean. It looks almost like idiocy run mad, like absurdity in hysterics, like illusion dancing in the maddest frenzy, like the unsubstantial dream or vision of the dreamer, who dreams that he has been dreaming." When one goes out, under the impulse of mere romance or personal affection, and romance gives place to stern reality, and personal affection conflicts with disease and lassitude and untold abominations, is it strange that they seem like grasshoppers, and the heathen like Anakim, and say, "They are too mighty for us, and we cannot subdue them!" These "few men," amidst countless masses of

immortal minds, each “dead in trespasses and sins,” and most of them linked by ties apparently insoluble to existing systems of superstition or social abomination, must feel like Jonah, as he trod alone the streets of that great city, Nineveh. Judged by human philosophy, contrasting simply the instrumental agency and the results to be accomplished in a single case or in the whole combined, what an infinite absurdity to expect success! As well might a worm overturn mountains, as these “few men” transform these millions.

It seems to be a part of God’s settled plan to produce and perpetuate this sense of inadequacy. He chooses “weak things” to confound the mighty, and “things which are not to bring to nought things that are.” The instruments of God’s selection, to be properly qualified, must not only acknowledge, but be willing to glory in this arrangement. He that purposes to stain the pride of all human glory, says, “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, or maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart,” in its expectation of success, “departeth from the Lord,” by transferring its confidence any where else. Intellectual resources, pecuniary means, and strong organizations may become arms of flesh, and serve to engage the carnal confidences of half-believing Christians on wrong reliances, so that they have sometimes to be removed, crippled or destroyed. When Gideon was to be made “the sword of the Lord” against Midian, his host was reduced to “few men,” that no might or glory should be ascribed to the instrument. When the brazen serpent, once the instrument of salvation, was



perverted to an amulet, it was ground to powder and called "Nehushtan." When the ark of God was prostituted to mere magical purposes, in the spirit of fetishism, as the cross is often now, it fell into the hands of the Philistines. Yea, when he who was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," came to achieve the great victory, "he humbled himself," "took upon him the form of a servant," and was found in the fashion and feeling and infirmity of a man, that this great principle might even here be preserved intact, and by this illustrious exemplification be made intelligible, as the governing idea of all God's operations through his selected instrumentalities. "Worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel!"

Such, brethren, is the inadequacy of the agency, or the want of proportion between the instrumentality employed and the results to be accomplished, in the great enterprise in which we are engaged. Let us ever cherish the right spirit in regard to this point. Ever let us realize the inadequacy of the instrumental agency, even if ever so much increased. From the extraordinary influx of wealth and intellectual resources into the church in these last days, the natural result of Christian activity, we may be approximating the critical period in the development of this great enterprise, the hour and power of temptation to fleshly confidences, and to forgetfulness of the great truth, that it is "not by might nor by power" that the work is to be done. In the reign of Solomon gold was as silver, and silver as brass in the streets of Jerusalem; and it became necessary, to prevent wrong conclusions and false confidences,

that four-fifths of the whole numerical strength of the nation should be severed from it, that Judah should boast only in the Lord. When primitive Christianity was embodied in "few men," opposed and persecuted, her power was resistless, her life perpetuated, and her limits enlarged, amidst all the bloody scenes through which she passed. It might have seemed that when installed in the court of the Cæsars, and invested with imperial power, the remaining conflict would have been short and glorious. But, as you are all aware, it was not so. So when the reformers relied on God and the sword of the Spirit, their victories astonished even themselves, and made their antagonists tremble for existence. But when, frightened at their own successes and the excesses which seem almost necessarily incident to the human factor in the elements of progress, they allied themselves to power and patronage, the onward and outward work ceased; and all their resources were needed to conserve what had been gained, and oppose the reactionary tendency which succeeded.

Just so at any period when special agencies, eminently blessed and honored, come to be considered the great power of God and exclusive channels of his victorious might, they are allowed to shrivel into insignificance, to become a stench in the nostrils of the pious, like Herod, who gave not God the glory, and was eaten of worms, weak and chattering mementoes of fatuity, withered arms of flesh, on which it would be the acme of folly any longer to lean. The perils of the experimental period of any great enterprise are many and peculiar, but not comparable

with those which environ the period of prosperity, when the worm in his own estimation or that of others becomes a giant, and forgets where his strength is found. If the Christian or the church is ever disposed to say aloud, or in the secrecy of pride, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built," God will find ways and means of expelling the proud spirit, though it should require, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, the passing over of seven times amongst the beasts of the field. We are, and God knows it, and he has said it, and we should feel it, "worm Jacob" and "men of Israel," and nothing else, in our best estate altogether vanity, utterly, utterly weak and inadequate!

II. But in the second place, notwithstanding this confessed and entire inadequacy of instrumental agency, there is no ground of discouragement, provided we view aright, and make available by faith, the infinite resources promised to render the instrumentality efficacious. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel." Why? Because "I will help thee, saith the Lord and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." "I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth." Here a new element enters into the explanation of the result, a factor in the moral calculus which makes an infinite difference. He who is "infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth," says, "I will help thee." This is the pledge of Almighty assistance. Thou art, indeed, in thine own estimation and the judgment of others, a worm, utterly incompetent to this work.

But “I will help thee !” Alone, and of thyself and by thyself, thou canst do nothing ; but I will cause thee to become an instrument, that can do all things. “Thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills like chaff.” Almighty power can energize the weakest instrumentality for any conceivable purpose. With God working in us and by us, we can work out all “the good pleasure of his goodness.”

This is a right view of the infinite resources promised. We grant that promise was primarily to his ancient people. But is it not the word of Him who is “the same yesterday, to-day, and forever,” himself, “without variableness or shadow of turning,” in every age and dispensation ? It is the “Ancient of Days,” ever uttering afresh the oracle, as from the throne, to his people. The Lord our Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, is Jesus Jehovah, “over all, God blessed forever,” who has “power over all flesh,” yea, “all power in heaven and earth,” “head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all,” he by whom and for whom all things were created at first, and by whom they consist, are kept in being, beauty and harmony, upholding all things by the word of his power, and “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” It is he who, at a later period, when he had been made flesh, and by himself had purged our sins, and was about to ascend to the glory he had with the Father before the world was, said, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” He who was, and

is, and is to come, the Almighty, promises, "I will help thee." What human or angelic conception can fully grasp what is conveyed in this promise? It is the voice of a King, yea, of "the King of kings and Lord of lords," who speaks, and it is done, who commands, and it stands fast. It is not poetic fancy, but a glorious fact, poetically expressed. "The voice that rolls the stars along," declares that "all the promises in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God." The element of power here conveyed, on every rational principle, is adequate to any conceivable result, even through the weakest instrumentality he chooses to select, and is more illustrious in proportion to the acknowledged inadequacy of the agency employed. We glory in infirmity, that this power may have its true place. Here then is the philosophy of success, the rational basis of hope in attempting what he has commanded, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," discipling them "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

But this infinite power is made available only by faith. "All things" that are to be done, "are possible to him that believeth." Nothing is too hard for God, or for us, if we have the faith of God, "who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that be not, as though they were." He could not, consistently with his plan, do "many mighty works there," and in many places and periods since, "because of their unbelief." "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say to this mountain remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove." This

was, indeed, the faith of miracles ; but Christ says, " Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." Moral miracles, the miracles of faith, are greater, and bring greater glory to God, than those that are merely physical. Hence he says again, " It is expedient for you that I go away," that this new spiritual dispensation of power, which is to last to the end of the world and of the mystery of God, may be inaugurated. Faith of the right quality, reposing on the promise and power of God, and calmly going forth to the appointed work, though but as a grain of mustard-seed in quantity, would remove these mountains, whose growth and gigantic greatness cause us to stagger and faint, as certainly, and on the same principle, as in apostolic times it availed to raise the dead and cast out devils. It is but the same almighty power, working through an appointed channel to the promised result. The faith that eminently gives glory to God in every age, is that which staggers not at improbabilities or impossibilities suggested by sense when a promise and command are given, but is " fully persuaded " that whatsoever he has promised he is able also to perform, and by the precise instrumentality he is pleased to select and make efficient by his superadded excellency of power.

What we want most of all, more than money or men, intellectual resources or an overflowing treasury, or wisdom and prudence in their management, is such faith as will bring the infinite and pledged resources of our almighty Head, the living Jesus at the right hand of the Father, to the aid of our

instrumentality. Along with a deepening sense of our inadequacy, we want a more vivid, living, abiding apprehension of his actual position as our Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, of the vastness of his power, the amplitude of his promise and his infinite veracity and trustworthiness. Here we find the life and power of all Christian enterprises, especially of this in which we are engaged. With this faith, victory is sure. This is the victory over the world and all forms of opposition.

We talk of power, physical or mechanical power, intellectual power, the power of money, of numbers, of nations. Men seek after power in these forms, and sometimes sacrifice peace, and hazard salvation for its possession, and the privilege of wielding it temporarily for the astonishment and admiration of worms like themselves. We do not disparage such power or its results, or envy the poor immortality it secures. But what is it to the power of faith, which makes us "partakers of the divine nature?" What has it done, or rather what has it not done? "By it the elders obtained a good report." "It has wrought righteousness," "subdued kingdoms," "stopped the mouths of lions," "quenched the violence of fire." And why should such things be thought incredible, if faith links the creature with one who fainteth not, neither is weary? If it is the medium along which strength is poured to the extent of recipiency, a capacity enlarging till filled with all the fullness of God, why should any bounds be placed to its possible achievements? Faith can make a worm a giant, yea, can invest the feeblest instrument with more than a giant's power,

even "the power of God." "Fear not," "worm Jacob."

If we had this faith, how could we fear? It is only for lack of this that we ever stagger, when we look at the greatness of the work or the feebleness and fewness of the instrumentalities. "Oh! Lord God, we have no might against this great company," "neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee." "What art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain." As "perfect love casteth out fear," in regard to our personal salvation, so perfect faith, grasping the fullness of the promise and power, casts out all fear of failure. The nature of the human mind forbids the contemporaneous prevalence of two such antagonist principles as faith and fear. A blessed philosophy, endorsed by the Savior! "Oh thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt." "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." When these two factors exist, infinite power and living faith to make it available, the product is equal to every thing which accords with the will and purpose of God, and in doing which he is pleased to use human instrumentality.

III. Let us see, in the last place, whether this is not true of the enterprise in which we are engaged.

1. Is not this thing to be done? Are not these mountains to be threshed and beaten small, and these hills to be made like chaff? Is He not to reign, till he has put down all authority and rule? Are not "all principalities and powers" of opposition to be made



subject to him? “We see not yet all things put under him,” though so many centuries have passed by; but is that blessed One, who by the grace of God tasted death for every man, and is now “crowned with glory and honor” at the Father’s side, and “expecting till his enemies be made his footstool,” and this earth the place of his dominion,—is he to be disappointed of his covenanted prerogatives? Are not the heathen given to him for an inheritance? Are not the uttermost parts of the earth his purchased possession? Shall not every knee bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, whether of things in heaven, or earth, or under the earth? When we sing,

“Jesus shall reign where’er the sun  
Does his successive journies run;  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
’Till suns shall rise and set no more,”

do we not believe it? Was he not manifested to destroy these works of the devil, these great mountains, the mountains of his power and pride? Was not this “the intent” for which the universe was created by him, and is kept in being for him, “according to the eternal purpose,” “the mystery of his will,” “hid from ages and from generations,” but made known in these last times by the apostles and prophets through the Spirit? Is it not a part of our privilege, in preaching “among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,” “to make all men see” and enjoy with us “the fellowship of the mystery,” and to co-operate with us in the sublime glory of its accomplishment? Is not this the grand

intention of "the only wise God," resolved on in one eternity, steadily prosecuted through the whole intervening episode of time, and which another and succeeding eternity shall see gloriously consummated, in ignorance or unbelief of which all philosophy is at fault, and the whole scheme is inexpressibly and distressingly mysterious? If this is not to be done, is the word of God true; or has he any final purpose in this scene of things, stretching "from everlasting to everlasting?" Yea, verily, it is to be done. The time is coming when he will say, "It is done; the mystery of God is finished." "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." Thus the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

2. And is not this to be done also by human instrumentality? Yes! "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills like chaff." We must distinguish, where God has distinguished, but not separate what he has united, almighty efficiency and human instrumentality. God created all things "to the intent that *now*," as the period, and *here* as the theatre, and "*through the church*," as the instrumentality, "might be known" "to principalities and powers in heavenly places" his "manifold wisdom," "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yes, God in Christ is the great executive of the everlasting purpose; angels, principalities and powers in heavenly places are the august spectators, which things they desire to look into beyond all other spectacles; but we, worm Jacobs, are the

instruments! "The world to come," of which the glowing language of prophets is full, he does not bring into subjection by angelic instrumentality, "the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." No. They might possibly, they do covet our privileges in this strife with "the rulers of the darkness of this world," "spiritual wickedness in high places." They may be, and possibly are astonished at our lethargy and want of appreciation; but they know that we, and not they, are "workers together with God," the instrumentality he is pleased to select, to whom they are but ministering spirits, and of whose successes they are enraptured witnesses, and possibly privileged heralds to the rest of creation.

Brethren, our faith, if intelligent and available, must embrace clearly these two great principles, that the work is to be done, for he has so purposed, and we are to do it; that "the excellency of the power" is of God, and the glory of the instrumentality is of us, worm Jacobs and men of Israel, weak, inadequate in ourselves, but mighty through God, and relying on his almighty and promised resources.

With this faith, expulsive of fear, and grasping the infinite resources promised, we need not be discouraged, however deeply we realize our own weakness, and however clearly we comprehend the immense magnitude of the work. The voice that commands us to do the work, says "Fear not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee;

yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Thine enemies "shall be ashamed and confounded; they shall be as nothing. "Thou shalt seek them, and shall not find them." "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree and the myrtle, and the oil tree. I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together. I have a long time holden my peace; I have been still." "Now I will destroy and devour at once." "I will make waste mountains and hills," "make darkness light," and "crooked places straight." "These things will I do, and not forsake them," that all "may see and know, and consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this." These are the words of Him that weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, who measures the waters in the hollow of his hand, and comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure, to whom all "the nations are as a drop of a bucket" and "the small dust of the balance," yea, less than nothing and vanity. Why then should we fear? Or why shall we not go up and take the land? We are able to do it.

Fathers and brethren, we are gathered here as the representatives of the churches, at this annual "feast of tabernacles," to survey the field, and calculate our resources, and project anew our plans of operation for the future. We are assembled too, in the providence of God, in a place hallowed by many sweet associations, a place where faith had once a beautiful and living exemplification, where Payson lived and labored, whence, in the days of his flesh, the

prayers of Payson went up to heaven with strong crying and tears, where the spirit of Payson and of the patriarchs of this enterprise are present! Oh! could we here and now have a pentecostal baptism of the Spirit, vivifying our faith, giving us a sight of Jesus on the throne, and enabling us to grasp and appropriate the whole comprehensiveness of his promised aid, imparting to us all the spirit of "power and of love and of a sound mind," what would be the style of our projects and the extent of our expectations? What wonders might we not achieve? These worm Jacobs and men of Israel, made to feel aright themselves, would have power to go back and wake up all our churches to the true feeling, and demolish mountains of unbelief, lethargy, and worldliness in our own land. One man, strong in the Lord, properly alive to this great idea like Paul, a living temple of an indwelling divinity, living, as he did, a life of faith upon the Son of God, could in a single year make the energies of a comparatively slumbering church tell mightily on the removal of the mountains of error and sin in other lands. He could make this cause appear to all, as it is in truth, the grandest ever contemplated by the mind, or challenging the co-operation of man, as infinitely above the ordinary projects of our fellow men as mind is above matter. He might open closed coffers, whence millions of superfluous wealth, owned by professing Christians, now rusting or prostituted to ignoble purposes of personal vanity and pride, might flow forth, accompanied by the prayer of faith, to bless a world lying in wickedness! What might we not witness, if all these fathers and brethren and

mothers and sisters would carry forth from this sweet and solemn convocation the faith that makes a worm a giant, mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds! Instrumentality enough is here aggregated to-night to shake the powers of darkness, did our faith fully realize who says, "I will help thee." We may go on, making our hundreds thousands, and thousands millions, gather up men by thousands, all intellectually qualified too; but what are they, after all? Worm Jacobs! If too many and too confident, the reliance of Christians may be transferred to them; and half believers or unbelievers, judging of success from adequacy of means, may be induced to make investments, and hope for dividends, till God is offended, and shows that in his plan the strength and wisdom of men are weakness and folly. Faith in God our Redeemer is what we want above all things; and probably this is the blessing yet in reserve for us, in floods of which the showers of Pentecost were but earnest. This may be the form of Christ's coming in great power and glory, to bring the whole energies of omnipotence to the problem of threshing the mountains, along the channel of the church's faith? Then the glorious period would come, when the light of the moon would be as the sun, and the light of the sun seven fold; when the weak of the flock would be as David, and David as the Angel of the Lord; when one would chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, as "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken," and angels and principalities are yet to witness.

And if so, if this new era of faith and power and

triumph is to be, when and where shall the blessing begin, if not now and here? How many hearts look forward to these periods, from distant continents, with interest and expectation? What deep affections and desires cluster and concentrate at this point, at this time, from earth, possibly from heaven also; from churches and closets and missionary stations, and why not also from "the cloud of witnesses" now at home!

Here are sojourning dwellers in almost every part of the world, from our own land and foreign lands, from the Green and White mountains, from the rock-bound coasts of New England, from the great valley and the mighty West. Here are representatives of other climes, whose homes are on the other side of the globe. Yet are all here "with one accord in one place." Here, we look back over a half century closed, filled with wonders that God has wrought. We look forward to another now begun, which may exceed in glory. Here, at a period when all hearts are full of expectancy of some new manifestation of power, why should we not expect "the promise of the Father," and be endowed with power from on high. Is the Spirit of the Lord straightened? Have his greatest and last effusions yet been enjoyed? Will not the wonders of the last days, yet in reserve, the triumphs of the spiritual when the divine philosophy of power is clearly grasped, equal and transcend the wonders of the physical and the mental in the departments of science and art? Is there not a period when, in a nobler sense than ever before, the church is to arise and shine, her light being come, and the glory of the Lord risen upon

her, and when the glorious things spoken of Zion are to be fulfilled? On the soberest interpretations of prophecy, without assuming to be wise above what is written, or that we comprehend all the symbols and figures of the word of the Eternal in their full extent, are not the final scenes of the mighty plan to excel all that precedes in glory? Are not these shakings of heaven and earth preparatory and premonitory? Are we not warranted to anticipate, at some period, an interposition that will actualize the high and glorious images of some yet unfulfilled portions of the sacred word? Is there not to be an end or fulfillment, as well as an expectation awakened from age to age in the heart of the men of Israel by the word in which he has caused us to hope? Have we followed cunningly devised fables, in reference to the future coming and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glory that is to follow his sufferings? Does not the heart of every true Christian desire a revelation to his soul and in his heart of that glory that shone around the traveler to Damascus, above the brightness of the mid-day sun, even though it should dazzle his eyes to temporary blindness to all earthly things, and entrance his heart away from all earthly ambition? And with such a manifestation, would not each one say, "Henceforth let no man" or earthly desire or unbelieving fear "trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus?" And would not each one afterwards, in a sweeter sense of its glory than ever, be able to say, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me;"—"I am



crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Would not this be the beginning of the end ? If so, we ask any one, when and where might we expect the beginning of this new era, if not now and here ? Not, indeed, with a rushing mighty wind, to shake the place where we are sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, or visible tongues of fire disparted to each of us here assembled ; not in the earthquake or whirlwind, but in "the still small voice," speaking to the secrecy of every spirit from the seat of power. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel ; I will help thee." Oh ! Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, ascended, exalted, almighty Redeemer ! speak, for we thy servants wait to hear. Our eyes and ears are unto thee. We stand still to see the salvation of God !

" A rill, a stream, a torrent flows,  
But pour a mighty flood ;  
Oh ! sweep the nations, shake the earth,  
Till all proclaim thee God ! "

And what better blessing could we desire for all our brethren in heathen and nominally Christian lands, than such a baptism as we have described as desirable for ourselves. To make them strong and successful, they need faith in the infinite resources here pledged for our assistance in the great work in which we are all engaged ; we at home, and they as our organs and representatives abroad ; faith in the living, personal, constant presence and power of Him who says, "I will help thee." We do not mean to say that our brethren do not believe, that

they have no faith. Ah, their faith, shown by their works and sacrifices, is enough to shame us who profess to honor and serve the same Master! But they need, as well as we, more vivid realizations of these exceeding great and precious promises, and fuller appropriations of the infinite fullness of his power. They need the faith that lived in the apostles, and made radiant with glory the ancient martyrs; that strengthened Luther to stand almost single-handed, a conscious worm, against his mighty and mountain-like antagonists; the faith of Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Moses of old. They need a faith that would enable them to see, as did Isaiah, the Lord high and lifted up, and his train filling the temple, and heaven and earth full of his glory; or as Stephen, the Son of Man our Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, at the right hand of power; or as John in his exile, alone and isolated, a Lamb as it had been slain from the foundation of the world, in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders and the innumerable company of angels. They need a faith that would open to their view the armies of heaven on white horses, and Him who leads them, having on his vesture and on his thigh, that vesture dipt in blood, "King of kings and Lord of lords," his eyes as a flame of fire, and on his head many crowns, to compensate them for the songs they have forsaken for the love of Jesus, and cause them to hear the heavenly harpings and seven-fold hallelujahs within the veil and on the sea of glass, and that great voice, saying, Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God, even the power of the

