

instead of lasting eight years had lasted thirty, there would have been mighty few left of Christians in the empire. It was God's plan that nominal Christianity should be spread so wisely that people everywhere would have a chance to hear the gospel. That certainly was his plan and it is the most amazing thing how you will find when you preach in a church, that some of the people who seem the least hopeful to you turn out to be the most serious and sincere in the end. Then some of the people who are the very voluble in their great loyalty to what you stand for, in persecution of some kind comes, even if they have a chance of a little rise in salary by covering up their testimony a bit, how ready you find they are to do it. Only God knows the heart. If Constantine had not supported the Christian church, under the circumstances, humanly speaking, there is no question that somebody else would. The Christian church was growing in the Roman empire, becoming a force that people had to reckon with, and certainly the leadership of the empire would have become Christian. It is doubtless a very good thing for the Christian church that that did not happen 50 years after the death of Christ, that it didn't happen for two or three centuries. But it was bound to happen sometime unless Christianity was to remain something that only would reach maybe one person in 50 and the rest would never hear of it. Constantine certainly - his activity in the church resulted in the church having the opportunity to preach the gospel in a wide fashion throughout the empire. It resulted in many heathen coming to the church because they thought they could get advancement and that of course was bad but it resulted in their families hearing the gospel, and doubtless many of them being saved. So it is what happened in the providence of God and I think we cannot but say that there were good results and there were bad results but the bad results were results which would inevitably have come. While it seems to me that Constantine deserves a great deal of credit for the fact that during the next century and a half before the barbarians swept over the empire and put an end to culture within it, there was opportunity for all the people of the empire to hear the gospel and great numbers to be saved, and for a foundation to be laid which would open up and blossom up again when the time of the reformation came.