"Have salt in yourselves," says Jesus. Example, after all, is the loudest preaching. We may have salt in our creed, and salt in our sermons, and salt in our conversation, and salt in our prayers; but if we do not have it in ourselves it is missing where it ought most to be.

A.J.G.

17. WORKERS WITH GOD

To the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.—Judges 5:23.

It sounds strange to hear men summoned to lend help to the Almighty. We can imagine all sorts of exclamations of astonishment at such a suggestion. "What, does the sun need a tallow candle to help it light up the globe? Does the earth need someone to turn a crank in order to assist it in revolving on its axis? And no more does God need our help in managing the affairs of his kingdom." But it must be replied that while in creation God does everything by His own direct agency—"the heavens are the work of his fingers," and "his hands formed the dry land,"—it is not so in redemption. God has associated man directly with Himself in this work, so that the Apostle addresses his brethren thus, "We, then, as workers together with him." And because God can get hold of men best by means of men, when redemption is to be effected—man's recovery from sin and ruin—a greater work than that of the original creation, God chooses this method: He becomes man in order to save man. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels," says the Scripture. Why? Because

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angelic nature is not in close enough contact with human nature to lift it up. Of the angels it is said, "They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

But something more than this is needed now. Bearing up in the hands will do well enough for infants who are yet in a nurse's arms. But God wants to put a fallen race on its feet and enable it to stand fast in the Lord with a manly and self-reliant confidence. In the incarnation, instead of putting angelic arms underneath us, God put His own life into us, that we might be strong with an inward strength instead of being strong by an outward support. And being thus strong, we can do something in saving others. Therefore, it is true, as Jeremy Taylor says, "When God would save man, He does it by way of man." Don't we hear the workers in ore talk about chemical affinity? If there is gold in the refining pot, and that gold is mingled with other elements—lead and iron and quartz—does not the refiner cast in quicksilver, because quicksilver has affinity with the gold and can lay hold of it and draw it out of its baser admixture? So God put a Christian man into the mass of debased and degraded beings, that by his humanity he may lay hold of their humanity and draw them out, and prepare them to be re-created and stamped with the image and superscription of God. This is the present method of the Divine working. God became man, that by a human affinity He might lay hold of man and lift him up. And now in this dispensation He is using Christian men, in whom God is incarnated by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to lay hold of fallen men and lift them up to Himself. Do we not see, then, that God must have the help of man in carrying on His work?

This principle is constantly exhibited in works of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Those works are all supplemented by human agency, as though to teach us that God would do nothing without man's co-operation. When Lazarus is to be raised from the dead, the command is, "Roll ye away the stone." When the man blind from birth was to be restored to sight, Jesus said, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." When they besought Him to heal the lunatic son, He said, "Bring him hither to me." Thus His very omnipotence must be pieced out, if we may say it, by weak man's assistance. His miracles, though let down from heaven, never quite touch the earth. Man's will, man's agency, man's co-operation, must come to form the connecting medium, like the rod which draws the electricity from the clouds. We can do nothing without God; God will do nothing without us in the redemption of the world. When a house was on fire in a great city, and two little children were seen standing at an upper window, pleading to be rescued, the spectators hurried for help. They brought the longest ladder obtainable, but when it was set up against the wall it was found to be five feet too short. A cry of disappointment ran through the crowd. Just then a tall and stalwart sailor stepped forward, and commanded, "Put the ladder on my shoulders." They did so, and the ladder reached, and the children were saved. It was just the length of a man that was needed to accomplish the rescue. And so it is throughout the entire system of grace and nature—the length of a man must supplement the provisions of God. "He that heareth my words," says Jesus, "and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life." This is the Gospel. "But how can they hear without a preacher?" asks Paul. The whole infinite distance between heaven and earth has been spanned by redemption, except where human co-operation is called for. Without a man the Gospel will never reach
the world for which it was meant. "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me," said the ascending Christ. "Go ye, therefore, and preach the gospel to every creature," He adds. "All power in heaven and earth, Lord? Then what more is required? Can our human weakness add a single increment to that power?" No; but God has not chosen to save humanity without the aid and intervention of human agents. The length of a man is needed that the power of Christ may rescue the lost: "Go ye, therefore, . . ."

"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." That, again, is the Gospel. And does the Son of man need our help, since He is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him"? "Unto the uttermost," indeed! But between Himself and that uttermost sinner must stand the missionary or the evangelist, pointing that sinner to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Oh, it is a wonderful fact, and as universal as it is wonderful! We can do nothing without God: God will do nothing without us. And the principle applies to personal salvation. God wants to save. He wants to so much that He has brought out all the resources of His omnipotence to accomplish it. Infinite love, infinite power, infinite sacrifice, infinite price, all have been freely bestowed to save. And yet hear God now saying pathetically, "How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of the nations?" As though He said, "I would save you; help me, ye helpless ones, help me to save you; help me by submitting to me; help me by receiving me." "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," says the Scripture. But except we receive Him, He cannot put us among His children.

This suggests persistence in witness-bearing on the part of the Christian. What is considered a fault in rhetoric is a virtue in testimony, namely, repetition. We have to say the same thing over and over again till it has fairly worn a hole in men's indifference. Our witness may not lead to immediate conversion. It may not gain a foothold at once. But we must continue, year after year, saying the same thing, "God so loved the world"; reiterating the same promise, "He that believeth shall be saved"; and sounding the same warning, "He that believeth not shall be condemned." We do not forget that this persistent holding forth of the Word tests strongly our humility. Scripture preaching is plain preaching. Scripture testimony is plain testimony. People do not naturally take to this more than they take to plain clothes. They like to show what they can do in the way of fringes and jewelry. They like to attract attention to the ornaments of rhetoric and poetry and illustration. A Gospel simplicity is as hard to maintain as domestic and social simplicity. But this is what is required of us—to "hold forth the word of life." "Lord, I should like to serve as a polished reflector," says one, "to radiate and intensify that light by my cultured intellect." "And I should be glad to act as a stained-glass window," says another, "to color and variegate that light by passing it through the brilliant medium of my imagination." "And I should like to magnify that light," says a third, "by letting it shine through the lenses of my philosophical reasoning." Here is a most subtle danger, to which we are all exposed, that in some way we use the Word of God for self-aggrandizement. But the real requisite is a very humbling
one. We are to hold a candle for the Lord, indifferent to
the radiance it may reflect into our faces.

*With all longsuffering and doctrine.*—2 TIMOTHY 4:2.

The crucial test of effectiveness in rebuke is that we
give it with all long-suffering. “Simon, put up thy sword
again into its place,” said the Lord to His disciple. There
has been a long succession of Petrine apostles, valiant
swordsmen of the faith, whose principal ministerial troph-
ies have been severed ears and not converted hearts,
who have preached with such two-edged severity as to
alienate their hearers when they should have won them.
The Lord has not called us to be theological gladiators to
win the applause of the crowd by cutting and slashing. We
are sent to save, not to destroy, to win not to wound. What
glory is it, therefore, if we have gained a reputation for
keenness in rebuke, for brilliance in pulpit repartee, for
pungency in hitting off the foibles of our brethren? This
is a short road to popularity. Let it be known that a min-
ister on a Sunday is to give a hot, spicy discourse on the
crookedness of deacons and the shallowness of Christians
in general, and a large attendance is assured. The popu-
laritv of some of our most noted pulpителиes has been due
largely to their ingenuity in this direction. They are the
Thomas Nasts of the ministry. They are brilliant caricatu-
rists of the foibles and faults of Christians. But it is our
vocation, rather, to set forth the beauties of Jesus Christ,
not to uncover the blemishes of human nature. In either
case, we shall unconsciously be assimilated to the image of
that on which we dwell. “I do not allow myself to look at
a bad picture,” said Sir Peter Lely, “for if I do my brush

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and not a headlight of universal knowledge. Let it shine on our pathway and we shall see each successive step in the way of life distinctly revealed—repentance, faith, justification, growth in grace, sanctification, and redemption. Take one step and the next will be plain before us. . . . Every duty done opens a door to wider knowledge and further service. I can proceed to an advanced attainment only through the portals of a prior attainment. The Christian life is like the locks of a canal. One has to close after it has been entered before the next opens up. Until one has believed on Christ and confessed, and so shut the gate of irresolution behind, one cannot know Him in any of the deeper revelations of His will. Christ's word is: "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of the Lord?" We reverse this and say: "Show me the glory of the Lord and I will believe."

Take note that the lamp of Scripture lights up the way of obedience and not of disobedience. It were well to get this fact distinctly fixed in our minds, that the province of God's Word is to show us what truth is rather than what error is, what life is rather than what death is, what salvation is rather than what damnation is. If we attempt to explore the realms of error or to draw up an elaborate philosophy of eternal ruin we are doing what God does not do. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life." The lamp of the Word throws its beams along this way to light it up for us. But over the whole adjacent territory of death and punishment it shuts down an awful cloud of mystery, on which it writes the words: "the blackness of darkness for ever and ever." If men attempt to disperse this mystery with their little theological candles they will do more harm than good. God has drawn out a most complete and perfect system of grace. Let us study the plan of salvation if we will, but let us not presume to construct any philosophy of damnation. With one glance at the fathomless depths of eternal woe, let us turn with a sigh and bend all our strength to the work of snatching souls as "brands from the burning." The danger is that we shall lose our balance if we look into the "deep and dazzling darkness" of perdition. Hear the prophet Habakkuk of the Almighty: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity." The gaze of Jehovah is fixed forever on the holy, the pure, the blessed. Let us fix our eyes there too, and press on.

But if the salt have lost its savor.—Matthew 5:13.

What is the test of a redeemed man? Whether he has savor or not, we take it. There may be other tests, but this is certainly one. Has he the right flavor? Does his conversation leave a good evangelical taste in the mouth after you have talked with him? Does he help to check the corruption that goes on around him, by his word or example, or is he himself tainted and deteriorated by it? The great question today is whether the salt shall stay the corruption or the corruption shall dissolve the salt, whether Christians shall sanctify society or society shall unsanctify Christians.

So Paul enjoins us in the Epistle to the Colossians in regard to our speech. For it is speech which reveals especially the flavor and quality of the man. It may sometimes feign sanctity, to be sure, and may seek to make itself redolent with a borrowed grace, as the tippler disguises his breath with spices and perfumes; but the illusion cannot be long maintained. "Thy speech betrayeth thee" is of universal application. One cannot live sinfully and talk holily, live
impurely and talk cleanly, live selfishly and talk generously. “Show me your tongue” is the first demand of the doctor of the patient. And the truest diagnosis of the soul starts at the same point—examining the tongue, to see what kind of deposit and coloring the thoughts and desires have left there.

“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt,” is the Scriptural demand. Mark the words well. We are not told that our speech should be all salt. We may in spiritual things disgust and repel by too raw and excessive and unmixed use of religious phraseology. It is a great art to temper one’s words as a Christian to the occasion. “The gracious words” that proceeded out of Jesus’ mouth were as wonderful in their adaptation to time and circumstances as they were powerful in their relation to absolute and eternal truth. Modulated from the most awful vehemence of rebuke to the delicate silence that wrote on the ground, they furnish the supreme model for those who would be masters of fitting speech. “Seasoned with salt”—the evenly mingled and thoroughly transfused grace of the Gospel, that flavor of godliness in our conversation that at once preserves it from the corruption of “foolish talking and jesting which is not convenient,” and from the vice of sanctimoniousness and cant which are unpalatable even to Christians—this is what the believer should, with the greatest carefulness strive after. But our chief concern should be that the flavor of godliness should never be absent from our conversation, that it should so permeate and sanctify our speech, that, saying much or saying little, it should indicate that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him.

And here is an admirable caution, “Have salt in yourselves.” In the country we see the farmer salting his sheep. He goes out with his wooden measure, and, shaking it in front of them, calls them to him. In feeding the flock of God over which we have been set, we have something more to do than hold forth the Word and communicate its savor in preaching. Example, after all, is the loudest preaching. We may have salt in our creed, and salt in our sermons, and salt in our conversation, and salt in our prayers, but if we do not have it in ourselves it is missing where it most ought to be. There is a kind of unconscious grace in a good man that impregnates the very air in which he moves and makes it healthful. Whether he speaks or is silent, those who company with him are blessed, because he makes manifest the savor of Christ in every place. There is such authority in a godly example—it is so dogmatic in its assertion of the truth of the Gospel, and so persuasive withal! An example does not admit of many interpretations, like a creed; it cannot be evaded like a sermon; it cannot be gainsaid like an argument. It is, as Pliny said, “the softest and least invidious way of commanding.” If the Gospel gets filtered through us, if it so impregnates our affections and conduct that men may scent it before we open our mouths, it has done a great work for us, and endowed us with its highest blessing.

_She shall be saved in child-bearing._—1 Timothy 2:15.

Ask social scientists about the perils that threaten our republic, and they will mention, among other things, the increase in population of foreign races. These multiply rapidly, while Americans, as they grow rich and aristocratic, evade the responsibilities of child-bearing, and so put the original stock at a disadvantage. I mention this only that I may dwell upon an analogous spiritual fact. “As soon as Zion travailed she brought forth children.” It is the law of
God that renewed souls should come forth through the birth-pangs of prayer and faith in the church of Christ. But the tendency is for the church, as soon as it becomes wealthy and at ease, to shirk the obligations of child-bearing, preferring the luxuries of worship, the music, oratory and architecture of an elegant sanctuary, to the bringing forth and nursing of converts. Fashionable religion frowns on prayer-meeting exhortations as sanctified baby talk, and on simple Gospel preaching as weak pulpit milk, and on the lifting of the hand and the rising for prayer as nursery exercises which cultivated Christians have quite outgrown. But the church that knows its calling as the mother and nurse of souls will use all these means, because God has enjoined “milk for babes” and the rudiments of faith for children. All honor to the church that accepts the function of child-bearing and nursing; but no honor to the church that prefers barrenness to maternity in order that she may be at ease in Zion. May God save us from this temptation which culture and social position are constantly forcing upon us. It is a certain precursor of doctrinal unsoundness as well as spiritual blight. As said Dr. Duff, “The church which ceases to be evangelistic will soon cease to be evangelical.” I can look out on scores of churches in my own city, planted in orthodoxy but now fallen from the faith, and their history verifies this maxim. Their doctrinal looseness began with spiritual laziness; it was when they ceased to bring forth children that they began to bring forth heresies.

Our safety is in our fruitfulness. Worldliness and self-indulgence will come in through our increased wealth; but I take the words of the revised Scripture as used by Paul concerning our first mother, and apply them to the church, which is the mother of us all: “Notwithstanding, she shall be saved through the child-bearing.”

Workers with God

Revive thy work in the midst of the years.—Habakkuk 3:2.

What is a revival? It is the quickening and re-enforcement of that which already is. “Revive thy work,” strengthen the things that are; accelerate that which is moving but moving too slowly. “There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God, the Holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.” The river is always there, but the stream sometimes runs low in its bed; the rocks are uncovered, the sand-bars are laid bare. It is still there, but it needs reviving by showers and quickening by gentle rainfalls. So the Spirit of life which flows from the throne of God clear as crystal is in the church, but its influences may be running low just now. Rocks of evil which the waters covered up are visible; sand-bars of worldliness and snags of unbelief and indifference are showing themselves. We need a freshet. Some may say that a freshet always does harm by lodging heaps of driftwood on the banks. To be sure. But it also sweeps many logs into the stream that had been stranded midway before. The undecided, the half-persuaded, the halting, the hesitant—these are often caught up by the current of gracious influences and borne into the church and established there. Many who became steadfast Christians and enduring saints were brought into the church by a revival.

“Be watchful,” says the risen Lord, “and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die.” You who have been begotten of the Spirit of God, if the life forces have slackened within you, give yourself to prayer, to confession, to humiliation, that so you may know the zeal of the Lord. “O Lord, revive thy work.” And what is the work of the Lord in us? Repentance. “Bring forth therefore works meet for repentance.” Faith: “This is the work of God, that ye
should believe on him whom he hath sent.” Obedience: “If ye love me keep my commandments.” “Take with you words and return unto the Lord.” God’s Word is the best for conviction. It is the “sword of the Spirit,” which can reach the deep-seated sins of our hearts. When President Garfield was shot it was long hoped that the bullet which had entered his body might become encysted. That means encased and overlaid with hardened membrane so that the wound about it would heal up and cause no further discomfort. An encysted bullet is one that has made a secure home for itself in the body. Sin often becomes encysted by a slow but sure process so that it no longer irritates. The sword of the Spirit is needed to puncture the conscience and lay bare the sin. “Take you words and return unto the Lord,” as David did when he cried “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight.” That is the way a revival began in David’s heart. It is the way a revival began in the days of Ezra. It is the way it must begin in our day.

_Incline my heart unto thy testimonies._—Psalm 119:36.

I saw a sign painter take a dish full of gold dust and pour it over the board on which he was working; but when he turned his board over nearly all seemed to slide off. Yet not all. The lines where his brush had been drawn a few moments before with the adhesive preparation—these caught the glittering particles and held them firm. So, I thought, must the teachers of God now do. Pour the golden sand of the Gospel over the whole congregation, and if it seems to get no hold on their hearts, let us know that many who have been touched with the preparing grace of the Holy Spirit will catch and hold fast the Word of life. So the Word will not return to God void.

"Prove me." Two and two make four—that is arithmetic. Hydrogen and oxygen in certain proportions make water—that is science. Faith and Christ crucified bring salvation—that is the Gospel. But how do you know? Put two and two together and you have four—count and see. Put hydrogen and oxygen together in certain proportions and you have water—taste and prove. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved—believe and you shall know. The last is as clear a demonstration as the others.

_If I go away I will send the Comforter unto you._—John 16:7.

Where is the Holy Spirit? Jesus said: “If I go away I will send the Spirit unto you.” He Himself goes; the Spirit comes. He is there; the Spirit is here. He went to take His seat on the right hand of God; the Spirit came as the disciples were together at Pentecost and sat upon each one of them. The Spirit is really present in every little church composed of those whose hearts are cleansed and given up to His indwelling. Stephen could look up to heaven and say: “I see Jesus in the midst of the throne of God.” So the angels looking down can say: “We see the Holy Spirit in the midst of the Church of God.” . . . When Jesus was here as our great Teacher, God stood apart, so to speak, and commanded His disciples to listen to Jesus. “This is my beloved Son. Hear ye him,” He said from heaven. But now that Jesus is ascended to the Father He speaks out of heaven seven times to the seven churches and says: “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith.” Just as the Father commended Him, so he commends the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is now our teacher, and Jesus will not interfere with His office. Remember the Spirit is not there but here. Slight Him not. If it is an offense to forget an absent friend, how much more to forget one right at hand.
All through the Acts of the Apostles, when anything signal or mighty is done the record is prefaced with the words, "being filled with the Spirit." When a person is thus filled we may expect power to flow from him inevitably. So it was of our Lord. The incidental miracles which He wrought, if so we may call them, are especially remarkable. While He was on His way to do one mighty work, another occurred, almost as if unintentionally. When He was going to raise the daughter of Jairus an afflicted woman touched the hem of His garment and was healed. A mere contact will unload an electric jar that is filled. So the believer who is filled with the Spirit will do the work of the Master without forethought and without intention. "I was riding," writes one, "between Boston and a western city, and noticed two tracks, side by side, one covered with verdure and the other sandy and bare. I was perplexed by the contrast, till it was explained to me that the green track was the one on which cargoes of grain were shipped from the west to the seaboard, and inevitably some of it was shaken to the ground and took root and grew. The other track was traversed only by the 'empties.'" It is a parable of two classes of Christians. Some are unfruitful because they have not made way for the Spirit to fill them. Others are so filled with the Spirit that everywhere they go they make even the wilderness blossom as the rose. I know Christians who are constantly doing good without being aware of it. If we were entirely the Lord's perhaps the greater part of the good we do would be of that sort. Service would overflow from us. Shall we not covet this abounding in the Lord?

The Holy Spirit is always in the church if only we come together and get kindled by its warmth. It is not that we need more fire but more fuel. The Holy Spirit is the fire of God. Our penitence, our faith, our love—these are the fuel.

If these are present the Spirit of God has something to take hold of. If not, one might as well try to kindle a fire in a vacuum. We pray that the Spirit may come down. He has come down. He pray now in us and for us that we will yield to His pressure, that we will open to His indwelling, that we will obey His guidance.

*If thou hadst known, even thou, at least the things that belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.*—Luke 19:42.

We are wont to say that man's extremity is God's opportunity. What if we invert the maxim, and say reverently that God's extremity is man's opportunity? And such is the day in which we are living. God's affairs have reached a crisis, and the consummation of the ages is upon us. Has not speed quickened a hundred fold in our century? Let the telegraph and the lightning express answer. And think you that God does not keep up with men? That He alone is willing to move slowly while all the world is making haste? I profess to know something of what is going on in the religious world, and I venture to say that there was never a time since the Christian era dawned when the chariot of the Lord moved with such speed as now. It moves rapidly because it is getting near the end of its course. Well has a wise man said: "Opportunity is but another name for the nineteenth century."

"And about the eleventh hour," that is, near sunset, says Jesus, the husbandman "went out and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right ye shall receive." Who were these eleventh-hour work-
men? We are accustomed to think of them as idlers, who were so slow in getting around that they reached the vineyard only at the last moment. But this is not said. “No man has hired us” is their story. But now at sundown they are set to work. What a picture of the eventide of the time in which we are living. The Lord is hiring those who before have not been set to work—laymen and laywomen, mechanics and plowmen, converted drunkards and pugilists, Salvation Army lads and lasses, unlettered gospellers, and plain Bible readers. We do hear them speak in their own tongue the wonderful Gospel of the Son of God. The church has been slow to employ such, but in the hurry of the final ingathering, the Lord has set them to work. It is because the crisis of the battle is coming on that God is calling out the recruits.

So my word to you is that of Scripture: “Brethren, the time is short.” Therefore, responsibility presses a hundred pounds to the square inch, where formerly it pressed one. The heart must beat faster for Christ today than ever before; the blood must bound quicker. It is now heart throbs for a perishing world, or it is spiritual apoplexy. The veins and arteries of the church cannot stand the pressure of the stagnant blood of religious inertia much longer. She must do or die. I speak the truth and lie not. Ecclesiastical corpses lie all about us. The caskets in which they repose are lined with satin; they are decorated with solid silver handles and abundant flowers; and, like other caskets, they are just large enough for their occupants, with no room for strangers. These churches have died of respectability and been embalmed in self-complacency. If by the grace of God, our church is alive, be warned to use your opportunity, or the feet of them that buried thy sisters will be at the door, and will carry thee out. “If thou hadst known.” Do you know your opportunity, my brother? Oh, if you would only open your eyes to see what your Lord sees! You would crowd about Him, asking, “Lord, what will thou have me to do?” For myself, my daily cry to heaven is, “O Lord, give what thou wilt, or withhold what thou wilt; but do not suffer me to be blind to my ‘day,’ and so people my grave with the haunting specters of forfeited opportunity.”