

Sermonettes for Children on the Golden Texts.

I.

'Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.'—1 Tim. i. 15.

HERE is a saying. What is it? 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' Who said it? St. Paul immediately. But Christ Jesus Himself said it first, and St. Paul is quoting it from Him: 'I came not to call the righteous but sinners.' What is it about? It is about salvation. And who is spoken to? Sinners. So we have a Saying to Sinners about Salvation.

1. THE SAYING.—St. Paul describes it first as a 'faithful' saying, that is a saying we may put faith in; and that not only because it is a *true* saying; but because it so *blessed* a saying. We know it is a true saying, for Christ Jesus Himself said it. We find it true when we believe it. But it is most worth believing because of the blessing it contains. What does it say? (1) That Christ Jesus came into the world. And that means more than that He was born into the world. It means that He was somewhere else before He came into the world. And it means that He came of His own free will. It says (2) that He came to save sinners. So He came for a purpose, a single direct purpose, a simple purpose, a very gracious purpose. He came to do something, and as soon as He had done it, He went away again. 'It is finished,' He said, and returned whence He came. St. Paul says this saying is, secondly, 'worthy of all acceptation.' And that means that it is worthy of being altogether (every word and every wonder of it) received, and of being received by all.

2. TO SINNERS.—When Christ Jesus was in the world, there were those who blamed Him for eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. They said He ought to leave the sinners alone, and associate with the saints. He answered that He was sent to the lost. If there were any who were not lost, He had nothing to do with them. He said He was a Physician. 'They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous but sinners.' But when anyone claimed to be a saint and no sinner, He easily showed them they were wrong. He told the story of the publican and the Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray, and He said the publican went down to his house *justified* rather than the other. Or He told the story of the prodigal son, and showed how cruel and contemptuous the so-called 'saint' could be. Thus He showed that all were sinners. And this is what Paul learned. For though he was able to call himself 'a Pharisee of the Pharisees, touching the righteousness that is in the law blameless,' he now knows that he was and is 'the chief of sinners.'

3. ABOUT SALVATION.—Christ Jesus came into the world for the sake of sinners; He came to have to do with sinners only. He came to save them from their sin. Just before He left the earth, looking back as if He were already out of it, He said, 'I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do.' This was the work. And He did it by Himself

taking the sins upon Him. He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He became, as it were, a sinner in men's sight, for they constantly found Him mixing amongst sinners. He became, as it were, a sinner in God's sight. He saved by suffering. He carried the sin away by carrying it in Himself.

II.

'And every man that striveth in the games is temperate in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.'—1 Cor. ix. 25.

When Paul was a boy he had often seen races, and the sight impressed itself upon him. He frequently uses the racecourse in illustration of the things of God. He uses it here. And he uses the most striking part in a racecourse here—the intense earnestness of the runners. Have you ever watched the faces of the runners as they ran past? What earnestness, what eager straining, what intense striving for the mastery. What is it all for? It is for the crown which the victor wins. In the races Paul witnessed, the winner was rewarded with a crown of laurel or ivy or some other leaf. It was a perishing thing. Yet they strove for it, and spent themselves in the effort to win it.

But not only did they strive so while the race was in progress. They trained themselves for the race beforehand. They went through a long course of self-discipline. They ate sparingly and exercised themselves continually. They were temperate in all things.

Well, the apostle says that we should take a lesson from the racer. Who enters the kingdom of heaven? He who *strives* to enter. 'Strive to enter at the strait gate.' Who are the followers of Jesus? Those who are temperate in all things. So we have, first, Earnestness, next Temperance, and then the Crown.

1. EARNESTNESS.—When asked if he could say whether all those who became followers of Christ had anything in common, an experienced believer said, 'Yes, just one thing, earnestness.' There are those who are kept out of the kingdom by their wilful indulgence in sin; there are ten times as many who are kept out by their *want of will*. And then among the followers themselves, this is the distinction that still remains—some are more earnest than others. It is true that some are more wealthy than others, but that makes little difference to their success in serving Christ; it is true that some are better educated than others, but that makes little difference. It is earnestness that wins for Christ; it is the want of it that makes us run the risk of losing even our own souls and becoming castaways.

2. TEMPERANCE.—The Christian life is a race then, and we must run it with every nerve strained. But we must also prepare for the race and practise temperance. He who indulges the appetites makes a poor Christian; he who pampers the temper or the taste makes a miserable profession for Christ. We must be temperate in all matters of the world, the flesh, and the devil—using the world but not

to the full, keeping the flesh in vigorous life but not in indulgence; resisting the devil with all our might.

3. And the end is worth the effort. It is a crown of life that fadeth not away. It is the seat of honour at the Saviour's right hand. It is the inheritance of the saints in light. It is joy unspeakable, full of glory, reserved in heaven for us.

III.

'But the Word of God grew and multiplied.'—

Acts xii. 24.

1. The first, and one of the best-known of Christ's parables, is the Parable of the Sower. The sower sows seed. What is the seed? Christ Himself explained when His disciples asked Him. He said, 'The seed is the Word.' That parable the disciples never forgot. They came to speak familiarly of the Word of God as if it were seed. So they said, 'the Word of God grew and multiplied.' It is seed that grows; it is seed that multiplies, bringing forth some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, some an hundred-fold.

2. What is the Word of God? It is the story of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have the report of several sermons in the Acts. They are all the story of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They all tell how Jesus died for sin and

rose again for righteousness. God's Word is a great subject, but the Word of God, which is spoken of here, is comparatively limited; it is very pointed; it is very simple and impressive. It is the story of the Cross of Christ, the Son of God, Who came into the world to save sinners; Who finished the work that the Father gave Him to do; Who was raised from the dead a Prince and a Saviour; Who now sits at the Father's right hand to make intercession.

3. How did the Word of God grow and multiply? By being preached, heard, and believed. There were those who went everywhere preaching the Word of God. Wherever they went they found hearers. And in those days, wherever there were hearers, there were those who believed and were saved. So the Word grew and multiplied by the conversion of sinners to God. The Word grew and multiplied by the number of those who believed in Christ growing and multiplying.

4. This was a contrast. See the word 'But.' That word makes a contrast between what goes before and what comes after. What goes before? It is the miserable death of Herod. He suffered death by a loathsome disease after he had blasphemed God. *But* the Word of God grew and multiplied. For God was on the side of His own Word; God was against Herod. And this is what makes success or failure always. As Gamaliel said, if a thing is not of God it will always come to nought.

Contributions and Comments.

Arpakshad.

In the February number of the *Expositor*, Professor Cheyne, by way of reply to my explanation of ARPAKSHAD in the *Academy* of 17th October 1896, proposes a textual emendation which, clever as it is, is too violent to hope to gain general acceptance.

My explanation left the consonantal text quite intact, and even in regard to the vocalisation it implies only a slight modification, viz. Ur-pa-Keshad for Arpakshad. Arpakshad is, in Gen. x. 22, the third of the five sons of Shem, and is, of course, to be taken (like Elam, Asshur, Lud,¹ Aram) as the name of a country or people. In Gen. x. 24 and xi. 12 ff., Arpakshad appears as the progenitor of the Hebrews, 'Eber being reckoned his grandson. But elsewhere Ur-Kasdim, as the home of 'Abram the Hebrew,' is the starting-point of the Hebrews, so that Arpakshad and Ur-Kasdim are strictly parallel (both of them geographical)

¹ That Lud is not Lydia but an Arabian tribe (cf. *Laudhân*) should be clear. This view is confirmed by personal names in the time of David, such as Ahilud (*Akhi-Lud*, 'my brother is Lud'), for at that time Lydia had not come within the range of Israel's observation.

terms. Moreover, in Gen. xxii. 22, one Chesed appears as a relation of Abraham and as 'brother' of certain Aramæo-Arabian districts. Arpakshad and Ur-Kasdim (in its oldest form, אַרְכַּשְׁדִּים) being thus *materially* identical, I proposed to identify also the *forms*. Thus:—

א ר פ כ ש ד
א ר כ ש ד מ

The *pa* between אר and כשר I explained as the Egyptian article.

If the Egyptians of the era of the New Empire could form a word *pa-Ba'al* (=Heb. תַּבְעֵל), the Israelites who sojourned 400 years in Goshen might form one, *Ur-pa-Keshad*, i.e. 'Ur of the Keshad' (instead of Ur-Kasdim). Even *Putiel* (Ex. vi. 25, cf. *Potiphar*) is a half-Egyptian, half-Israelitish name.²

My explanation presupposes, indeed, that the story of Abraham's departure from Chaldea is very ancient, and that in the time of Moses it already formed part of the Israelitish traditions. And this is the chief reason why an adherent of Wellhausen like Professor Cheyne will never

² Putiel is the maternal grandfather of Phinehas, whose name is also an Egyptian one.