

WORK TO BE DONE!

JOSHUA XIII. 1.

BEING THOUGHTS ON MISSIONS,

With special reference to the position of
THE CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

BY THE

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“There remaineth yet much land to be possessed.”—JOSHUA xiii. 1.

READER,

These were God’s words to Joshua, sometime after he had led Israel into the land of Canaan. I know none more applicable to the subject I want to bring before you this day.—That subject is “Missions to the Heathen, and the Church Missionary Society.”

When Joshua spoke these words, something had been done by Israel, but much was left undone.—Some tribes had received their inheritance;—the greater part were yet without it. Some land was possessed, but much still remained to be possessed.—They had everything to encourage them. The Lord of hosts had done great things for them, and was with them still. Thirty and one kings had fallen before them in battle. And yet they seemed to hesitate and draw back.

Reader, this is just the position of the Church Missionary Society, which I desire to set before you this day.

I. Something the Church Missionary Society has done:—THERE YOU HAVE MATTER FOR THANKFULNESS.

II. Much is still left undone:—THERE YOU HAVE MATTER FOR HUMILIATION.

III. Something is required at our hands:—THERE YOU HAVE OUR PRESENT AND IMMEDIATE DUTY.

These three things, by God’s help, I shall try to bring before your mind. Give me your attention. Forget the common prejudices which abound on the subject of Missions. Try to look at Missions to the heathen like a Christian and an honest man.

I. First then I say, the Church Missionary Society has done something:—THERE IS MATTER FOR THANKFULNESS.

I trust I need hardly remind you that a true Christian ought always to see causes for thankfulness, and if his heart be in tune he will never fail to find them. I say that thankfulness is the first and foremost feeling which the state of the Church Missionary Society calls for at our hands. I think no man can consider that state for a moment, and not see that we have cause.

We are now in the sixty-eighth year of the Society’s existence. Come with me and review what God has done for us. Place side by side the Socie-

ty of this day, and her beginning, sixty-seven years ago, and then see what abundant reason we have to praise the Lord.

Sixty-seven years ago there was literally nothing done for the heathen by the Church of England. Something, perhaps, was attempted, around our Indian settlements; but aggressive measures on the mass of heathenism there were none at all. Now we have a strong and powerful Society, well-organized, well-established, and well-worked.

Sixty-seven years ago, twenty-five laymen and clergymen were all who met together to launch the Society into the world. They were names we now delight to honour,—Venn, Pratt, Scott, Newton, and a few others. They stood almost alone in their desire to do good to heathen souls. Now thousands upon thousands throughout the land count it a privilege to give the Society a helping hand.

Sixty-seven years ago not a single bishop supported the Society. Some opposed it. Others looked coldly at it. Fourteen years passed before two bishops became subscribers. Now the four Archbishops and nearly all the episcopal bench give it active aid. Support is the rule, and not the exception.

Sixty-seven years ago the Society started with an income of less than £500. At the end of ten years its income was under £2,500. It now receives more than £140,000 a year.

Sixty-seven years ago the Society dared not think of anything more than “Africa and the East.” Now all the world is dotted over with missionary stations. Every quarter of the globe is visited by messengers of the Gospel. It can number one hundred and forty-eight stations, two hundred and one European ordained missionaries, seventy-one native-ordained, two thousand one hundred and twelve native teachers, eight hundred schools, twenty-five thousand communicants, and at least half a million of hearers.

Truly we have reason to bless God. Truly it is good sometimes to look back and compare “past and present.” It is good to consider what we were, and then to say,—“The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.”

The first beginning of the Church Missionary Society was indeed a day of small things. Here, at this distance of time, we can form little idea of the immense difficulties its founders had to contend with. The thing was new. The work was strange. Machinery had to be made. Men had to be found. It was five years before any missionaries at all could be obtained, and then they were two Germans. Sixteen years passed away before any Englishman was sent forth. It sounds incredible now. Truly other men have laboured, and we have entered into their labours. Truly we should remember all the way by which the Lord has led us, and be thankful.

Nothing can account for the growth and progress of the last sixty-seven years but the hand of God. His arm has been round the Society. His power sustained her founders. His Spirit has guided her counsels. His blessing has been upon her work. Verily we must be harder and more unbelieving than Egyptian magicians, if we do not say, "This is the finger of God," and give Him all the praise.

Let us praise God for moving the hearts of good men to begin the Society, and to wipe off from our Church the reproach of doing nothing for heathen souls.

Let us praise Him for giving them such zeal and courage in carrying on the work they took in hand. They were not discouraged by the feeble support they met with. They went forward, faint, yet pursuing. Let us praise Him for keeping the Society faithful to Gospel principles for fifty years. Notwithstanding all temptations to swerve, her course has been straightforward, her eye has been single; she has gloried in nothing but the cross of Christ.

Above all, let us praise Him for the abundant success He has graciously given to the Society's labours. Tinnevelly, Sierra Leone, New Zealand, North-West America, must never be forgotten. Thousands of souls have been plucked, like brands, from the burning. Hundreds are blessing God in paradise for the men the Society has sent forth,

Yes! reader, we have abundant reason to praise God,—and let us do it. Let us not be slow to build an Ebenezer. Let us say rather, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." Surely it is true this day of our Society as it was of Jacob of old: "We are not worthy of the least of all the Lord's mercies: with our staff we passed over Jordan, and now we have become a mighty band."

II. The second thing I wish to consider is this,—much has been left undone:—WE HAVE REASON FOR MUCH HUMILIATION.

It is far less pleasant to dwell on this part of our subject, but not less important. It is well to know the worst, in order that we may rise to a sense of our immediate duty.

Now, I fear in this matter we are often disposed to take a false view of our real condition. We content ourselves with looking at what we have done, and forget what we ought to have done. We look back to days when there were no missionary sermons and no collections,—no reports and no subscriptions,—no meetings and no speeches,—no talking and no doing; and then, looking at the present state of things, we flatter ourselves a great deal is doing, and are ready to say, "What lack I yet?"

Believe me, reader, if the truth be spoken, we have no room for boasting. If we look beneath the surface, and fairly examine our position, we have

abundant cause for shame and confusion of face. All things go by comparison. Compare what is done with what ought to be done, and I think you will feel we ought to be humbled indeed.

We ought to be humbled when we consider the position and power of *our own nation*.

England is, without controversy, the first of nations. No nation on earth has such power and such wealth,—such dominion and such greatness,—such revenues and such commerce. English ships are to be found on every sea. English colonies open a door to us in every climate. English influence is felt by every government under the sun. England is the heart of the world. The slightest movement in this little island is a pulsation felt in the remotest corner of the globe.

And what is England doing for the heathen? Literally next to nothing at all! Nothing worthy of her greatness. Nothing in the least degree proportioned to her power. All the religious societies in England of every description do not raise together a million pounds, and of this a great proportion is spent on objects at home. Vast as this sum may sound, compared to the sums spent on trifles, luxuries, and sins, it is really a drop of water. Verily, verily, no Christian man can think of our national wealth, and then look at the sums given towards sending the Gospel to the heathen, and not feel utterly ashamed.

But, furthermore, we ought to be humbled when we consider the *actual state of the heathen world*.

Many faithful missionaries have gone forth and spent their lives in Christ's cause. Many are this day labouring in the same field, bearing the burden and heat of the day in foreign lands. And yet, after all, what has been done?

Truly, so little that it is as dust in the balance compared to what remains! We have just touched the mass of heathenism: we have scarcely shaken the outskirts of the devil's kingdom.

We speak of twenty-five thousand communicants and half-a-million hearers; but the souls sitting in darkness are still six hundred millions in number.

We count up two hundred and seventy-two missionaries. But what are they among so many? Each would have millions upon millions to look after, if the heathen were divided equally among them all.

China alone contains three hundred and sixty millions—all dark as midnight. India can show us one hundred and forty millions more—all sunk in superstition and immorality. The Mahometan religion stands almost everywhere unmoved; rarely do we hear of a follower of the false prophet becoming a Christian. We have barely made the darkness visible. We have

scarcely done more than spy out the nakedness of the land. We cannot be said to possess it.

Verily, I think no Christian man can look for a moment at the heathen world, and not feel that Christendom ought to be ashamed.

But, again, we ought to be humbled when we consider *our privileges as a Church*.

I believe I say the truth in saying, that few churches have more privileges than the Church of England. We have sound Articles, and a scriptural Prayer-book. We possess, in our parochial arrangements, immense available machinery for doing good. You can scarcely travel five miles in any direction without seeing a parish Church.

Yet what does the Church of England do for the Church Missionary Society? Little, very little indeed. There are probably sixteen thousand Churches belonging to our communion, and yet there are not four thousand of this number in which this Society is supported. There are eighteen thousand clergymen on our lists, and yet not five thousand subscribe to this Society's cause. There are only too many pulpits in which missions are never brought forward—too many villages in which the subject is altogether an unknown thing.

Verily, I believe no man can think what our Church does, and what she might do, and not feel ashamed.

Once more, it is a humbling thing to consider that the *Society's income from Associations has now comparatively stood still for seven years*.

We seem to have come to a dead lock. We appear to have reached the highest point of liberality, and can get no further. We are as near as possible just where we were eight years ago.

There is everything to encourage. God has blessed the Society wonderfully in the last seven years. It cannot be said that want of success has kept back subscriptions. Yet we stand still.

The progress of the country has been wonderful in the last eight years. It cannot be said there has been a scarcity of money. Yet the cause of missions has made no advance.

Verily, if there was no other reason, this alone ought to make us ashamed.

Reader, I may not tarry longer on this part of my subject.—I leave it to your own private thoughts.—I think enough has been said to show you we have mighty cause for humiliation. Much has been given to us, and little has been done for the Giver. Much has been bestowed, and small indeed has been the return.—Let us all take shame to ourselves.—Let us confess that we are a sinful people, an ungrateful Church, a thankless nation. We have left undone what we ought to have done.

III. I said, in the third place, something is required at our hands,—and that brings me to the question, *What is our present duty?*

I desire to speak with all humility on this point, but I shall speak decidedly, for I think a minister ought to do so. I commend what I say to your serious and prayerful consideration. Of this I feel satisfied, if ever the Society is to lengthen her cords and extend her operations, it must be by the use of means such as those I am about to dwell on.

1. First, then, I say there is wanting more of the *true spirit of missions* among us at home.

Let me speak plainly and show clearly what I mean. I mean nothing less than this,—we want a greater spread of real vital religion among ourselves in England.

This is the root of all that is wrong in our position about Missions, and if ever there is to be a change for the better, we must strike at the root. This is the true secret of small subscriptions, of poverty-stricken contributions, of cold interest in the Missionary cause. It is want of vital Christianity in England. It is ungodliness hard by our own doors. Our efforts are weak abroad because we are weak at home. Water never rises higher than its source, if it runs 5,000 miles;—and if we would change the face of affairs, we must begin at the fountain-head.

Reader, therein wanting everywhere a thoroughly deep sense of the sinfulness of sin,—a real knowledge of Christ's love to our souls, and Christ's work for our salvation,—a complete understanding of our lost and ruined state without Him,—a clear view of our need of the Holy Spirit,—a hearty desire to advance God's glory and do God's will;—these things, I say, are wanting everywhere,—wanting among ministers and wanting among people,—wanting among parishes and wanting among families,—wanting among rich and wanting among poor. Those of us who do know them, know far less of them than we ought,—and many, very many, I fear, in England, know nothing of them at all.

But one thing I am convinced of, till men do know something of these things they will do little or nothing for Missions. Till sin, and conversion, and justification, and repentance, and faith, and judgment, and heaven, and hell, are real things in their eyes, they will never care one straw whether the heathen know them or not.

Yes, reader, we must first of all look at home. The beginning, the A. B. C. of all our weakness is close at hand: it is over against our own house; Let us labour to bring more souls under the power of vital religion in our own country, and we shall soon see an immensely increasing interest in the cause of Missions abroad.

2. The second thing I will name is this. *There is wanting among us more prayer.* I do not say there is no prayer for the success of missions, but I do say there is far too little. We do not seem to realize the importance of prayer, or to believe its power.

We mourn our own want of success. Do we use the proper means to obtain it? We desire to see more doing at our stations. Do we go the right way to bring it about? Are we not neglecting the mightiest instrument of success within our reach? Might not God say to us with truth, “Ye have little because ye ask little. Open your mouths wide and they shall be filled”?

We want more missionaries of the right sort, and often lament the scarcity of them. But we seem to forget that it is not money and colleges, but the Holy Ghost who alone can make a gospel minister, and that we have the command,—“Pray ye the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into His harvest.”

Prayer is the mightiest engine that man can use. It is better than money. Like the dew in summer, it makes no noise, it is unseen;—but it produces immense results.

It needs no learning except the teaching of the Spirit. It requires no books and expensive machinery to carry it on. The old, the blind, the bed-ridden, the crippled, all can pray and obtain mighty blessings if they will.

Yet prayer is the last engine which men generally resort to, and the most difficult to persuade them to continue using. I hear it sometimes spoken of at the fag-end of platform speeches as a matter of course,—“Of course you will pray.” I wish I could think it was as often practised as it is preached.

Reader, if we would help forward the cause of missions we must pray more. The Lord's arm is not shortened since the days of old. The Spirit is still mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. The outpouring of the Spirit is needed and must be sought.

3. The third thing I will say is, there is wanting among us *more liberality in giving money.*

I am not at all ashamed to speak of this matter. After the most solemn chapter in the Epistles to the Corinthians, I mean the chapter about the resurrection, Paul goes on to say, “Now concerning *the collection.*” (1 Cor. xvi. 1.)

God generally works by means. He might convert the heathen in a day if He thought fit, but He does not do so. He is pleased to use means. So long as He does use our money and contributions we should count it a privilege to be fellow-workers with God. Means, doubtless, can do nothing without God, but they are not therefore to be despised. It is one thing to put our trust in means; it is quite another to use them in humble dependence on God's blessing.

Money is one great means of setting forward the work of missions. Missionaries must live, and they cannot live without money. Their wives and children must be supported and educated; they cannot feed on air. And this is one grand reason why I say money is wanted.

Now the hands of the Church Missionary Society are positively tied and her strength crippled for want of more money. There are many stations where there are two or three missionaries labouring, and there ought to be fifty. There are places where there is a great opening for sending missionaries, and we cannot afford to do anything at all. There are vast fields of heathenism entirely untouched, simply because we are not able to send men.

The plain truth is, there is not enough giving to the cause of missions in England. I find no fault with the poor; they generally give to their power, and even beyond. If all people gave in proportion to their income as the poor do, our Society would have millions at her command instead of thousands.

But many members of our Church who have money give nothing at all to missions. Few who are rich give anything like what they might. Shillings are often given where sovereigns would not be missed, and sovereigns where a five-pound note might have been bestowed with perfect ease. The sooner the wretched habit of "one-guinea subscription" is broken down the better. Few deny themselves at all in order to give more. Few are rich towards God,—rich toward their own clothes, their own carriages, their own houses, their own comforts,—but poor, very poor, toward God.

I have not the smallest doubt the income of the Society might be increased ten-fold by increased subscriptions, and yet the subscribers would scarcely feel the difference.

The children of Israel gave so freely to the construction of the Tabernacle when it was first made in the wilderness, that Moses was obliged to stop them.

David gave eighteen millions in gold and silver at once toward building the temple. The people gave thirty millions more. There was more than half the annual revenue of Great Britain in one subscription! Yet David did not die a poor man: and Judah and Israel were so rich a few years after, that you are specially told silver was as common as stones in the streets.

The Free Church of Scotland calls on all her congregations to contribute to seven or eight great schemes of Christian charity every year, besides supporting their ministers.

I lay these facts before you for your own consideration. They ought to be known and thought over from Cornwall to Kent, and from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed. I declare I think our small contributions to the missionary cause are a positive disgrace to the nation. Oh! that we had more of

the spirit of that old Negro in Demerara, who insisted on giving all his savings, £3, toward a missionary chapel, saying, "God's work must be done, and I may be dead."

4. The last thing I will say is this, there is wanting among us *more of a working spirit*.

I mean just simply what I say. We want more vigorous working to advance the cause of missions,—more active, business-like exertion to set forward its prosperity.

The way to advance any cause is to keep it continually in mind, to be always thinking of it, always speaking of it, always trying to bring it under the notice of others, always endeavouring to keep it before their eyes. We want to have this done for the missionary cause.

The heathen perish day by day. Nothing but the Gospel can save them. Every person who is in earnest about his own soul should look on missions as his own affair as much as his minister's, and should consider "what can I do to help them." All can do something. Print that in your mind. One single man, one woman, can practice immense results if they take up a subject, and are resolved to press on and never give it up. One man, almost alone, upset the slave trade. One man purified the prisons of the world. It is wonderful to observe what one can do, if he is resolved to do something and stick to it. Ways and means open up when the mind is bent on an object. People become ingenious in finding modes of action when their hearts and affections are engaged. I wish that it were so with many in the matter of missions!

When you have given all you can, try and fill your mind with the subject and set to work upon others. Ask others to give. There are fountains of wealth in this land from which not one drop has flowed yet to the treasury of God. There are mines of wealth from which not a sixpence was ever extracted for Christ's cause. Tell others about missions. Write to your friends and relations about them. Bring forward the subject in conversation. You never need be ashamed of it. Christ and His Apostles were missionaries, and that is sufficient answer to the tongue of scorn.

Reader, the state of the world demands more exertion, from all professing Christians. The latter days of the earth are fallen upon us. The nations are shaking, and thrones and principalities are being cast down. The kingdom draws near which can never be shaken. The King himself cannot be far off. The Judge standeth at the door. The night cometh when no man can work. God seems to be crying in His wonderful providences,—“Who is on the Lord's side?” Oh! let us each say, I am.

The state of the heathen demands it. North and south, east and west, souls are perishing for lack of knowledge. Sin is reigning, and Satan carry-

ing men captive at his will. If we are not infidels,—if we are not sham Christians,—if we are really in earnest in our religion,—let us have pity on them, and send to help them.

The life and prosperity of the Church of England demand it. Why has God dealt so graciously with us? Why has He spared us so long? Simply to prove us,—simply to try whether we will occupy our right position and stand in the fore-front, as we ought to do, in the day of battle. Depend on it, our Church is on her trial. If she does not rise to the requirements of the times, her candlestick will be taken away. God can fulfil His purposes without us. If we are not ready to do His work He will choose other instruments, and cast us aside. Oh! let us take heed, lest we be weighed in the balances and found wanting.

Above all, the well-being of our own souls demands it. We little know how much depends on working for God in the matter of our spiritual comfort. Exercise is the secret of a healthy body, and active working for God one secret of a healthy soul. This is the path in which God will meet us, and give us more peace and strength. “He that watereth others shall be watered himself.”

Reader, above all remember that the time is short. Make haste, make haste, if you ever mean to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Make haste, lest you be too late. In heaven there will be no ignorance and no darkness, no heathen to be converted, no sinners to be brought to God. Now is the only time for doing good. The way to do a thing is to do it. Begin at once. There is much land to be possessed and much **WORK TO BE DONE!**