

# AN ALL-ROUND MINISTRY

by C.H. Spurgeon

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*Spurgeon's addresses to pastors and students on the nature of effective Christian ministry, emphasizing that faith in God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the indispensable foundation. He calls ministers to a well-rounded approach that combines doctrinal fidelity, pastoral care, and evangelistic zeal.*

13 Chapters

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### Prefatory Note

THE publication of the present volume carries out a purpose which was in the mind of MR. SPURGEON many years ago. It was his intention to issue, in this form, a selection from his Presidential Addresses at the Annual Conferences of the Pastors' College. The first Address here given was delivered in the year 1872, and the last in 1890, so that the series embraces many of the most memorable utterances to the members of the old College Association as well as three of the "Inaugurals" at the meetings of the new Evangelical Association. "C. H. Spurgeon's Final Manifesto," The Greatest Fight in the World, is not included in this volume, as it is published separately. (Price 6d., and 1s.)

Though there is here the special, personal appeal to his own men, the subjects dealt with concern the whole Christian ministry at home and abroad, using the term "ministry" in its widest sense as applying to all servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. The clergy and ministers of all denominations, home and foreign missionaries, open-air preachers, Sunday-school and Bible-class teachers, tract-distributors, and Christians of all ranks will here find much that will help them to exercise that "all-round ministry" of which MR. SPURGEON himself was so earnest an advocate and so bright an example.

## Faith

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### Chapter 1

#### Faith

NOW that the time has come for me to address you, my beloved brethren, may God Himself speak through me to you!

Now, to us the covenant belongs, for it has been decided—and the apostle has declared the decision in the name of God,—that "to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. . . . And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Galatians 3:16; Galatians 3:29. We are altogether saved by faith. The brightest day that ever dawned upon us was the day in which we first "looked unto Him, and were lightened." It was all dark till faith beheld the Sun of Righteousness. The dawn of faith was to us the morning of life; by faith only we began to live. We have since then walked by faith. Whenever we have been tempted to step aside from the path of faith, we have been like the foolish Galatians, and we have smarted for our folly. I trust we have not "suffered so many things in vain."—Galatians 3:4. We began in the Spirit, and if we have sought to be made perfect in the flesh, we have soon discovered ourselves to be sailing upon the wrong tack, and nearing sunken rocks. "The just shall live by faith," is a truth which has worked itself out in our experience, for often and often have we felt that, in any other course, death stares us in the face; and, therefore, "we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."—Galatians 5:5.

The object of our preaching, as well as its doctrine, is faith; for we reckon that we have done nothing for sinners until, by the power of the Holy Ghost, we bring them to faith; and we only reckon that our preaching is useful to saints as we see them increase in faith. As faith is in our hand the power with which we sow, and as the seed we sow is received by us by faith, and steeped in faith, so the harvest for which we look is to see faith springing up in the furrows of men's hearts to the praise and glory of God.

Our work especially requires faith. If we fail in faith, we had better not have undertaken it; and unless we obtain faith commensurate with the service, we shall soon grow weary of it. It is proven by all observation that success in the Lord's service is very generally in proportion to faith. It certainly is not in proportion to ability, nor does it always run parallel with a display of zeal; but it is invariably according to the measure of faith, for this is a law of the Kingdom without exception, "According to your faith be it unto you." It is essential, then, that we should have faith if we are to be useful, and that we should have great faith if we are to be greatly useful. For many other reasons besides usefulness,—namely, even for our being able to hold our own against the enemies of the truth, and for ability to stand against the temptations which surround our office,—it is imperative upon us that we should have abundant confidence in the living God. We, above all men, need the mountain-moving faith, by which, in the old time, men of God "subdued kingdoms,

wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

I. I mean first to speak, concerning faith, under the head of this question,—WHEREIN AND UPON WHAT MATTERS HAVE WE, AS MINISTERS, FAITH, OR GREAT NEED OF IT?

We believe in a God of purposes and plans, who has not left a blind fate to tyrannize over the world, much less an aimless chance to rock it to and fro. We are not fatalists, neither are we doubters of providence and predestination. We are believers in a God "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." We do not conceive of the Lord as having gone away from the world, and left it and the inhabitants thereof to themselves; we believe in Him as continually presiding in all the affairs of life. We, by faith, perceive the hand of the Lord giving to every blade of grass its own drop of dew, and to every young raven its meat. We see the present power of God in the flight of every sparrow, and hear His goodness in the song of every lark. We believe that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" and we go forth into it, not as into the domains of Satan where light comes not, nor into a chaos where rule is unknown, nor into a boiling sea where fate's resistless billows shipwreck mortals at their will; but we walk boldly on, having God within us and around us, living and moving and having our being in Him, and so, by faith, we dwell in a temple of providence and grace wherein everything doth speak of His glory. We believe in a present God wherever we may be, and a working and operating God accomplishing His own purposes steadfastly and surely in all matters, places, and times; working out His designs as much in what seemeth evil as in that which is manifestly good; in all things driving on in His eternal chariot towards the goal which infinite wisdom has chosen, never slackening His pace nor drawing the rein, but for ever, according to the eternal strength that is in Him, speeding forward without pause. We believe in this God as being faithful to everything that He has spoken, a God who can neither lie nor change. The God of Abraham is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and He is our God this day. We do not believe in the ever-shifting views of the Divine Being which differing philosophies are adopting; the God of the Hebrews is our God,—Jehovah, Jah, the Mighty One, the covenant-keeping God,—"this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death."

Next to this, our faith most earnestly and intensely fixes itself upon the Christ of God. We trust in Jesus; we believe all that inspired history says concerning Him; not making a myth of Him, or His life, but taking it as a matter of fact that God dwelt in very deed among men in human flesh, and that an atonement was really and truly offered by the Incarnate God upon the cross of Calvary. Yet, to us, the Lord Jesus Christ is not alone a Savior of the past. We believe that "He ascended up on high," and "led captivity captive," and that "He ever liveth to make intercession for them that come unto God by Him." I saw, in the cathedral at Turin, a very remarkable sight, namely, the pretended graveclothes of the Lord Jesus Christ, which are devoutly worshipped by crowds of Romanists. I could not help observing, as I gazed upon these relics, that the ensigns of the death of Christ were all of Him that the Romish Church possessed. They may well show the true cross, for they crucify Him afresh; they may well pray in His sepulchre, for He is not there, or in their Church; and they may well claim His graveclothes, for they know only a dead Christ. But, beloved brethren, our Christ is not dead, neither has He fallen asleep; He still walks among the golden candlesticks, and holds the stars in His right hand.

We have an equal confidence, beloved brethren, in the Holy Spirit. We unfeignedly believe in His Deity and personality. We speak of His influences, because He has influences, but we do not forget that He is a Person from whom those influences stream; we believe in His offices, for He has offices, but we rejoice in the Person who fills them, and makes them effectual for our good. Devoutly would each one of us say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." Yet, my brethren, do you believe in the Holy Ghost? "Yes," you say unanimously, spontaneously, and emphatically. "Yes," say I also; but be not grieved if I ask you yet again if you verily and indeed believe in Him; for there is a believing and a believing. There is a believing which I have concerning a man, for which I may have but slender grounds, and upon which I would not risk a single penny of my substance; but it is another form of believing in a man when I feel that I could trust my very life with him, being assured that he would be true to me, and prove both an able and a willing helper. Have we such a reliance upon the Holy Ghost? Do we believe that, at this moment, He can clothe us with power, even as He did the apostles at Pentecost? Do we believe that, under our preaching, by His energy a thousand might be born in a day? If we all so believe, we are happy to be in such an assembly, for the majority of Christians, if under one sermon even a dozen persons were to cry out, "What must we do to be saved?" would exclaim exactly as the unbelieving Jews did, "These men are full of new wine." They would condemn the whole transaction as the result of dangerous excitement; they would never imagine it to be of the Lord. For this reason, I mournfully conclude that there is not, in the Church, such a belief in the Holy Ghost as there ought to be; and yet, as certainly as we hear the voice which saith, "Power belongeth unto God;" as surely as we hear the Divine voice of the Son, saying, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me;" so truly does the third Person of the blessed Trinity claim our loving confidence, and woe be unto us if we vex Him by our unbelief! When we have a full faith in the Triune God, then shall we be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

But, in these days, the self-styled "men of progress", who commenced with preaching the gospel, degenerate as they advance, and their divinity, like the snail, melts as it proceeds. I hope it will never be so with any of us. I have likened the career of certain divines to the journey of a Roman wine-cask from the vineyard to the city. It starts from the wine-press as the pure juice of the grape; but, at the first halting-place, the drivers of the cart must needs quench their thirst; and when they come to a fountain, they substitute water for the wine which they have drunk. In the next village, there are numbers of lovers of wine who beg or buy a little, and the discreet carrier dilutes it again. The watering is again and again repeated, till, on its entrance into Rome, the fluid is remarkably different from that which originally started from the vineyard. There is a way of "doctoring" the gospel in much the same manner. A little truth is given up, and then a little more, and men fill up the vacuum with opinions, inferences, speculations, and dreams, till their wine is mixed with water, and the water none of the best. Many preachers—and I speak it with sorrow,—have built a tower of theological speculations, upon which they sit, like Nero, fiddling the tune of their own philosophy while the world is burning with sin and misery. They are playing with the toys of speculation while men's souls are being lost.

Brethren, our faith also, resting upon the doctrines of the gospel and upon the God of the gospel, embraces the power of prayer. We believe in the prevalence of supplication. I am afraid that this belief is going out of fashion in the so-called Christian world. The theory of some is, that prayer is useful to ourselves, but that it cannot be operative upon God; and much is said about the

impossibility of the Divine purposes being changed, and the utter unlikelihood of a finite being affecting God by his cries. We also hold that the purposes of God are not changed; but what if prayer be a part of His purpose, and what if He ordains that His people should pray when He intends to give them blessings? Prayer is one of the necessary wheels of the machinery of providence. The offering of prayer is as operative in the affairs of the world, and the production of events, as the rise of dynasties or the fall of nations. We believe that God in very truth hearkens to the voices of men.

Brethren, we ought not always to profess our ability to prove Scriptural truths to ungodly men, for many of those truths lie outside the region of their understanding. I should not try to prove to a blind man that the grass is green and the sky is blue, because he can have no idea of the proposition which I am proving. Argument in such a case is folly on both sides. To us, at any rate, prayer is no vain thing. We go to our chambers alone, believing that we are transacting high and real business when we pray. We do not bow the knee merely because it is a duty, and a commendable spiritual exercise; but because we believe that, into the ear of the eternal God, we speak our wants, and that His ear is linked with a heart feeling for us, and a hand working on our behalf. To us, true prayer is true power.

Now, having detailed the great points of our faith, let me say, brethren, we believe, hence, on account of all this, that, notwithstanding the slenderness of our stores, the Great Shepherd of the sheep will grant us an all-sufficiency with which to feed His people. Believing in God All-sufficient, we expect to see our loaves and fishes multiplied; consequently, we do not lay by in store, but deal out at this present all that we have. I saw in Rome a fountain, which represented a man holding a barrel, out of which a copious stream of water was perpetually running. There never was much at any one time in that marble barrel, and yet it has continued to yield a stream for four or five hundred years. So let us pour forth from our very soul all that the Lord imparts to us. For twenty years and more, I have told out all I know, and have run dry every time, and yet my heart still bubbles up with a good matter. I know some brethren in the ministry who are comparable to the great tun of Heidelberg for capacity, and yet the people do not receive so much gospel truth from them as from preachers of very inferior capacity who have formed the habit of giving out all they have. We believe that the Spirit of God will be in us a well of water springing up unto everlasting life, and we act according to that conviction. We do not expect to have much goods laid up for many years; but, as we live by daily bread, so upon continually new supplies do we feed our people. Away with the musty, worm-breeding stores of old manna, and let us look up day by day for a fresh supply!

Faith leads us to believe in difficulties being overruled to promote success. Because we believe in God, and in His Holy Spirit, we believe that difficulties will be greatly sanctified to us, and that they are only placed before us as stepping-stones to grander results. We believe in defeats, my brethren; we believe in going back with the banner trailed in the mire, persuaded that this may be the surest way to lasting triumph. We believe in waiting, weeping, and agonizing; we believe in a non-success which prepares us for doing greater and higher work, for which we should not have been fitted unless anguish had sharpened our soul. We believe in our infirmities, and even glory in them; we thank God that we are not so eloquent as we could wish to be, and have not all the abilities we might desire, because now we know that "the excellency of the power" shall "be of God, and not of us." Faith enables us so to rejoice in the Lord that our infirmities become platforms

for the display of His grace. Brethren, we believe that even our enemies shall, in God's hands, subserve our highest interests; they are yoked to the car of God. Perhaps, of all the powers which effect the Divine purposes in the world, no one does more than the devil himself. He is but a scullion in the Eternal's kitchen; he unwillingly performs much work to which the Lord would not put His own children, work which is just as needful as that which seraphim perform. Believe not that evil is a rival power of equal potency with the good God. No, sin and death are, like the Gibeonites, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Divine purposes; and, though they know it not, when the Lord's enemies rave and rage most, they fulfil His eternal purposes to the praise of the glory of His wisdom and grace.

If our gospel be true, it will yet come to the front, and God will work for us; therefore are we "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." If we do not see souls saved today or tomorrow, we will still work on. Ours is not the unrequited toil of Sisyphus rolling uphill a stone which will rebound upon us, nor that of the daughters of Danaus who sought to fill a bottomless vessel. Our work may no more quickly appear than the islands which the coral insects are building below the blue waves of the Southern sea; but the reef is rising, far down the foundation of the massive structure is laid, and its walls are climbing to the surface. We are laboring for eternity, and we count not our work by each day's advance, as men measure theirs; it is God's work, and must be measured by His standard. Be ye well assured that, when time, and things created, and all that oppose themselves to the Lord's truth, shall be gone, every earnest sermon preached, and every importunate prayer offered, and every form of Christian service honestly rendered, shall remain embedded in the mighty structure which God from all eternity has resolved to raise to His own honor.

It works in us, first, a glorious independence of man. We are glad of earnest helpers, but we can do without them. We are grateful for our good deacons, but we dare not make flesh our arm. We are very glad if God raises up brethren in other churches who will fraternize with us, but we do not lean upon them. The man who believes in God, and believes in Christ, and believes in the Holy Ghost, will stay himself upon the Lord alone. He does not wish to be solitary, or to be singular, yet can he by himself contend for his Master; and when he has most human helps, he sedulously endeavors still to wait only upon God. If you lean upon your helpers when you have them, it may be that you will realize the terrible meaning of that ancient word, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." As the apostle saith, "It remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;" so may we say that it remaineth, that we who have zealous helpers be as though we had none, and to let our confidence in God be as simple, and our own selves be as free of all carnal confidence, as if we stood like Athanasius against the world, and had no one to speak a good word for us, or to bear a portion of our burden. God alone suffices to bear up yon unpillared firmament. He alone balances the clouds, and upbears them in the heavens. He kindles the lamps of night, and gives the sun his flames of fire. God alone is sufficient for us, and in His might we shall achieve the purpose of our being.

True faith in God will also make us abundant in good works. The eleventh of Hebrews is a chapter dedicated to the glorification of faith; but if I assert that it records the good works of the saints, can anybody contradict me? Is it not as much a record of works as of faith? Ay, verily, because where there is much faith, there shall surely ere long be abundant good works. I have no notion of that faith which does not produce good works, especially in the preacher. I question whether, as

channels for damnation, Satan has upon earth more apt instruments for breeding infidelity, and for causing men to regard the gospel with contempt, than those who profess to believe it, and then act as though the belief were a matter of no consequence whatsoever.

But our faith makes us abundant in good works. May I say to you, if you are doing all you possibly can for Christ, endeavor to do yet more? I believe a Christian man is generally right when he is doing more than he can; and when he goes still further beyond that point, he will be even more nearly right. There are scarcely any bounds to the possibilities of our service. Many a man, who now is doing little, might, with the same exertion, do twice as much by wise arrangement and courageous enterprise. For instance, in our country towns, a sermon delivered on the village green would, in all probability, be worth twenty sermons preached in the chapel; and, in London, a sermon delivered to a crowd in a public hall or theatre may accomplish ten times as much good as if it had fallen on the accustomed ears of our regular auditors. We need, like the apostles, to launch out into the deep, or our nets will never enclose a great multitude of fishes. If we had but the pluck to come out of our hiding-places, and face the foe, we should soon achieve immense success. We need far more faith in the Holy Ghost. He will bless us if we cast ourselves entirely upon Him.

Well, brethren, to sum up a great many things in one, faith is to us a great enlargement of our souls. Men who are morbidly anxious to possess a self-consistent creed,—a creed which they can put together, and form into a square, like a Chinese puzzle,—are very apt to narrow their souls. Fancying that all truth can be comprehended in half-a-dozen formulae, they reject as worthless every doctrinal statement which cannot be so comprehended. Those who will only believe what they can reconcile will necessarily disbelieve much of Divine revelation; they are, without knowing it, following the lead of the Rationalists. Those who receive by faith anything which they find in the Bible will receive two things, twenty things, ay, or twenty thousand things, though they cannot construct a theory which harmonizes them all. That process of theory-making is an expensive folly, the invention of middle terms is a waste of ingenuity; it were far better to believe the truths, and leave the Lord to show their consistency.

Faith is also our refreshment. Our faith in God relieves us of our weariness. Even natural fatigue is sometimes overcome by faith. Certainly, faintness of spirit needs no better restorative than reliance upon God. Close to the Colosseum there stands the ruin of an ancient fountain and bath called the Meta Sudans. Here came the gladiators who escaped with life from the struggles of the amphitheatre; covered with blood, and begrimed with sweat and dust from the arena, they plunged into the bath, and felt delicious refreshment. Faith in God is just such a laver to our hearts.

First, it claims to be well-founded. I put it to you, brethren, in very simple words. Is the living God worth trusting? Does Omnipotence deserve that you should lean upon it? Does Omniscience warrant you in believing it? Does Immutability justify you in depending upon it? Why, if I were to bring here the best man of woman born whose name should be to you the synonym for virtue, and if I were to advise that you should trust him with your lives, I must speak with bated breath, for who shall trust in man? Ay, and if there stood here Gabriel, the angelic messenger of God, and he should tell us that he would zealously defend us, I might hesitate ere I said to you, "O sons of men, rest in angelic strength, and rely on seraphic zeal!" But when I speak of the Father, the Incarnate Son, the ever-blessed Spirit, who shall venture to hint a limit to our trust in God? What logician

shall accuse us of folly in confiding in the Divine Trinity?

I never feel, when I meet with intellectual men, who look down upon me as a mere preacher of platitudes, that they have any right to do so. To them I give place by subjection, no, not for an hour. I have rather to check a propensity to look down on them than to subdue any feeling of inferiority. To us, the truths of the gospel are absolute certainties for which we do not crave tolerance, but to which we demand submission. If any shall brand us with epithets, such as "bigot", "vulgar dogmatist", or "mere echo of departed Puritanism," (and all these have been used,) we will only reply, "You may apply to us what opprobrious titles you please, but we know that, if we were to express the truth about you, there is no adjective of contempt which you do not deserve; and, therefore, because we know of no language sufficiently strong to set forth our abhorrence of your false doctrine, we will let you pass in silence."

Though we may be confounded in argument, we cannot be confounded in experience, or driven from that which we have tasted and handled of the good Word of God. Neither are we confounded in our faith. We know that our faith is well-founded, and, therefore, we hear it say, "Do not treat me as if I were a dream. Do not deliver your message with bated breath. Tell it out boldly, for he who contradicts it is a liar!" If it be of God, it must be true. We are not adherents of an infallible church which founds its faith on its own authority, or of an infallible Pope who fancies himself to be the image of truth; if such were our boast, the world might well laugh us down; but, having learned God's truth by Divine revelation, we defy the 'world's sneer, and we do not even say, "By your leave, gentlemen." No, but with or without your leave, we will speak what God has revealed to us.

And so faith says, in the third place, "Give me a wider range. Trust your God far more." We have only waded ankle-deep in faith as yet. We thought the water very cold and chill when we timorously ventured in; but having tried it up to the ankles, we have found it good and pleasant. Let us advance until we are breast-deep, yea, and deeper. Blessed is that man who gets his feet off the bottom, and swims in the stream where he has no hope but his God, and no confidence and no helper but the Invisible One who sustaineth all things. Faith cries, "Trust me, my son, to make you preach better. Have more enterprise. Be more daring. Do not fight your own battle in the church-meeting, leave it to your God; trust all with Him. Do not be afraid to go and speak to that foul-mouthed man; I will give you the right word to say to him. Trust me, and go with prudence but with zeal into the darkest haunts of vice. Find out the worst of men, and seek their salvation. There is nothing you cannot do if you will but trust in God." Brother, your failure, if you fail, will begin in your faith. The air says to the eagle, "Trust me; spread thy broad wings; I will bear thee up to the sun. Only trust me. Take thy foot from off yon rock which thou canst feel beneath thee. Get away from it, and be buoyed up by the unseen element." My brethren, eaglets of Heaven, mount aloft, for God invites you. Mount! You have but to trust Him. An unknown glory rests upon Him, and the radiance thereof shall come upon you if you only know how to trust Him.

I pray the Lord to endow this College with faith. May we be both established and endowed,—established on a rock, and endowed with the blessings of the covenant of grace! Remember, brethren, that you and I are committed to faith now; it is too late for us to retire. We are in the condition of Bunyan's pilgrim; we must go forward. There are many perils before us, the Valley of the Shadow of Death lies on ahead; arrows will fly very thickly around us as we traverse its, shades. 'Tis hard going on, but we cannot retrace our steps, for we have no armor for our

backs. Suppose we should take to reasoning, suppose we should give up the fundamentals of our faith, what would remain to us? For my part, I should have nothing beneath the sun to do but to take the rope of Judas, and to end a miserable life, for only my faith makes it worth my while to live. If faith were gone, I would entreat permission to expire; to be extinct, were better than to live if these things be but a delusion after all. It must be onward with us, for in the case of brethren of this College, the most unsafe thing for us is to think of turning back. One or two of our former comrades have gone aside from us; I cannot judge their hearts, but I fear they have also gone aside from God. I will not say more of them than this,—they are the last men you would envy if you knew their whole history. If any men bear upon them, even in this life, the evident mark of God's disapprobation, it must be those who have known the truth, and defended it, and yet, for lucre's sake, or ambition's sake, have turned aside from it. If it were fitting, I could write narratives of apostate experiences which would harrow up your feelings, and they would relate to men into whose faces I have looked as I now look into yours, and who were familiar with me, but with whose names, once well-beloved, I am ashamed now to be associated. God have mercy upon them! It is all that I could say if I had to write their epitaphs, "God have mercy upon them!"

■PRIVATE "TYPE=PICT;ALT= "Well, brethren, you and I are committed to the onward course, we cannot go back; neither can we turn to the right hand or to the left. What shall we do, then? Shall we lie down, and fret? Shall we stand still, and be dismayed? No! In the Name of the Lord, let us again set up our banner, the royal standard of Jesus the Crucified. Let us sound the trumpets joyously, and let us march on, not with the trembling footsteps of those who know that they are bent upon an enterprise of evil, but with the gallant bearing of men whose cause is Divine, whose warfare is a crusade. Courage, my brethren; behold, the angels of God fly in our front, and, lo, the eternal God Himself leads our van. "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Blessed faith! God grant us more of it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

## "Forward!"

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### Chapter 2

#### "Forward!"

BRETHREN, the substance of my address, this morning, will be found in the words of God to His servant Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." "Forward" is the watchword of our Conference, let it ring through your ranks. Onward, ye elect of God! Victory is before you; your very safety lies in that direction. To retreat is to perish. You have most of you read the story of the boy, in an American village, who climbed the wall of the famous Natural Bridge, and cut his name in the rock above the initials of his fellows, and then became suddenly aware of the impossibility of descending. Voices shouted, "Do not look down, try and reach the top." His only hope was to go right up, up, up, till he landed on the top. Upward was terrible, but downward was destruction. Now, we, dear brethren, are all of us in a like condition. By the help of God, we have cut our way to positions of usefulness; and to descend is death. To us, forward means upward; and therefore forward and upward let us go. While we prayed, this morning, we committed ourselves beyond all recall. We did that most heartily when we first preached the gospel, and publicly declared, "I am my Lord's, and He is mine." We put our hand to the plough then; thank God, we have not looked back yet, and we must never do so. The only course open to us is to plough right on to the end of the furrow, and never think of leaving the field till the Master shall call us home. But this morning you committed yourselves again to the Lord's work; you did not deliberate, or consult with flesh and blood; but you plunged right in, renouncing all for Jesus; and except ye be reprobates, ye have enlisted for life in His service. You are the branded servants of Christ, bearing in your bodies His mark. You have now no liberty to serve another, you are the sworn soldiers of the Crucified. Forward is your only way; you are shut up to it. You have no armor for your backs; and whatever dangers lie in front, there are ten thousand times as many behind. It is onward or nothing; nay, onward or dishonor; onward or death.

I. First, dear brethren, I think it necessary to say to myself and to you that we must GO FORWARD IN OUR MENTAL ACQUIREMENTS.

Dear brethren, we must cultivate ourselves to the highest possible point, and do this, first, by gathering in knowledge that we may fill the barn; then, by acquiring discrimination that we may winnow the heap; and, lastly, by a firm retentiveness of mind, which lays up the winnowed grain in the storehouse. The three points may not be equally important, but they are necessary to a complete man.

Be well instructed in theology, and do not regard the sneers of those who rail at it because they are ignorant of it. Many preachers are not theologians, and hence the mistakes which they make. It cannot do any hurt to the most lively evangelist to be also a sound theologian, and it may often be the means of saving him from gross blunders. Nowadays, we hear men tear a single sentence of Scripture from its connection, and cry, "Eureka! Eureka!" as if they had found a new truth; and

yet they have not discovered a diamond, but only a piece of broken glass. Had they been able to compare spiritual things with spiritual, had they understood the analogy of the faith, and had they been acquainted with the holy learning of the great Bible students of past ages, they would not have been quite so fast in vaunting their marvelous knowledge. Let us be thoroughly well acquainted with the great doctrines of the Word of God, and let us be mighty in expounding the Scriptures. I am sure that no preaching will last so long, or build up a church so well, as the expository. To renounce altogether the hortatory discourse for the expository, would be running to a preposterous extreme; but I cannot too earnestly assure you that, if your ministries are to be lastingly useful, you must be expositors. For this purpose, you must understand the Word yourselves, and be able so to comment upon it that the people may be built up by the Word. Be masters of your Bibles, brethren; whatever other works you have not searched, be at home with the writings of the prophets and apostles. "Let the Word of God dwell in you richly."

I said that, next, we must learn always to discriminate between things that differ; and at this particular time, this point needs insisting on very emphatically. Many run after novelties, charmed with every new thing; learn to judge between truth and its counterfeits, and you will not be led astray. Others adhere to old teachings, like limpets stick to the rock; and yet these may only be ancient errors: wherefore, "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good." The use of the sieve and the winnowing fan, is much to be commended. A man who has asked the Lord to give him clear eyes, by which he shall see the truth, and discern its bearings, and who, by reason of the constant exercise of his faculties, has obtained an accurate judgment, is one fit to be a leader of the Lord's host; but all ministers are not thus qualified. It is painful to observe how many embrace anything if it be but earnestly brought before them. They swallow the medicine of every spiritual quack who has enough of brazen assurance to appear to be sincere. I say to you, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Brethren, be not children in understanding;" test everything that claims your faith. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the faculty of discerning between good and evil, so shall you conduct your flocks far from poisonous meadows, and lead them into safe pasturage.

When men change often, they generally need to be changed in the most emphatic sense. Our "modern thought" gentry are doing incalculable mischief to the souls of men. Immortal souls are being damned, yet these men are spinning theories. Hell gapes wide, and with her open mouth swallows up myriads, yet those who should spread the tidings of salvation are "pursuing fresh lines of thought." Highly-cultured soul-murderers will find their boasted "culture" to be no excuse in the day of judgment. For God's sake, let us know how men are to be saved, and get to the work; to be for ever deliberating as to the proper mode of making bread while a nation dies of famine, is detestable trifling. It is time we knew what to teach, or else renounced our office. "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," is the motto of the worst rather than of the best of men. Are they to be our model? "I shape my creed every week," was the confession of one of these divines to me. Whereunto shall I liken such unsettled ones? Are they not like those birds which frequent the Golden Horn, and are to be seen from Constantinople, of which it is said that they are always on the wing, and never rest? No one ever saw them alight on the water or on the land, they are for ever poised in mid-air. The natives call them "lost souls"—seeking rest and finding none; and, methinks, men who have no personal rest in the truth, if they are not themselves unsaved, are, at least, very unlikely to be the means of saving others. He who has no assured truth to tell must not wonder if his hearers set small store by what he says. We must know

the truth, understand it, and hold it with firm grip, or we cannot be of service to the sons of men. Brethren, I charge you, seek to know, and, knowing, to discriminate; having discriminated, I charge you to "hold fast that which is good." Keep in constant operation the three processes of filling the barn, winnowing the grain, and storing it in granaries, so shall you mentally "go forward."

I am beginning at the bottom, but all these matters are important, for it is a pity that even the feet of this image should be of clay. Nothing is trifling which can be of any service to our grand design. Only for want of a nail the horse lost its shoe, and so became unfit for the battle; that shoe was only a trifling rim of iron which smote the ground, and yet the neck clothed with thunder was of no avail when the shoe was gone. A man may be irretrievably ruined for spiritual usefulness, not because he fails either in character or spirit, but because he breaks down mentally or oratorically; and, therefore, I again remark that we must improve in utterance.

Brethren, we should cultivate a clear style. When a man does not make me understand what he means, it is because he does not himself know what he means. An average hearer, who is unable to follow the course of thought of the preacher, ought not to worry himself, but to blame the preacher, whose business it is to make the matter clear. If you look down into a well, if it be empty, it will appear to be very deep; but, if there be water in it, you will see its brightness. I believe that many "deep" preachers are simply so because they are like dry wells with nothing whatever in them, except decaying leaves, a few stones, and perhaps a dead cat or two. If there be living water in your preaching, it may be very deep, but the light of the truth will give clearness to it. At any rate, labor to be plain, so that the truths you teach may be easily received by your hearers.

Among many other things, we must cultivate persuasiveness. Some of our brethren have great influence over men, and yet others with greater gifts are devoid of it; these last do not appear to get near to the people, they cannot grip them, and make them feel. There are preachers who, in their sermons, seem to take their hearers one by one by the buttonhole, and drive the truth right into their souls, while others generalize so much, and are withal so cold, that one would think they were speaking to dwellers in some remote planet, whose affairs did not much concern them. Learn the art of pleading with men. You will do this well if you often see the Lord. If I remember rightly, the old classic story tells us that, when a soldier was about to kill Darius, his son, who had been dumb from his childhood, suddenly cried out in surprise, "Know you not that he is the king" His silent tongue was unloosed by love to his father, and well may ours also find earnest speech when the Lord is seen by us crucified for sin. If there be any speech in us, this will arouse it. The knowledge of "the terror of the Lord" should also bestir us to persuade men. We cannot do other than plead with them to be reconciled to God. Brethren, mark those who woo sinners to Jesus, find out their secret, and never rest till you obtain the same power. If you find them very simple and homely, yet if you see them really useful, say to yourself, "That method will do for me;" but if, on the other hand, you listen to a preacher who is much admired, and on enquiry you find that no souls are savingly converted under his ministry, say to yourself, "This style is not the thing for me, for I am not seeking to be great, but to be really useful."

Brethren, let none excel us in power of speech; let none surpass us in the mastery of our mother-tongue. Beloved fellow-soldiers, our tongues are the swords which God has given us to use for Him, even as, it is said of our Lord, "Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." Let these swords be sharp. Cultivate your powers of speech, and be amongst the foremost in the land

for utterance. I do not exhort you to this because you are remarkably deficient; far from it, for everybody says to me, "We know your College men by their plain, bold speech." This leads me to believe that you have the gift largely in you, and I beseech you to take pains to perfect it.

Let the points I shall mention here come home to those who shall require them, but I assure you I have no special persons among you in my mind's eye. We desire to rise to the highest style of ministry; but even if we obtain the mental and oratorical qualifications I have mentioned, we shall fail, unless we also possess high moral qualities. There are evils which we must shake off, as Paul shook the viper from his hand, and there are virtues which we must gain at any cost. Self-indulgence has slain its thousands. Let us tremble lest we perish by the hands of this Delilah. Let us have every passion and habit under due restraint; if we are not masters of ourselves, we are not fit to be leaders in the Church of Christ.

We must also have our tempers well under restraint. A vigorous temper is not altogether an evil. Men who are as easy as an old shoe are generally of as little worth. I would not say to you, "Dear brethren, have a temper;" but I do say, "If you have one, control it carefully." I thank God when I see a minister have temper enough to be indignant at wrong, and to be firm for the right; still, temper is an edged tool, and often cuts the man who handles it. "Gentle, and easy to be entreated," preferring to bear evil rather than inflict it, this is to be our spirit. If any brother here naturally boils over too soon, let him mind that, when he does do so, he scalds nobody but the devil, and then let him boil away as fast as he likes.

At the same time, we should avoid everything like the ferocity of bigotry. There are religious people about, who, I have no doubt, were born of a woman, but they appear to have been suckled by a wolf. I have done them no dishonor by that comparison, for were not Romulus and Remus, the founders of the city of Rome, nourished in that fashion? Some warlike men of this order have had power to found dynasties of thought; but human kindness and brotherly love consort better with the Kingdom of Christ. We are not to be always going about the world searching out heresies, like terrier dogs sniffing for rats, and to be always so confident of our own infallibility that we erect ecclesiastical stakes at which to roast all who differ from us, not, 'tis true, with faggots of wood, but with those coals of juniper, which consist of strong prejudice and cruel suspicion.

And, dear brethren, we must acquire certain moral faculties and habits, as, well as put aside their opposites. He will never do much for God who has not integrity of spirit. If we be guided by policy, if there be any mode of action for us but that which is straightforward, we shall make shipwreck before long. Resolve, dear brethren, that you can be poor, that you can be despised, that you can lose life itself, but that you cannot do a crooked thing. For you, let the only policy be honesty.

Having the integrity and the courage, dear brethren, may you be gifted with an unconquerable zeal! Zeal,—what is it? How shall I describe it? Possess it, and you will know what it is. Be consumed with love for Christ, and let the flame burn continuously; not flaming up at public meetings, and dying out in the routine work of every day. We need indomitable perseverance, dogged zeal, and a combination of sacred obstinacy, self-denial, holy gentleness, and invincible courage.

IV. Above all these things, we need TO GO FORWARD IN SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATIONS, the graces which must be wrought in us by the Holy Spirit Himself. This is the main matter, I am sure.

Other things are precious, but this is priceless.

Believers of another school dwell much—and rightly and blessedly so—upon the glorious work of the Spirit of God. They believe in the Spirit of God as a cleansing power, sweeping the Augean stable of the soul, and making it into a temple for God. But frequently they talk as if they had ceased to sin, or to be annoyed by temptation; they glory as if the battle were already fought, and the victory won. Yet let us also learn what we can from these brethren. All the truth they can teach us, let us know. Let us become familiar with the hilltops of salvation, and the glory that shines thereon,—the Hermons and the Tabors, where we may be transfigured with our Lord. Do not be afraid of ever growing too holy, or of being too full of the Holy Spirit.

Brethren, know man, in Christ, and out of Christ. Study him at his best, and study him at his worst; know his anatomy, his secrets, and his passions. You cannot gain this knowledge from books; you must have personal acquaintance with men if you are to help them in their varied spiritual experience. God alone can give you that wisdom which you will need in dealing wisely with them, but He will give it to you in answer to believing prayer.

Last Sunday night, I had a text which mastered me: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." I told the people that poor sinners, who had gone to Jesus, and trusted Him, thought they knew Him, but that they knew only a little of Him. Saints of sixty years' experience, who have walked with Him every day, think they know Him; but they are only beginning to know Him yet. The perfect spirits before the throne, who have been for five thousand years perpetually adoring Him, perhaps think they know Him, but they do not to the full. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." He is so glorious, that only the infinite God has full knowledge of Him, therefore there will be no limit to our study, or narrowness in our line of thought, if we make our Lord the great object of all our thoughts and researches.

V. I have not finished my message, for I have further to say, GO FORWARD IN ACTUAL WORK.

We want facts,—deeds done, souls saved. It is all very well to write essays, but what souls have you been the means of saving from going down to hell? Your excellent management of your school interests me, but how many children have been brought into the church by it? We are glad to hear of those special meetings, but how many have really been born to God in them? Are saints edified? Are sinners converted? To swing to and fro on a five-barred gate, is not progress; yet some seem to think that it is. I see them in a kind of perpetual Elysium, humming over to themselves and their friends, "We are very comfortable." God save us from living in comfort while sinners are sinking into hell! In traveling along the mountain roads in Switzerland, you will continually see marks of the boring-rod; and in every minister's life there should be traces of stern labor. Brethren, do something; do something; DO SOMETHING. While Committees waste their time over resolutions, do something. While Societies and Unions are making constitutions, let us win souls. Too often we discuss, and discuss, and discuss, while Satan only laughs in his sleeve. It is time we had done planning, and sought something to plan. I pray you, be men of action all of you. Get to work, and quit yourselves like men. Old Suwarrow's idea of war is mine: "Forward and strike! No theory! Attack! Form column! Fix bayonets, and charge right into the very centre of the enemy." Our one aim is to save sinners, and this we are not merely to talk about, but to effect in the power of God.

I plead this day for those who cannot plead for themselves, namely, the great outlying masses of the heathen world. Our existing pulpits are tolerably well supplied, but we need men who will build on new foundations. Who will do this? Are we, as a company of faithful men, clear in our consciences about the heathen? Millions have never heard the Name of Jesus. Hundreds of millions have seen a missionary only once in their lives, and know nothing of our King. Shall we let them perish? Can we go to our beds and sleep, while China, India, Japan, and other nations are being damned? Are we clear of their blood? Have they no claim upon us? We ought to put it on this footing,—not, "Can I prove that I ought to go?" but, "Can I prove that I ought not to go?" When a man can honestly prove that he ought not to go, then he is clear, but not else. What answer do you give, my brethren? I put it to you man by man. I am not raising a question among you which I have not honestly put to myself. I have felt that, if some of our leading ministers would go forth, it would have a grand effect in stimulating the churches, and I have honestly asked myself whether I ought to go. After balancing the whole thing, I feel bound to keep my place, and I think the judgment of most Christians would confirm my decision; but I hope I would readily, and willingly, and cheerfully, go abroad if I did not feel that I ought to remain at home. Brethren, put yourselves through the same process. We must have the heathen converted; God has myriads of His elect among them, we must go and search for them somehow or other. Many difficulties are now removed, all lands are open to us, and distance is almost annihilated. True, we have not the Pentecostal gift of tongues; but languages are now readily acquired, while the art of printing is a full equivalent for the lost gift. The dangers incident to missions ought not to keep any true man back, even if they were very great, but they are now reduced to a minimum. There are hundreds of places where the cross of Christ is unknown, to which we can go without risk. Who will go?

I wish that our churches would imitate that of Pastor Harms, in Germany, where every member was consecrated to God in deed and of a truth. The farmers gave the produce of their lands, the working-men their labor; one gave a large house to be used as a missionary college, and Pastor Harms obtained money for a ship which he fitted out, to make voyages the to Africa, and then he sent missionaries, and little companies of his people with them, to form Christian communities among the Bushmen. When will our churches be equally self-denying and energetic? Look at the Moravians, how every man or woman becomes a missionary, and how much they do for the Lord in consequence. Let us catch their spirit. Is it a right spirit? Then it is right for us to have it. It is not enough for us to say, "Those Moravians are very wonderful people." We ought to be wonderful people, too. Christ did not purchase the Moravians any more completely than He purchased us; they are under no more obligation to make sacrifices than we are. Why then this backwardness? When we read of heroic men who gave up all for Jesus, we are not merely to admire, but to imitate them. Who will imitate them now? Come to the point? Are there not some among you willing to consecrate yourselves to the Lord? "Forward" is the watchword today! Are there no bold spirits to lead the van? Pray all of you that, during this Pentecost, the Spirit may say, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

"Brethren, on wings of love mount upward, and fly forward. Amen.

## Individuality, and Its Opposite

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### Chapter 3

Individuality, and Its Opposite WHEN the late excellent Field-Marshal, Sir John Burgoyne, took the chair at the Tabernacle, at a lecture by Mr. Henry Vincent, he discharged his duty as chairman briefly, but admirably, by saying that, as chairman, he looked upon himself as merely called upon to ring the bell to announce the starting of the train. That is somewhat my position with regard to this Conference, only it rises to a higher degree of responsibility, because your President has not only to start the train of good thoughts and words for this week, but to a large measure he will give a tone for better or worse to all that shall follow. I am, therefore, more like the pitch-pipe of the olden times, which gave the key-note to the singers in the gallery, and through them to the whole congregation, and I feel inexpressibly anxious that the key-note should be a right one. Brethren, a measure of the sense of responsibility is helpful, and in many ways qualifies a man for saying the right thing; but it may be pushed too far, it may go beyond humbling the mind, and reach to the crushing of the spirit; it may so overwhelm you with the feeling of what is to be done as utterly to disqualify you for the doing of it. I am somewhat in that condition as to my part in this Conference to-day. I pine to inspire and not to repress your zeal, I long to lead you into the highest spiritual condition, and not to divert your attention to lower matters, and these strong desires master me; my heart conquers my head, and disturbs the equanimity so needful for the creation and utterance of thought. However, I shall do my best, and leave myself in the hands of our great Illuminator, the Holy Spirit, that He may speak through me as He wills.

Perhaps my one thought will come better if I give you a text from the 1st of Corinthians, the 15th chapter, and 10th verse, 1 Corinthians 15:10 : "I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I." "I, yet not I;"—I to the very full, every bit of me: Paul, once the Pharisee, the blasphemer, the persecutor, called now to be an apostle, who finds it cause of joy that this grace is given unto me to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; I, not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles: and yet not I, for I feel myself to be nothing, yea, and less than nothing, and Christ is all and in all. So it is I, yet not I.

Brethren, I hope that, however useful God may have made us in our several spheres, we do not conceive ourselves to be vastly important, for indeed we are no such thing. The cock was of opinion that the sun rose early every morning on purpose to hear him crow; but we know that Sol did nothing of the kind. The world does not revolve, the sun does not blaze, the moon does not wax and wane, the stars do not shine, entirely for the especial benefit of any one brother here, however admirable he may be in his own place; neither does Christendom exist for the purpose of finding us pulpits, nor our own particular church that it may furnish us with a congregation and an income; nay, nor does even so much as one believer exist that he may lay himself out for our sole comfort and honour. We are too insignificant to be of any great importance in God's vast universe; He can do either with us or without us, and our presence or absence will not disarrange His plans.

Upon this matter of individuality, note first, the necessity of an earnest sense of our individual interest in the gospel which we preach. Brethren, we shall never preach the Savior of sinners better than when we feel ourselves to be the sinners whom He came to save. A penitent mourning for sin fits us to preach repentance. "I preached," says John Bunyan, "sometimes, as a man in chains to men in chains, hearing the clanking of my own fetters while I preached to those who were bound in affliction and iron." Sermons wrung out of broken hearts are often the means of consolation to despairing souls. It is well to go to the pulpit, at times, with "God be merciful to me a sinner" as our uppermost prayer. Some mourners will never be cheered till they see the preacher smite upon his own breast, and hear him confess his personal sense of unworthiness.

We must never preach to others with a counterfeit voice, narrating an experience which we have not ourselves enjoyed; but if we feel that we have back-slidden to any degree, we must either rally to the mark, or penitently speak from the standpoint we actually occupy. On the other hand, if we have grown in grace, it is wicked to conceal what we have tasted and handled, and affect a mock humility; in fact, we dare not do so, we cannot but speak what Christ has taught us. We must speak out of the God-given fulness within, and not borrow from another; better far to be silent than to do that. We must be true to our personal condition before God, for perhaps the Lord allows the state of heart of His ministers to vary on purpose that their roving paths may lead to the discovery of His wandering sheep. I have sometimes traversed a portion of the pilgrim path by no means to be desired, and I have groaned in my soul, "Lord, why and wherefore is it thus with me?" And I have preached in a way which made me lie in the dust, fearing that the Lord had not spoken by me, and all the while He was leading me by the hand in a way that I knew not, for the good of His own. There have come forward, ere long, one or two who have been just the people God intended to bless, and they were reached by the very sermon which cost me so much, and grew out of an experience so exceedingly bitter.

Brethren, this personality of life in Christ being well kept in our minds, it will be well for us never to forget our personal commission to preach the gospel. For I hope you have each of you received such a personal commission, and know it; or else why are you here? Leave the ministry, brethren, if you have not received it of the Lord. I preach—I dare to say it—because I can do no otherwise; I cannot refrain myself; a fire burns within my bones which will consume me if I hold my peace. Every God-sent Christian minister is as much called to preach the gospel as was that apostle to whom Ananias spoke concerning "the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way." This makes our preaching a solemn business. Suppose that, this morning, in going down the stairs of this College alone, an angel should meet you, and lay his hand upon you, and say, "The Lord God Almighty hath sent me to commission you to preach the gospel henceforth." Brother, you would feel a burden laid upon you, and yet you would feel renewed confidence and ardour. But no mere angel's hand has touched thee, brother; the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who redeemed thee with His most precious blood, has laid this "necessity" upon thee. The pierced hand, which gave thee healing, has appointed thee to thy Lord's service, and made thee a chosen vessel to bear His Name. Hear afresh from His lips the commands, "Feed My sheep" and "Feed My lambs," even as Peter did by the Sea of Galilee.

Brethren, in connection with our individuality, we ought to feel a great respect for our own sphere of labour. You who are pastors are not only set to be watchmen for souls, but to be watchmen for the souls in particular places. You brethren, as a whole, are to go into all the world to preach the

gospel, but each one of you must feed that flock of Christ over which the Holy Ghost has made you an overseer. There your principal labors must be expended, for there your principal responsibilities lie. I would have every brother think very highly of the position in which God has placed him. If I am a sentinel, set to guard the army at a certain point, I know that every post in the whole cordon is important; but I am not to dream that mine is not so. If so, I may be inclined to sleep, and the foe may surprise the camp at the point which I ought to have guarded. I am to feel as if the whole safety of the entire camp depended upon me;—at least, I ought to be as zealous and as watchful as if it were so. You see the links of that chain; each one of them has a certain strain upon it. Suppose that one of them should say, "I may rust through; it does not matter, for many other links are strong." No, my friend, the chain depends upon each link; and so, for the completeness of church work, and for the perfect edification of the body of Christ, a great weight of responsibility lies upon you. I am very responsible; I admit it, but you have each one your measure of responsibility, which you cannot shift to another's shoulders. If all the rest of the world should be blest, and the hamlet to which you minister should be unvisited, the general revival would be no joy to you if your negligence had made your little vineyard a mournful exception to the rule. You might rejoice in the increase of blessing elsewhere, but the deeper would be your regret that you had none of it at home.

A dear brother said to me, "I wish you would go abroad, and preach the Word;" and he urged as a reason that my people would appreciate me better if they had less of me. I replied that I did not want my people to appreciate me any more, for they go already as far in that direction as would be safe, and I assured him that I should stop at home for fear they should appreciate me more. I might have rambled all the world over, and done great good, if that had been my calling; but the day will declare whether I have not been more in the path of duty and real usefulness by fostering Institutions at home, and scattering the Word by my printed sermons far more widely than I could have done with my voice. Be it so or not, brethren, when you know which part of the Lord's work He has committed to you, give your whole soul to it. Going through the famous factory at Sevres, the other day, I noticed an artist painting a very beautiful vase. I looked at him, but he did not look at me; his eyes were better engaged than in staring at a stranger. There were several persons at my heels, and they all looked at him, and made various observations, yet the worker's eye never moved from his work. He had to paint the picture upon that vase, and what benefit would he get from noticing us, or from our noticing him? He kept to his work. We would fain see such abstraction and concentration in every man who has the Lord's work to do. "This one thing I do." Some frown, some smile, but "this one thing I do." Some think they could do it better, but "this one thing I do." How they could do it, may be their business; but it certainly is not mine.

Come fair or come foul, my comrades, hold ye the fort. Some men attempt to excuse their own negligence by blaming the times. What have you and I to do with the times, except to serve our God in them? The times are always evil to those who are of morbid temperament. A scholar tells us that he once read a passage from a book to a worthy gentleman of the desponding school; it described "these days of blasphemy and rebuke,"—I think that is the correct expression,—and lamented the failure of the faithful from among men "Ah, how true!" said the worthy man, "it is the precise picture of the times." "What times?" exclaimed the scholar. "These times, of course," was the reply. "Pardon me," said the scholar, "the sentiment was delivered about four hundred years ago; examine for yourself the date of the volume." The benefit of railing at the times it would be

hard to discover, for railing does not mend them. What have you to do with the times? Do your own work. Charles the Twelfth of Sweden had his secretary sitting by his side writing from dictation, when a bombshell fell through the roof into the next room. The secretary, in alarm, dropped his pen, upon which the king exclaimed, "What are you doing?" The poor man faltered, "Ah, sire, the bomb!" The king's answer was, "What has the bomb to do with what I am telling you?" You will say that the secretary's life was in danger. Yes, but you are safe in any case, for you are side by side with Jesus in holy service, and no evil can befall you. Watch on, and work on, even to the crack of doom. Leave the times and the seasons with God, and go on with your work. Carlyle speaks somewhere of the house-cricket chirping on while the trump of the archangel is sounding;—who blames it for so doing? If God had made you a house-cricket, and bidden you chirp, you could not do better than fulfil His will. As He has made you a preacher, you must abide in your vocation. Even if the earth should be removed, and the mountains should be cast into the midst of the sea, would that alter our duty? I trow not. Christ has sent us to preach the gospel; and if our life-work is not yet finished, (and it is not,) let us continue delivering our message under all circumstances till death shall silence us.

Keep your adaptation for your work up to the highest pitch. Be not in so much hurry to do that you forget to be,—so anxious to give out that you never take in. This is the haste which makes no speed. Old Nat had a large wood pile before him, and he sawed very hard to make that pile smaller. His saw wanted sharpening and re-setting, and it was dreadful work to make it go at all. An honest neighbor stepped up to him, and said, "Nat, why don't you get that saw sharpened? You want to get that put to rights, and then you could do a deal more than you are now doing." "Now then," replied Nat, "don't you come bothering here. I have quite enough to do to saw that pile of wood, without stopping to sharpen my saw." It is unnecessary to point the moral of that anecdote; take note of it, and act accordingly in future. It is a waste of time, not an economy of it, to dispense with study, private prayer, and due preparation for your work.

Once more, remember our personal responsibility. I shall not trust myself to go very deeply into this question, but every brother should remember that, however well or ill another man may do his work, it can have no effect whatever upon our own personal responsibility before God. Some blame others with a kind of silently-implied belief that they are thereby praising themselves; for, if we censure the methods adopted by other workers, we tacitly suggest that our own modes are—or, if we had any, would be—superior to theirs. Well, brother, it may be so. It may be that others are not wise, are scarcely sound, are fanatical, erratic, and the like; but what hast thou to do with them? To their own Master they shall stand or fall, and God's grace is able to make them stand; but your supposed wisdom, which leads you to criticize them, may prove a snare to you, and make you fall. You have yet to bring your work before God, to be tried by fire. Souls are entrusted to you, and for these you must give account. God does not mean to bless those souls by anybody else, they are to be converted through you; so, are you acting, living, and preaching in such a way that God is likely to convert them through you? That is the question for each one of us to answer.

I feel that this matter of personality may be pressed very earnestly upon you, my brethren, in all five of its points; and in all it will be useful. If our individual responsibility be rightly felt, we shall refrain from judging others. We are all too ready to ascend the judgment-seat. One man judges his fellow, and condemns him because he has had so few additions to his church. I should myself be

sorry if I saw few conversions, and I should severely censure myself; but I should be very, very wrong if I were to utter an indiscriminate censure upon others. Our brother's congregation may be smaller than ours; the people's hearts may have been long steeled by a cold, dead, stereotyped ministry, and it may be that there is a good deal of work to be done before they will become interested in the gospel, much less affected by it. Possibly it may happen that the preacher, who has one convert, might say as the lioness did about her one cub, when the fox boasted that she had so many, "One, but that one is a lion!" The minister, whose whole year's work ended with one convert, and that one was Robert Moffat, did not reap a scanty harvest.

Our individuality will preserve us, by God's grace, from envying others. This vice is loathsome, and eats as doth a canker. "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?" I have known persons utter sentiments which condemned themselves merely with the view of injuring others. They cared not if they perished, like Samson, so long as they pulled the house down upon others. An ancient story tells us that a king invited to his palace two men, one of whom he knew to be the slave of envy. "Now," said he, "I will give you whatever you please, upon the condition that this man shall choose first, and his companion shall have twice as much as he." The first man was envious: he desired great wealth, but he could not endure that the other man should have double. He therefore thought that he would reduce what he asked for, but this also left his companion his superior; and as the fable goes,—for peradventure it was only a fable,—his envy so prevailed that he chose to have one of his eyes torn out that the other man might be rendered totally blind. Somewhat similar is the spirit of those who oppose others upon principles fatal to their own work. Brother, do not so. If thy neighbor be honored of God, thank God for it; if thou art not so honored, be humbled, and pray more earnestly. If the blessing comes not to thee, still rejoice that it gladdens thy comrade. In any case, do not envy others.

Dear brethren, I have said enough upon this first point, and I shall not be so long upon the other lest I should weary you. I wish, however, that what I have said may abide in the hearts of us all.

Let us all feel, dear brethren, that, though we have each one a work to do, and are personally fitted to do it, we are not the only workers in the world. Brother, you are not the only lamp to enlighten earth's darkness, you are not the only sower to sow the field of the world with the good seed, you are not the only trumpet through which God proclaims His jubilee, yours is not the only hand by which He feeds the multitudes. You are only one member of the mystic body, one soldier of the grand army. This thought should encourage you, and relieve the despondency engendered by loneliness. When God sent the flies, and locusts, and caterpillars to conquer Egypt, Pharaoh might have ridiculed any one of those insignificant warriors, and said, "What can this caterpillar do? I defy the Lord and His caterpillars." But the caterpillar might have answered, "Beware, O king, for there are ten thousand times ten thousand of us! We come in mighty armies, and will cover all the land. Weak as we are one by one, the Lord will evidence His omnipotence by the multiplication of our numbers." Thus was it in the early days of Christianity. Christians came into Rome,—a few poor Jews they were, and they dwelt in the Ghetto, in obscurity; by-and-by, there were more. Meanwhile, a few had passed over into Spain; soon there were more. A few had reached Britain; soon there were more. The nations, angry at this invasion, set to work to destroy those pests of society, which turned the world upside down. They tormented, burned, and destroyed them; but they continued to come in shoals and swarms, and though they were slain without mercy, there were always more to follow. The foes of God could not possibly stand against the vast host that

pressed forward. "The Lord gave the Word: great was the company of those that published it." Even so it is at this day. You are not alone in sounding the praises of Christ, your voice is but one, of a mighty orchestra. The whole world is full of the praises of God: "their line is gone out through all the earth; and their words to the end of the world."

Brethren, we are not alone. Legions of angels are all around us. Hosts of glorified spirits look down upon us. We are surrounded with a mighty band of helpers. We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses; wherefore, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus."

It is very blessed to feel that God is behind you, that God is in you, and that He is working with you. Mr. Oncken, in the early days of his preaching at Hamburg, was brought up before the burgomaster many times, and imprisoned. This magistrate one day said to him, in very bitter terms, "Mr. Oncken, do you see that little finger?" "Yes, sir." "As long as that little finger can be held up, sir, I will put you down." "Ah!" said Mr. Oncken, "I do not suppose that you see what I see, for I discern not merely a little finger, but a great arm, and that is the arm of God, and as long as that arm can move, you will never put me down." The opposition which is waged against the true minister of Christ does not, after all, amount to more than the burgomaster's little finger, while the power which is with us is that eternal and omnipotent arm whose forces sustain the heavens and the earth. We need not, therefore, fear. God's presence makes us bold. Let the Uhlan in the late war be our example. Picture him, a solitary man, brave and cool, riding upon a fleet horse. He is going along one of those interminable French roads which have no variety, except that now and then one poplar may be half an inch taller than another; he rides hard and fearlessly, though there are foes on all sides. That one man passes through a hamlet, and frightens everybody. He enters a town. Is he not foolhardy? All alone he has ridden up to the Town Hall, and demanded beds and stores. Why is he so bold? They are all afraid of him, evidently. Ask the man why he is so daring, and he replies, "There is an army behind me, and therefore I am not afraid." So must you, dear brother, be one of the Uhlans of the Lord God Almighty, and never be afraid, for the eternal God will be your rearward. "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth," says our Commander; "go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." I feel as if He were here, this very morning, looking on you as His soldiers, and saying, "Conquer in My Name." Go, then, my brethren, ride to those villages, and arouse them. Go to those towns, and summon them to surrender. Go to the great cities, and say to the people in them, "Christ demands that you yield your hearts to Him." Do this, and He will make your word effectual.

Where God chooses to dwell, there is a palace; His presence glorifies the place of His abode. Is there anything very wonderful in the architecture of Shakespeare's house at Stratford-on-Avon? Yet, from the utmost ends of the earth, admirers of the world's great poet will come, because Shakespeare once lived there. Suppose Shakespeare were there now! What would his admirers do then? Now, this day, brethren, our poor humble constitutions and frames and bodies,—be they what they may,—are the temples of the Holy Ghost. It is not only that He was there;—that fact makes us respect the very ashes of the saints, but He is there now. May we never have to lament His absence! You may often see a fine house, of which the owner is dead, only the picture of him hangs on the wall; but our delight is that the living Christ is in us now by the power of His Spirit. I went to the monastery which adjoins the church of St. Onofrio, in Rome, some years ago, and they

showed me there the rooms in which Tasso lived, and they had so skillfully drawn his likeness on the wall, that it looked for all the world as if Tasso were there. There were also his bed, and his pen, and his inkstand, and some of the paper on which he wrote; but there were no fresh stanzas of "Jerusalem Delivered" to be heard. Even so, we may have the likeness of Christ in our theological knowledge of Him, in our power of speaking for Him, we may have the pen with which He used to write, and we may have the paper on which He was accustomed to write in hearts that were interested in the gospel; but no "Jerusalem Delivered" will be produced, unless Jesus Himself is there. Brethren, we must have Christ in us, the hope of glory; the Spirit dwelling in us, the pure, the ever-flowing life, or our lives will be failures. O Lord, abide with us, and abide in us!

PRIVATE "TYPE=PICT;ALT= "I must conclude with the remark that it is a very delightful thing to feel that all the work we are doing is Jesus Christ's work. All the sheep we have to shepherd are His sheep; the souls we have to bring to Him were bought with His blood; the spiritual house that is to be built is for His habitation. It is all His. I delight in working for my Lord and Master, because I feel a blessed community of interest with Him. That is not my Sunday-school, it is my Lord's; and He says, "Feed My lambs." It is not my church, but His; and He cries, "Feed My sheep." Mine are His, and His are mine; yea, all are His. In the days when servants used to be servants, and were attached to their masters, one of our nobility had with him an old butler who had lived with his father, and was getting grey. The nobleman was often much amused with the way in which the good old man considered everything that was his master's to be his own. I was not only pleased with the story, but it touched my heart when I heard it. His lordship once said to him, "John, whose waggon is that which has just come up loaded with goods?" "Oh!" said he, "that is ours. Those are goods from our town house." His lordship smiled, and as a carriage came up the drive, he said, "John, whose coach is that coming into the park?" "Oh!" said he, "that is our carriage." "But," said the master, "there are some children in it, John; are they our children?" "Yes, my lord, they are our children, bless them, I will run, and bring them in." My Lord Jesus, how dare I have the impertinence to claim anything which is Thine? And yet, when I gaze upon Thy Church, I am so completely Thy servant, and so wholly absorbed in Thee, that I look upon it as mine as well as Thine, and I go to wait upon Thy beloved ones. Yea, Lord, and all these my brethren are going, too. Come with us, Lord, for Thy love's sake! Amen.

## How to Meet the Evils of the Age

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### Chapter 4

#### How To Meet the Evils of the Age

BELOVED friends, allow me to welcome you all most heartily. I have already received a blessing in the prayers which have been offered; and we have all, I think, enjoyed the earnest of a Divine refreshing during the first hallowed hour of our meeting. Let us continue in the believing confidence that He, who has already deigned to visit us, will tarry with us until the time shall come for us all to say, "Let us go hence."

Still, it is a wise thing to admit that these days have their own peculiar perils and trials. The kaleidoscope shifts, the scenes presented to our gaze are changed, whether for good or evil; good has infinite varieties, and so has evil. We are not troubled, as our Puritan forefathers were, by persecution and oppression such as would take from us our civil rights and our liberty to worship God. Evil has assumed quite another form with us, and we must meet it as we find it. The battle-front is altered, but do not imagine that the conflict will be less severe. I look for a sterner struggle than we have ever yet engaged in, and we must be prepared for it. During the progress of a battle, the Duke of Wellington was observed riding along the lines to a certain part of the field, and a soldier said to his fellow, "There goes the Duke, and there's sure to be warm work." Brethren, we have evidence that the Lord Jesus is with us, let us therefore set the battle in array. He is not a general who rides about for mere parade, He means fighting wherever He comes, and we may expect warm work. When He girds His sword upon His thigh, and rides forth on His white horse, you may rest assured that His sword will smite heavily, and His arrows will fly thick and fast, while on the other hand His enemies will furiously rage.

The worst of it is, that the growth of sacramentalism in the Established Church is not like that of the mistletoe or a fungus upon an oak, it is a real and legitimate branch of the parent stem. There is no man living, and there never was a man, and never can be one, who believes the whole of the Book of Common Prayer in its natural signification. The only way in which it can be done is by some such device as that of the two nuns who had borrowed a mule which would not go without being sworn at. As neither of them could be so profane as to swear, one good sister pronounced the first syllable of the French word *sacre*, and the other finished it, and thus between the two the mule was made to go. So must it be with belief in the Prayer-book, no one man can believe it all; possibly High Church, Low Church, and Broad Church can manage it between them. But if I were driven, at the point of the bayonet, to certify that one of the parties was a grain or two more consistent with the Prayer-book than the others, I must declare in favor of the High Church party. It is true that the Articles are against them, but what are the Articles? They are only read over perhaps once in a lifetime. The mischief is in the Catechism and the service book which are in constant use. We have not to deal with a parasitical evil, but with a natural offshoot of the national vine, which will remain as long as the Book of Common Prayer is unrevised; and when will it be revised?

This superstition, too, is in harmony with the innate idolatry of the human heart; it offers gratification to the eye and to the taste, it sets up a visible priest and outward symbols, and these man's fallen heart craves after. It offers to save men the necessity of thought by offering an outward service, and furnishing a priest to do their religion for them; but, alas! it takes man off from the real and spiritual, it consoles him without true regeneration, and buoys him up with hope though he has not submitted himself to the righteousness of Christ.

It is too often progress from the truth, which, being interpreted, is progressing backwards. They talk of higher thought, but it is an ascending downwards. I must use their terms, and talk of progress; but their progress is a going from, and not a going to, the place of our desires. Evidently, it is progress from usefulness. They invite us to follow them in their advance towards a barren Socinianism, for thither the new theology tends, or to something worse. Now, we know, at the present time, certain ancient chapels shut up, with grass growing in the front of them, and over the door of them is the name Unitarian Baptist Chapel. Although it has been said that he is a benefactor of his race who makes two blades of grass grow where only one grew before, we have no desire to empty our pews in order to grow more grass. We have in our eye certain other chapels, not yet arrived at that consummation, where the spiders are dwelling in delightful quietude, in which the pews are more numerous than the people, and although an endowment keeps the minister's mouth open, there are but few open ears for him to address.

Besides, we are invited to follow the guidance of men who are not qualified to be leaders. I have waited, with a good deal of interest, to see whether modern thought would be capable of producing a man, a man of mark, of profound mind, and philosophic genius; but where is he? Where is the man who will found a school, and sway his fellows; a man for the orthodox to tremble at, a great Goliath, head and shoulders above his fellows? Truly, there are some who think they have power, and so they have amongst those young gentlemen whose moustachios are on the point of developing; but they have no influence over those who read their Bibles, have had experience, and are accustomed to "try the spirits."

We are invited, brethren, most earnestly to go away from the old-fashioned belief of our forefathers because of the supposed discoveries of science. What is science? The method by which man tries to conceal his ignorance. It should not be so, but so it is. You are not to be dogmatical in theology, my brethren, it is wicked; but for scientific men, it is the correct thing. You are never to assert anything very strongly; but scientists may boldly assert what they cannot prove, and may demand a faith far more credulous than any we possess. Forsooth, you and I are to take our Bibles, and shape and mould our belief according to the ever-shifting teachings of so-called scientific men. What folly is this! Why, the march of science, falsely so-called, through the world, may be traced by exploded fallacies and abandoned theories. Former explorers, once adored, are now ridiculed; the continual exposure of false hypotheses is a matter of universal notoriety. You may tell where the learned have encamped by the debris left behind of suppositions and theories as plentiful as broken bottles. As the quacks, who ruled the world of medicine in one age, are the scorn of the next, so has it been, and so will it be, with your atheistical savants and pretenders to science. But they remind us of facts. Are they not yet ashamed to use the word? Wonderful facts, made to order, and twisted to their will to overthrow the actual facts which the pen of God Himself has recorded! Let me quote from "Is the Book Wrong?" by Mr. Hely Smith, a pamphlet worthy of an extensive reading:—

So the bubbles go on bursting, and meanwhile more are being blown, and we are expected to believe in whatever comes, and wait with open mouth to see what comes next. But we shall not just yet fall down and worship the image of human wisdom, notwithstanding all the flutes, harps, sackbuts, psalteries, dulcimers, weekly papers, quarterly reviews, and boastful professors. Show us a man of science worthy of the name, and then we will not follow him if he dares to oppose revealed truth; but show us one in whom the next generation will believe; at present, there is not one alive worthy to be compared with Newton and other master-minds reverent to the Scriptures, compared with whom these men are mere pretenders. See, my brethren, we have unbelief, scientific and otherwise, to contend with, and we must meet it in the Name of the Lord.

The fourth evil is one to which I call your very earnest attention, the growth of wickedness in the land, especially in two forms, which we ought not to overlook. One is, the growing worldliness among professing Christians. They are indulging in extravagance in many ways; in luxurious habits, dress, equipages, feastings, and so on, and wasting the substance of which they are stewards. When a man is giving liberally to the cause of God, I count it very foolish to forbid his spending liberally in other ways, for men usually spend by scale. It would be absurd to hold up a wretched miser, who gives nothing either to God or man, as an example to a liberal spender; but there is too much of ostentatious extravagance abroad, which wastes the Master's money in worldly pleasures and doubtful amusements, yea, and amusements worse than doubtful. Some, who are called ministers of Christ, have in these days even defended amusements which moralists have felt bound to abandon, but let us hope that such ministers will not repeat the mistake. We must be careful, wise, and yet decided in our dealings with this growing evil, or we shall lose all spirituality from the churches.

I was in France, at the Carnival at Mentone, and I remarked again and again that I saw no sign of intoxication. All day long, the peasants and townspeople amused themselves with masks, and music, and confetti,—amusements fit for little children; but I saw no drunkenness, and do not think there was any. Yet France is a Popish country: do we not blush to think that it should excel us in so ordinary a virtue as sobriety? One of my friends said to me, "If this Carnival had been held in England, these people would all have been drunk before they started the procession." Several years ago, when staying on the island of Heligoland, I noticed with regret a regulation that no more than four English sailors should come ashore at one time, and then each one must be attended by a soldier till he returned to the boat. I saw hale and hearty sailors come to the little town, and walk up the street; but how differently they reeled back, and how difficult it seemed to get them safely away! Are our fellow-countrymen to become the scorn of mankind for their drunkenness? The world will begin to cry shame upon the Christian Church unless something is done in this matter. Consider the suffering and poverty which arise out of the waste of money involved in this vice, and the crime which is its inevitable result. The whole land reeks before the Lord, and is corrupt with this sin. If Christians do not labour to stay this evil, who will do it? If ministers do not seek to the utmost of their ability to apply a remedy, the world will think that their outcry against unbelief and other evils is not very sincere. He who does not cry out against the wolf cannot surely be at enmity with the lion.

It is evident enough that the gospel meets superstition. In the Revelation we read, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen," and we see her cast like a millstone in the flood. But was it not because, as we read a little before, "I saw another angel fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting gospel

to preach unto them that dwell on the earth"? Between the flight of the angel and the fall of Babylon there was an intimate connection. If you were to enter a ruin, and could not bear the hooting of the owls and the presence of the bats, and wanted to disperse them, if you could let the blessed light shine into the deserted halls, the bats and owls would soon find their wings. Let the flambeaux blaze in every corner, and the creatures of darkness will quit the scene. Do you wish to put an end to baptismal regeneration, the lie of lies? Proclaim spiritual regeneration by the Holy Ghost, and exalt the work of the Spirit of the Lord. Would you make men see through the sham of Romish and Anglican priesthood? Proclaim the everlasting priesthood of our great Melchisedec. If you would end belief in sacraments, proclaim the substance, of which ordinances can never be more than the shadow. You will find men turn away from the husks when you set before them solid food, God by His Spirit being with you to give them the wisdom to discern between things that differ.

I give the progressive gentlemen a motto to be engraved on their escutcheon, for which I hope they will be very grateful; it is this,—"Ever learning." It is their boast that they are ever learning. Accept it, gentlemen, but take the whole of it: "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." (2 Timothy 3:7.) They themselves confess that they do not come to definite knowledge, for they are always telling us that what they teach to-day they may repudiate to-morrow, for a process of development is going on, so that, having commenced with the oyster of Calvinism, they may yet reach the superlative manhood of atheism, for where else will it stop? Preach the truth with all your hearts as God teaches it to you, and this plague will be stayed.

As to that terrible matter of drunkenness, I believe there are many palliations for the disease, but I am equally certain that there is no complete and universally applicable cure for it except the gospel. The best way to make a man sober is to bring him to the foot of the cross. It is a practical question, well worth your pondering, whether, in order to bring him there, it may not be necessary to get him sober first, for we cannot hope to see men converted when they are drunk. You may find it wise to use with vigor all the appliances which the temperance movement has so amply provided; but whether you personally agree to do so or not, if you see others earnestly warring with the demon of drink, even though they use weapons which you do not admire, do not despise them, nor treat them otherwise than as allies. Let your own personal habits be such as shall tend to overthrow the evil, and to encourage those who are laboring to that end. Let the current and tone of your conversation be always friendly to the man who fights this foe, even if he does not come upon your platform, for the enemy is so strong and so all-devouring that no honest helper may be scorned. But, after all, the gospel is the needle-gun of the conflict. If you could make every man in England sign the pledge of total abstinence, you could not secure sobriety for any length of time, since pledges are too often broken; but if men's hearts are changed, and they become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, then the stamina of principle will, by Divine grace, be given to the mental constitution, promises will be kept, and vices will be forsaken.

To begin with, we must have more knowledge of the gospel. It is not every minister who understands the gospel; many ministers, who understand its elements, have never attempted to grasp and to preach the whole of it, and even he who knows most of it needs to understand it better. You must preach the whole of the gospel. The omission of a doctrine, or an ordinance, or a precept, may prove highly injurious. Even points which others think trivial must not be trivial to the man who would make full proof of his ministry.

To accomplish this, we are bound to search and study in order to know more and more of the inspired Word. Have you not found that the precious gospel is like a cavern into which you must enter bearing the torch of the Holy Spirit, who alone can show you all things? Were you not astonished as you stood in the first chamber, and saw its clear soft silver light? What treasures were all around you, for all its walls were slabs of silver, and the roof was hung with filagree of the precious metal! "I have found it! I have found it!" you cried, for very joy. But, just then, one of the shining ones touched you on the shoulder, and said, "Come hither, and I will show thee greater things than these." You passed through a portal hitherto unobserved, and, lo! there opened up another chamber, more lofty and more spacious than the last. The floor, the roof, and the pendant stalactites were all of gold,—pure gold, like unto transparent glass; and then you said, "Now have I entered the innermost shrine of truth." Yet was there more to be seen, for again the shining one touched you, another secret door flew open, and you were in a vast hall, where every form of precious stone flashed forth upon you; rubies, and jaspers, and emeralds, and amethysts emulated each other's beauties, while all in a blaze of light the terrible crystal and all manner of choice gems made the cavern to shine like a thousand firmaments crowded with stars. Then you marvelled indeed. And now, perhaps, having seen such treasures, you are of opinion that nothing more remains; but no mortal hath fully seen God's glory as yet, and the Divine Spirit waits to lead you by study and prayer to a yet clearer vision of the deep things of God.

Secondly, we must seek after a deeper and more experimental acquaintance with the gospel. The word "experimental" is one which theology has manufactured; but it is not correct, for true religion is no experiment. Surely it is a well-ascertained fact, a force the result of which may safely be predicted, for no cause more certainly ensures its effect. But we mean "experiential"—that which groweth out of experience,—pardon the uncomely coinage. Does a man know any gospel truth aright till he knows it by experience? Is not this the reason why God's servants are made to pass through so many trials, that they may really learn many truths not otherwise to be apprehended? Do we learn much in sunny weather? Do we not profit most in stormy times? Have you not found it so—that your sick-bed—your bereavement—your depression of spirit, has instructed you in many matters which tranquillity and delight have never whispered to you? I suppose we ought: to learn as much by joy as by sorrow, and I hope that many of my Lord's better servants do so; but, alas! others of us do not; affliction has to be called in to whip the lesson into us.

Such a criticism would justly apply to many preachers. They do not treat the gospel as a practical thing, or as a matter of fact which immediately concerns the people before them. If the gospel referred only to certain unclothed humanities in the bush of Australia, they could not themselves appear to be less interested in it. A pleading experimental sermon from them we could not expect, nor even the simple gospel, except so far as they may occasionally condescend to men of low estate by abasing themselves from the serenities in which their highnesses exist in order to consider a few of the depravities of the lower classes! This will never do. No; we must have personal experience of the things of God. As to our own depravity, we must feel it, and mourn it; and as to the glorious power of the grace of God, and the wondrous riches of Christ, we must go on to realize these in our own souls more and more, if we are to preach with power, and meet the evils of the times.

A woman was once very busy in fetching out of her burning house her pictures and her choicest pieces of furniture. She had worked a long while, toiling hard to save her little treasures; when, on

a sudden, it came to her mind that one of her children was missing. The child had been left in the burning house; and when the mother rushed back again, that chamber had long ago been consumed, and the child had, doubtless, perished. Then did she wring her hands, and bitterly bewail her folly. She seemed to curse every bit of furniture that she had saved, and wished that she had not saved it, because, by looking after such poor stuff, she had lost her child. Even so, every little piece of curious learning, and quaint proverb, and deep doctrine, that you manage to save from the fire, will only accuse your conscience if you let men's souls perish. We must have them saved; and it is infinitely better that fifty of those admirable discourses upon a difficult point should lie by till we are dead than that we should bring them out, and waste fifty Sundays when precious souls are waiting for the good news of mercy.

Keep to the gospel, then, more and more and more. Give the people Christ, and nothing but Christ. Sate them, even though some of them should say that you also nauseate them with the gospel. At every meal, set out the salt without prescribing how much. If they do not like it (and there are creatures that cannot endure salt), give them all the more of it, for this is according to your Lord's mind.

Some preachers remind me of the famous Chinese jugglers, who not long ago were everywhere advertised. One of these stood against a wall. and the other threw knives at him. One knife would be driven into the board just above his head, and another close by his ear, while under his armpit and between his fingers quite a number of deadly weapons were bristling. Wonderful art to be able to throw to a hair's breadth and never strike! How many among us have a marvellous skill in missing! "Be not afraid," says the preacher, "I am never personal. I never give home-thrusts." Stand quite still, my friend! Open your arms! Spread out your fingers! Your minister has practised a very long while, and he knows how to avoid troubling you in the least with truth too severely personal. Brethren, cultivate that art if you desire to be damned, and wish your hearers also to be lost; but if you want to be the means of saving both yourselves and them that hear you, cry to your Lord for faithfulness, practicalness, real heart-moving power. Never play at preaching nor beat about the bush; get at it, and always mean business. Plutarch tells us of two men at Athens who were nominated for a public office. One of them was famous for his oratory; and to gain the election, he gave a description of what he could and would do if the citizens would choose him. He would have charmed them with his fine promises, but they knew him too well. His rival was a man of few words, and simply said, "All that this gentleman has said, I mean to do." Now, be ye of that kind, not speakers of the Word only, but doers also.

I need scarcely add to you, brethren, that we must be more and more simple and clear in the preaching of the gospel. I think we are pretty clear and plain already; but, sometimes, young men are fascinated by some famous preacher whose style is grandiose, sublime, or involved. They see the thing done very splendidly, and as they look on, they marvel, and by degrees they think they will try that style, too; and so they put on the seven-league boots, large enough for them to live in, and the result is ridiculous, nay, worse than that, it is spiritually useless. When a man tries to do the magnificent, with elaborate sentences, and pompous diction, and grandeur of manner, it must and will come to nought. There is also a tendency, among some young gentlemen, to go off into excessive quotation of poetry. There are superfine young men who probably were born with a rose between their lips, and with a nightingale singing above their bed when first their infant cries were heard, and they seem to be consecrated to the sublime and beautiful. Every breeze wafts to them

from the mountains of Araby the sweet odors of poetic thought. It was concerning a man of this school that Samuel Butler wrote,—

"For rhetoric, he could not ope

His mouth, but out there flew a trope." That style of speaking is very fine, brethren; but do not you be beguiled by it. As much as ever you can, avoid all artificial oratory, or what simpletons nowadays mistake for eloquence. The word is shamefully misused; but, in the common acceptation of the term, the most detestable thing is eloquence. Speak from your heart, and never mind about eloquence. Do not speak after the manner of the orator; speak as a lover of souls, and then you will have real eloquence. The oratory which allies itself with the dancing-master, and practises before a looking-glass, and is fond of classical quotations, and obscure verses from unknown poets, is for ever to be abhorred by you. Perishing sinners do not want your poetry, they want Christ. If you are poetical, ride on the back of your poetry, but do not let it ride you. What you have to do is to be the means of saving souls, and look you well to that. If soldiers can win a battle and sing sweetly at the same time, by all means let them sing; but if it so happens that, while regarding the harmonies, they miss a cut at their enemies, let the singing come to an end at once. There, young warrior, give over your crochets and quavers, and vault into your saddle! Regard your pulpit as your steed, and dash into the battle like Khaled of old, smiting right and left with dauntless valour; and when you come back, you will have more honour from your Master than he will who stayed at home to arrange the plumes of his helmet, and then at length rode out bedizened to admiration, only to come home like that inglorious hero of whom the poet sings,—

"The King of France with forty thousand men.

Went up a hill, and so came down agen."

I am afraid that there are some ministers who get into a pulpit, intending to stick there. There is no moving them, and they never move the people. It is sometimes remarked to me, "Some of your men move about a good deal." "Yes," I reply, "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." I like the self-sacrifice of a man who feels that he can move, and will move when he can do more good elsewhere. Never move or stay for selfish reasons, but hold yourself at your great Captain's beck and call. An old Scotch minister, as he was riding along, saw, according to his own description, something coming which greatly alarmed him. It was a gipsy riding aloft upon an ass which he had loaded high with faggots. The beast, which the minister was riding, was alarmed as well as its rider, set its feet down very firmly, and put its ears back, after the manner of amiable horses! "And," said the minister in describing it, "I prepared myself for a fall, so that I fell somewhat more easily." "But," said a friend, "I should have got off." That idea had never crossed the worthy man's mind. So it is with some ministers, they prepare themselves to be dismissed by their people, but never propose to remove of their own will. It is within my knowledge that a brother, not of our Conference, said to his people, when they were in a most earnest manner endeavoring to get rid of him, "It was the Spirit of God that brought me here, and I shall never go till the Spirit of God leads me to go away, and that will be a very long while." The last sentence cast suspicion on all that preceded it, for, surely, he could not foretell what the mind of the Spirit might be. Stay or move, brethren; go to Africa, or America, or Australia, or flit from. John O' Groat's house to the Land's End, only do accomplish your mission, and glorify God. Be holy, be gracious, be prayerful, be disinterested, be like the Lord Jesus; thus only will your lives be consistent with

the gospel you are called to preach.

Brothers, I beseech you keep to the old gospel, and let your souls be filled with it, and then may you be set on fire with it! When the wick is saturated, let the flame be applied. Fire from Heaven is still the necessity of the age. They call it "go", and there is nothing which goes like it; for when fire once starts upon a vast prairie or forest, all that is dry and withered must disappear before its terrible advance. May God Himself, who is a consuming fire, ever burn in you as in the bush at Horeb! All other things being equal, that man will do most who has most of the Divine fire. That subtle, mysterious element called fire,—who knoweth what it is? It is a force inconceivably mighty. Perhaps it is the motive force of all the forces, for light and heat from the sun are the soul of power. Certainly fire, as it is in God, and comes upon His servants, is power omnipotent. The consecrated flame will, perhaps, consume you, burning up the bodily health with too great ardour of soul, even as a sharp sword wears away the scabbard; but what of that? The zeal of God's house ate up our Master, and it is but a small matter that it should also consume His servants. If, by excessive labour, we die before reaching the average age of man, worn out in the Master's service, then, glory be to God, we shall have so much less of earth and so much more of Heaven! And suppose we should be abused, misrepresented, and slandered for Christ's sake, then glory be to God that we had a reputation to lose for His sake, and blessed be our Lord who counted us worthy to lose it! Be on fire within yourselves with perfect consecration to God, and then you will blaze in the pulpit.

"There are the evils, brethren. I have tried to set them forth; you will not forget them. But we have, only one remedy for them; preach Jesus Christ, and let us do it more and more. By the roadside, in the little room, in the theatre, anywhere, everywhere, let us preach Christ. Write books if you like, and do anything else within your power; but whatever else you cannot do, preach Christ. If you do not always visit your people (though I pray God you may not be blameworthy there), yet be sure to preach the gospel. The devil cannot endure gospel preaching; nothing worries him so much as preaching. The Pope cannot bear it; nothing makes him so ill as preaching. Preaching is our great weapon, so use it perpetually. Preaching is the Lord's battering-ram, wherewith the walls of old Babylon are being shaken to their foundations. Work on with it, brothers, work on. Preach, preach, preach, preach, preach, till you can preach no more, and then go above to sing the praises of God in Heaven, and to make known to the angels the wonders of redeeming love.

## "A New Departure"

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### Chapter 5

#### "A New Departure"

BELOVED fellow-servants of Christ, our work requires us to be in the best possible condition of heart. When we are at our best, we are feeble enough; we would not, therefore, fall below our highest point. As instruments, we owe all our power for usefulness to the Divine hand; but, since tools should always be kept in order, we would have our spirit free from rust, and our mind sharp of point and keen of edge to answer at once to the Master's will. It is because I fear we do not always keep up to the mark that the subject for this morning's address shall be "A New Departure," or, in other words, a renewal, a revival, a starting afresh, a return to our first love, even the love of our espousals, when first our soul was wedded to our Redeemer's work.

I do not know, my brethren, that we can expect to see energy continuous at its full in any one of us. I suspect that he who burns like a seraph knows moments in which the flame somewhat abates. As the sun itself is not at all times alike powerful, so the man who, like the shining light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day, is not uniformly bright, nor always at his noon. Nature does not hold the sea for ever at flood; ebbs intervene, and the ocean pauses a while ere it returns again to the fulness of its strength. The vegetable world has its winter, and enjoys a long sleep beneath its bed of snow. It is not wasted time, that ebb or that winter; flood and summer owe much to ebb and frost. I suspect that, because we are in affinity with nature, we, too, shall have our changes, and shall not abide at one elevation. No man's life is all climax. Let us not despond if, just now, our spirit is at a low ebb; the tide of life will roll up as before, and even reach a higher point. When we stand leafless and apparently lifeless, our soul having become like a tree in winter, let us not dream that the axe will cut us down, for our substance is in us though we have lost our leaves, and before long the time of the singing of birds will come, we shall feel the genial warmth of returning spring, and our lives shall again be covered with blossoms, and laden with fruit.

In religious affairs, history shows us that churches have their palmy days, and then again their times of drought. The Universal Church has been thus circumstanced; it has had its Pentecosts, its Reformations, its revivals; and between these there have been sorrowful pauses, in which there was much more cause for lamentation than for rejoicing, and the Miserere was more suitable than the Hallelujah. I should not, therefore, wish any brother to condemn himself if he is not conscious just now of possessing all the vivacity of his youth.—he may find it return before our meetings close. I would have the husbandman long for spring, and yet not despair because of the present cold; so would I have a man lament every degree of decline, and yet not despond. If any man walk in darkness, and see no light, let him trust in God, and look to Him for brighter days.

For my own part, I would have remained a young man if I could, for I fear I am by no means improved by keeping. Oh, that I could again possess the elasticity of spirit, the dash, the courage, the hopefulness of days gone by! My days of flying are changed to those of running, and my

running is toning down to a yet steadier pace. It is somewhat cheering that the Scriptures seem to indicate that this is progress, for such is the order which it prescribes for saints: "They shall mount up with wings as eagles;" away they go, out of sight. In your first sermons,—how you mounted up! Your first evangelistic efforts,—what flights they were! After that, you slackened and yet improved your pace; but it grew more steady, and perhaps more slow, as it is written: "They shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." God grant that we may not faint; and if our running days are over, may we walk with God as Enoch did, till the Lord shall take us home!

The natural wear and tear of an active life also tend to our running down. Some of our people think that we have little or nothing to do but to stand in the pulpit, and pour out a flood of words two or three times a week; but they ought to know that, if we did not spend much time in diligent study, they would get poverty-stricken sermons. I have heard of a brother who trusts in the Lord, and does not study; but I have also heard that his people do not trust in him; in fact, I am informed that they wish him to go elsewhere with his inspired discourses, for they say that, when he did study, his talk was poor enough, but now that he gives them that which comes first to his lips, it is altogether unbearable. If any man will preach as he should preach, his work will take more out of him than any other labour under heaven. If you and I attend to our work and calling, even among a few people, it will certainly produce a friction of soul and a wear of heart which will tell upon the strongest. I speak as one who knows by experience what it is to be utterly exhausted in the Master's service. No matter how willing we may be in spirit, the flesh is weak; and He who made a tender apology for His sleeping servants in the garden knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust. We need that the Master should say to us, every now and then, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while;" and He does say so, for He is not a hard taskmaster, and whoever may use the lash, and cause the weary steed to die in harness, our gentle Lord doth not so.

I do not wonder that some brethren run down through want of association with others of warm heart and of kindred spirit. I will give you another lighthouse illustration; a gentleman, who called to see the keepers of a lone light, said to one of them, "I suppose, after all, you fellows are quite happy in this tower?" "We might: be happy," replied the man, "if we had a chat with one another; but my mate and I have not exchanged a word with each other for a month." If you are banished to a country place, where you have no superior or even equal mind to converse with, no intellectual or spiritual friend near at hand, I can feel for you. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend," and when that sharpening is missed, it is no marvel that the mind grows dull. We cannot live alone, brethren, and yet a dreadful solitude as to our higher cares is one of our sorest trials. Oh, for a twin spirit to converse with! The worst of it is that, if we have few to refresh us with their conversation, we have many to vex us with their chatter; and when we would fain be uplifted to noble themes, we find ourselves dragged down by the dreary gossip of a hamlet. What wonder if, with such surroundings, we lose force, and run down!

May not self-indulgence have mixed with unbelief? Have we made provision for the flesh? Have we lost the intimacy with Jesus which we once enjoyed? Have we violated the consecration with which we started? If so, the blue mould will settle on the unsound place. Selfishness will mar our strength, and destroy our usefulness. I will not suppose that this is the case with any of you; or, at least, I will only suppose it, and let it remain a supposition.

There is an evil under the sun which is as terrible as an open catastrophe,—indeed, it works greater ill to the church in the long run,—and that is, when a man's ministry is eaten through and through with spiritual dry rot.

When men drift into this condition, they generally adopt some expedient to hide it. Conscience suggests that there is something or other wrong, and the deceitful heart labours to conceal or palliate this fact. Some do this by amusing themselves with hobbies instead of preaching the gospel. They cannot do the Lord's work, so they try to do their own. They have not honesty enough to confess that they have lost gospel power, so they ride a hobby; and it is a very mild form of evil when they raise some side issue, which has no other fault about it than that it diverts them from the main point. Many are these playthings; I have no time to mention more than one.

I have been amused by observing the manner in which speculators have been taken in when they have left the old ship of the gospel to become prophets. The beast of the Revelation was reported to be Napoleon I., and then the creature suddenly reappeared in his nephew, Napoleon III. By-and-by, the deadly wound was healed, and the Prince Imperial wore the dreadful honours of the prophetic book; but the prince is now dead, and it will be needful for the seers to invent a new theory. There is no fear but what they will do it before long; and, meanwhile, "our Israelitish origin" will do to fill up the time. In the story of Sindbad the Sailor, it is said that, as they sailed along, they saw an island, and at the sight thereof they greatly rejoiced. The crew left the ship, and feasted on the island, and were going to take possession of it in the name of the king, when suddenly it began to quiver and to plunge, and finally it went down altogether, for it was a whale's back, and not an island at all! I have known brethren disport themselves upon the back of some novel speculation, when suddenly the facts of history have gone against them, and the whole thing has gone down very like a whale. I have mentioned one of the more harmless hobbies, but some have taken to fancies which have bred greater mischief. Speculation is an index of the spiritual poverty of the man who surrenders himself to it. His flour has all been used, so he tries plaster of Paris; he has no more gold or silver, so he coins the baser metals. He cannot prophesy after the measure of faith, so he exercises his immeasurable imagination. His own experience does not serve him with topics for his ministry, and therefore he takes airy flights into regions of which he knows nothing.

When the heart has got out of order, and the spiritual life has run down, men soon fall into actual doctrinal error, not so much because their head is wrong, for many of them have not erred very much there, but because their heart is in an ill condition. We should never have known that some men had brains at all if they had not addled them. Such departers from the faith usually fall by little and little. They begin by saying very little concerning grace. They serve out homoeopathic doses of gospel: it is marvellous what a very small globule of the gospel will save a soul, and it is a great mercy that it is so, or few would be saved. These snatches of gospel, and the preacher who gives them, remind us of the famous dog of the Nile, of whom the ancients said that he was so afraid of the crocodiles that he drank of the river in a great hurry, and was away from it directly. These intellectual gentry are so afraid of the critical crocodiles that the moment they touch the living water of the gospel they are away again. Their doubts are stronger than their beliefs. The worst of it is that they not only give us very little gospel, but they give us much that is not the gospel. In this they are like mosquitoes, of whom I have often said that I do not mind their taking a little of my blood, but it is the poison which they put into me which is my great cause of quarrel with them. That a man should rob me of the gospel, is bad enough; but that he should impregnate me with his

poisonous doctrine, is intolerable.

God forbid that we should ever try to cover our decline of heart by the invention of our self-conceit! I hope that, when our ministry begins to lose power, we shall be driven to our knees, and to our God, that He may quicken us again by His good Spirit.

This is necessary on account of our own happiness; for I appeal to any brother who declines in heart, and grows weak in faith, and doubtful in spirit, whether he is not unhappy. Do you not derive the purest joy and the most solid satisfaction from walking with God? Indeed, those who are "called to be saints" are doomed to be unhappy apart from Christ. It is a doom which destiny has fixed upon you that, if you depart from Christ, you must depart into hell; for it is hell for you to depart from Christ. If, therefore, in any measure, you have roamed away from Christ, mind that you fly home again to Him at once. Last year, when sojourning in the South of France, I went for a mountain ride to the foot of Castiglione, an old, half-deserted town. It was clear and bright at the time, and while the friends who were with me went up the hill to survey the place, I remained a little lower down. I soon observed that the clouds were coming from the other side of the mountains, and in a few minutes I was in a fog, chilled to the bone. I could just see Mentone under the bottom of the clouds, and I said to my man-servant, "Get the horses in, for I must get down again into the sun at once." Soon, the fog was all round me, and I hastened to descend until I reached the sunlight again. You must feel like that, my brethren; if you are caught in a mist, and a chill is upon you, you must hurry back to Christ. You may joyfully repose in Him, and find every blessing and comfort surrounding you; but if you have climbed into high notions, and entered upon the cold regions of speculation, you must hasten down again. You must say of the old gospel, "I can see the blessed spot of my repose, and I will get back to it at once." This is wise advice for those who are conscious of lost comfort through leaving the good old way.

Dear brethren, have we ever reached our right condition as compared with our early ideal of what we hoped to be? Do you recollect when you first entered the College or the ministry? Do you remember what a high standard you set up for yourself? You did well to fix the mark high; for, if you aim at the moon, you will shoot higher than if you fired at a bush. You did well to have a high standard, but you do not well to fall short of it; and, yet, who does not fall short even of his own ideal? Do you not wish to hide your head when you contrast yourself with your Lord? He saved others, and therefore could not save Himself; but we are keen to guard ourselves and our reputations, and often act as if we thought self-preservation the highest law of nature. Our Lord endured great contradiction of sinners against Himself, while we are provoked if we are thwarted in any degree. He loved His sheep, and followed them when they went astray; but we have far too little pity even upon those who gather at our call. We are far, far, far below the true glory of the Well-beloved, and even fall short of our poor ideal of Him. Neither in private in His prayers, nor in public in His life, or His ministry, or His teaching, do we approximate to Him so nearly as we should; and yet, to fall short of likeness to Him, ought to make us blush and weep. We cannot afford, therefore, to run down.

Beloved brethren, we cannot afford to remain in any state lower than the very best; for, if so, our work will not be well done. Time was when we preached with all our might. When we began to preach, what preaching it was for zeal and life! In looking back, it must increase our self-humiliation if we perceive that, in our younger days, we were more real and intense than we

are now. We preach much better, so the critics say; and we know that there is more thought and more accuracy in our sermons, and that we use better elocution than we did in our young days; but where are the tears of our early ministry? Where is the heart-break of those first sermons in our first sphere? Where is the passion, where is the self-annihilation that we often felt when we poured out our very life with every syllable we spoke? Now, sometimes, we go into the pulpit resolved that we will do as we did then, just as Samson went out to shake himself as he had done aforetime. He had snapped the cords and bands before, and he was going to do the same again; but the Lord had departed from him, and he was weak as another man. Brethren, what if the Lord should depart from us? Alas for us, and for our work!

A man ought to take care of himself, merely as a man, for the sake of himself and his household; but much more should a man, who is a minister, take care of himself for the sake of those who are committed to his charge. A captain, in the South Seas, was observed to go beyond the usual point for turning into the harbour, taking a longer but a safer course. On someone remarking to him that he was too careful, he replied, "I have so many souls on board, I cannot afford to run any risk." How many souls there are on board of some of our vessels! How many souls—ay, notwithstanding that the doctrine is unfashionable, I repeat it,—how many souls, not of creatures which will die out like cats and dogs, but of priceless, immortal beings, are committed to our charge! Since, upon our ministry, under God, hang everlasting things,—life and death, Heaven and hell,—what manner of persons ought we to be? How careful we ought to be as to our inner health! How anxious to be always at our very best! If I were a surgeon, and I had to operate upon a patient, I should not like to touch either the knife or his flesh if I felt bilious, or if my hand was quivering; I would not like to be in any but the calmest, coolest, most forceful condition, at the moment in which the difference of a hair's breadth might touch a vital chord, and end a precious life! God help all soul-physicians to be always at their best!

When a Spartan was asked what were the boundaries of his country, he replied, "The limits of Sparta are marked by the points of our spears." The limit of our church is also determined by the points of our spears; but our weapons are not carnal. Wherever we go, we preach Christ crucified, and His word of solemn proclamation, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The enquirer turned, and said to the Spartan, "You have no walls to Sparta." "No," he replied, "the walls of Sparta are the breasts of her sons." We have no defences for our churches, either in Acts of Parliament or enforced creeds; but the regenerated hearts and consecrated spirits of men, who resolve to live and die in the service of King Jesus, have hitherto sufficed, in the hands of the Spirit, to preserve us from grievous heresy. I see no beginning to this business, this battle of truth commenced so long ago; and I see no end to it, except the coming of the Master and the eternal victory. Yet some trembling persons say we ought to stop, and let the young men already in College learn a trade, and forego the ministry, lest England should become over-ministered; and they add that there is no use in preparing men for the foreign fields, for the Missionary Society is in debt, and its expenses must be curtailed. God bless the Missionary Society! But the condition of a Society is not the limit of our personal endeavour; besides, the Society will soon throw off its burden. If you, my brethren, are worthy of your calling, you will be bravely independent, and not hang too much upon the help of others. Sparta could not have been defended by a race of timid creatures armed with pointless spears, neither can young men of timorous spirit do great things for God. You must be braced to heroism, brethren, if you are to meet the demands of the hour. May

God make the feeblest among you as David, and the house of David as God! (Zechariah 12:8.)

We shall see that it is a fit time if we take an outlook upon our own nation. Politically, we have come back to a condition in which there will be a respect for righteousness, justice, and truth, rather than for self-assertion, and national gain, and conquest. We shall, I trust, no longer be steered by a false idea of British interests, and the policy which comes of it; but by the great principles of right, justice, and humanity. This is all I want to see: parties, as such, are nothing to us; nor individual statesmen, except so far as they represent right principles. We are for those who are on the side of justice, peace, and love. And now, instead of lying still year after year, and making no progress,—no laws amended, no home legislation attended to, but time wasted upon glittering foreign adventures,—something will be done that is worth doing.

Whatsoever things are honest, true, kind, humane, and moral, may reckon on our aid. We are on the side of temperance, and therefore on the side of the limitation of the abominable traffic which is ruining our country; and we are opposed to all that licenses vice among men, or allows cruelty to animals. We are up to the hilt advocates of peace, and we earnestly war against war. I wish that Christian men would insist more and more on the unrighteousness of war, believing that Christianity means no sword, no cannon, no bloodshed, and that, if a nation is driven to fight in its own defence, Christianity stands by to weep and to intervene as soon as possible, and not to join in the cruel shouts which celebrate an enemy's slaughter. Let us always be on the side of right. To-day, then, my brethren, I beg you to join with me in seeking renewal. Now is the time for a man to buckle on his harness, and bestir himself.

Let us begin it with repentance for all our mistakes and shortcomings. Let each one do this for himself. You remember how the ancient giant fought with Hercules, and the hero could not overcome him, because every time he fell he touched his mother earth, and received new strength. Let us, too, fall upon our faces, that we may rise invigorated; let us go back to our first simple faith, and recover our lost strength. Men who have been sore sick have cried, "Take me back to my native air, and I shall soon be well. Among the buttercups and daisies of the meadows, in which I used to play when I was a child, and near the brook where I caught the minnows, I shall soon revive." Ah! it does our soul good to get back to our days of child-like faith, when we sang,—

"Just as I am,—without one plea

But that Thy blood was shed for me,

And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,

O Lamb of God, I come." This will help you to renew your youth: it seems an easy way, but it is the only way.

Return, my brethren, to your earliest Bible-readings, when you were wont to let the promise lie under your tongue as a dainty morsel. Ah! this Book, as I turn it over, wakes up many a memory; its pages glow with a light which I cannot describe, for they are set with stars which in my many hours of gloom have been the light of my soul. I did not then read this divine volume to find a text, but to hear my Lord speak to my own heart; I was not then as Martha, cumbered with much serving, but as Lazarus, who sat at the table with Jesus.

It would be well for many to get back to their first prayers and watchfulness, and all else that is good.

It may cost you a great deal to be set right again. John Bunyan speaks of the pilgrim who lost his roll, and had to go back for it, so that he travelled three times over the road, and then found the sun setting ere he reached his lodging. But cost us whatever it may, we must get right with God. I read a dream, the other day, which was the means of a man's conversion. He thought that he was going with his friend into one of the Eastern towns, and as he was about to enter, the portcullis above the gate began to fall. As it descended, he stooped; but it fell so fast that he could not get through, stooping, kneeling, crouching, or even lying down. He felt that he must enter, so he made a desperate effort. He had on a very fine laced vest, and he pulled that off, but the portcullis still descended, till he found that the only thing he could do was to strip himself, and then, close to the earth, and grazed by the gravel, he crept through. When he was safely inside the gate, a shining one covered him from head to foot with glittering garments. It may be that, in order to get right with God, we shall have to part with that fine vest, that splendid theory, that love of popularity, that rhetorical flourishing; but, oh! if we once get through that gate, and God covers us with the robe of acceptance in the Beloved, it will well repay us for anything that the struggle may cost us.

It is expected of us, brethren, that from this time we rise to a higher point. It is the Lord's due, if we think of what He has done for us. Some of my comrades in arms, now before me, have gone through battles as hard as any men may wish to fight; and after such success as they have had, they must never say die. After what the Lord has done for us, we must never strike our flag, nor turn our backs in the day of battle. Sir Francis Drake, when it was feared that he would be wrecked in the Thames, said, "What! have I been round the world, and am I now to be drowned in a ditch? Not I." So say I to you, brethren: you have done business in stormy waters, and will you sink in a village pond? We shall not be worse treated than we have been. We are now in fine fighting trim, for we are hardened by former blows. A great pugilist at Rome was so battered, his nose, eyes, and face were so disfigured, that he was always ready to fight, because he said, "I cannot look worse than I do." Personally, I am in much the same plight. Men cannot say anything worse of me than they have said. I have been belied from head to foot, and misrepresented to the last degree. My good looks are gone, and none can damage me much now.

In the Name of the Ever-blessed, we this day again set up our banners. Our watchword is "Victory." We mean to win for the grand old cause of Puritanism, Protestantism, Calvinism,—all poor names which the world has given to our great and glorious faith,—the doctrine of Paul the apostle, the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We can both strike, and bear the strokes which are returned. Through Divine grace, we have given to us both energy and patience; we can work, and we can wait. May the Divine life in us put forth its mightiest force, and make us strong to the utmost of human possibility, and then we shall gain the victory, and give all the glory of it to our omnipotent Leader. The Lord be with you, beloved! Amen.

## Light. Fire. Faith. Life. Love.

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### Chapter 6

Light. Fire. Faith. Life. Love.

I NEVER needed help more than now, and never felt so utterly unfitted to give the key-note to the Conference. As you grow more numerous, more gifted, and more experienced, I feel more and more my unworthiness to stand foremost, and to lead your ranks. However, I will trust in God, and believe that He will, by His Holy Spirit send a word that shall be encouraging and quickening.

Those who truly serve God are made to feel more and more forcibly that "life is real, life is earnest," if it be indeed life in Christ. In times of great pain, and weakness, and depression, it has come over me to hope that, if I should again recover, I should be more intense than ever; if I could be privileged to climb the pulpit stairs again, I resolved to leave out every bit of flourish from my sermons, to preach nothing but present and pressing truth, and to hurl it at the people with all my might; myself living at high pressure, and putting forth all the energy of which my being is capable. I suppose you, too, have felt like this when you have been laid aside. You have said to yourselves, "Playtime is over with us, we must get to work. Parade is ended, now comes the tug of war. We must not waste a single moment, but redeem the time, because the days are evil." When we see the wonderful activity of the servants of Satan, and how much they accomplish, we may well be ashamed of ourselves that we do so little for our Redeemer, and that the little is often done so badly that it takes as long to set it right as we spent in the doing of it. Brethren, let us cease from regrets, and come to actual amendment.

I have heard of ministers who are most lively when playing croquet or cricket, or getting up an excursion, or making a bargain. It was said of one, in my hearing, "What a fine minister he would have been if he had only been converted!" I heard it said of a very clever man, "He would have been a great winner of souls, if he had only believed in souls; but he believed in nothing." It is said of the Russian peasants that, when they have done their work, they will lie on the stove, or around it, and there sleep hour after hour; and there is a current opinion among them that they are only awake when they are asleep, and that their waking and working hours are nothing but a horrible dream. The moujik hopes that his dreams are facts, and that his waking sufferings are merely nightmares. May not some have fallen into the same notion with regard to the ministry? They are asleep upon realities, and awake about shadows; in earnest about trifles, yet trifling about solemnities. What God will have to say to those servants who do their own work well, and His work badly, I will not attempt to foreshadow. What shall be done to the man who displayed great capacity in his recreations, but was dull in his devotions; active out of his calling, and languid in it? The day shall declare it. Let us arouse ourselves to the sternest fidelity, labouring to win souls as much as if it all depended wholly upon ourselves, while we fall back, in faith, upon the glorious fact that everything rests with the eternal God.

Possibly some brother will say, "I have done all that I could do." That may be his honest opinion, for he could not have preached more frequently, or held more meetings. Perhaps it is true that he has held enough meetings, and the people have had quite enough sermons; but there might have been an improvement in the spirit of the meetings, and in the sermons, too. Some ministers might do more in reality if they did less in appearance. A Bristol Quaker—and Quakers are very shrewd men,—years ago stepped into an alehouse, and called for a quart of beer. The beer frothed up, and the measure was not well filled. The Friend said to the landlord, "How much trade art thou doing?" "Oh!" he answered, "I draw ten butts of beer a month." "Dost thou know how thou mightest draw eleven butts?" "No, sir; I wish I did." "I will tell thee, friend; thee can do it by filling thy pots." To any brother who says, "I do not know how I can preach more gospel than I do, for I preach very often," I would reply, "You need not preach oftener, but fill the sermons fuller of gospel." The Saviour at the marriage-feast said, "Fill the waterpots with water." Let us imitate the servants, of whom we read, "They filled them up to the brim." Let your discourses be full of matter,—sound, gracious, and condensed. Certain speakers suffer from an awful flux of words; you can scarcely spy out the poor little straw of an idea which has been hurried down an awful Ganges or Amazon of words. Give the people plenty of thought, plenty of Scriptural, solid doctrine, and deliver it in a way which is growingly better,—every day better, every year better,—that God may be more glorified, and sinners may more readily learn the way of salvation.

I. I commend to you most earnestly the acquisition and distribution of LIGHT.

But, brethren, see to it that you have, in a sevenfold degree, light of a higher kind. You are to be, above all things, students of the Word of God; this, indeed, is a main point of your avocation. If we do not study Scripture, and those books that will help us to understand theology, we are but wasting time while we pursue other researches. We should judge him to be a foolish fellow who, while preparing to be a physician, spent all his time in studying astronomy. There is a connection of some kind between stars and human bones; but a man could not learn much of surgery from Arcturus or Orion. So, there is a connection between every science and religion, and I would advise you to obtain much general knowledge; but universal information will be a poor substitute for a special and prayerful study of the Scriptures, and of the doctrines contained in the revelation of God. We are to study men and our own hearts; we ought to sit as disciples in the schools of providence and experience. Some ministers grow fast because the great Teacher chastens them sorely, and the chastening is sanctified; but others learn nothing by their experience, they blunder out of one ditch into another, and learn nothing by their difficulties but the art of creating fresh ones. I suggest to you all the prayer of a Puritan who, during a debate, was observed to be absorbed in writing. His friends thought he was taking notes of his opponent's speech; but when they got hold of his paper, they found nothing but these words, "More light, Lord! More light, Lord!" Oh, for more light from the great Father of lights!

Get plenty of light, brethren, and when you have obtained it, give it out. Never fall into the notion that mere earnestness will suffice without knowledge, and that souls are to be saved simply by our being zealous. I fear that we are more deficient in heat than in light; but, at the same time, that kind of fire which has no light in it is of a very doubtful nature, and cometh not from above. Souls are saved by truth which enters the understanding, and so reaches the conscience. How can the gospel save when it is not understood? The preacher may preach with a great deal of stamping, and hammering, and crying, and entreating; but the Lord is not in the wind, nor in the fire;—the still

small voice of truth is needed to enter the understanding, and thereby reach the heart. People must be taught. We must "go, and teach all nations," making disciples of them; and I know of no way in which you can save men without teaching on your part, and discipleship on theirs.

At this time, there is a great necessity for giving much light, for a fierce attempt is being made to quench or dim the light. Many are scattering darkness on all sides. Therefore, brethren, keep the light burning in your churches, keep the light burning in your pulpits, and hold it forth in the face of men who love darkness because it favors their aims. Teach the people all truth, and let not our distinctive opinions be concealed. There are sheep-stealers about, who come forth in the night, and run away with our people because they do not know our principles,—the principles of Nonconformists, the principles of Baptists, or even the principles of Christianity. Our hearers have a general idea of these things, but not enough to protect them from deceivers. We are beset, not only by sceptics, but by certain brethren who devour the feeble. Do not leave your children to wander out without the guardianship of holy knowledge, for there are seducers abroad who will mislead them if they can. They will begin by calling them "dear" this, and "dear" that, and end by alienating them from those who brought them to Jesus. If you lose your members, let it be in the light of day, and not through their ignorance. These kidnappers dazzle weak eyes with flashes of novelty, and turn weak heads with wonderful discoveries and marvellous doctrines, which all tend towards division, and bitterness, and the exaltation of their own sect. Keep the light of truth burning, and thieves will not dare to plunder your house.

II. I have now, in the second place, to plead with you that you gather and use in your ministry much heavenly FIRE. Upon this subject, you will perhaps expect me to speak guardedly; for you have seen the mischief of wild fire, and the perils of strange fire, and possibly you are anxious; to know what I think of a certain "army" which abounds in fire, and blazes away most marvellously. I shall express no opinion, except that none of the supposed evils of fire are equal to those of lukewarmness. Even fanaticism is to be preferred to indifference. I had sooner risk the dangers of a tornado of religious excitement than see the air grow stagnant with a dead formality. It is far better for people to be too hot than to be lukewarm. "I would thou wert cold or hot" is Christ's word still, and it applies to preachers as well as to others. When a man is freezingly cold in the things of Christ, we know where he is; and if another is red-hot, or even at a white heat, and is thought to be too enthusiastic, we know where he is; but when a minister preaches in such a way that, at the close of his sermon, you say, "This is neither cold nor hot," you go away feeling that you have had enough, or even too much of it. There was nothing to excite you; you could almost wish to have been made angry rather than to have been lulled by such discoursing. A lukewarm sermon sickens every healthy mind.

Brethren, we must, first of all, take care that we have the fire burning in our own souls. I am happy to know that there are very few, if any, among you who are utterly cold; for you go to be warmed into earnestness if we set about it aright. It is very hard to warm a stone. You may clothe a man in blankets until he is fairly warm, because there is life in him; but you cannot heat a stone in that fashion. Life always begets a measure of warmth, and the possibility of more; and as you have life, there is within you the capacity for heat. Some preachers are of such a cold nature that no known means could warm them.

It is dreadful work to listen to a sermon, and feel all the while as if you were sitting out in a snowstorm, or dwelling in a house of ice, clear but cold, orderly but killing. You have said to yourself, "That was a well-divided and well-planned sermon, but I cannot make out what was the matter with it;" the secret being that there was the wood, but no fire to kindle it. A great sermon without heart in it reminds one of those huge furnaces in Wales, which have been permitted to go out; they are a pitiful sight. We prefer a sermon in which there may be no vast talent, and no great depth of thought; but what there is has come fresh from the crucible, and, like molten metal, burns its way. I once knew a lad who, when he used to go home from the smithy where he worked, was roughly handled by the boys of the village, till his master suggested to him a plan of defence, which was wonderfully efficacious. He took a rod of iron, and just before he started to go home, he blew up the fire, and made the iron hot. When the boys came round him, he warned them not to touch his stick; and after once feeling it, they obeyed the admonition, and respectfully kept their distance. I do not quote the example with any commendation of the actual fact, but with this moral in view,—heat your sermon red-hot, and it will be likely to be remembered by all who come into contact with it. Everything gives way before fire.

Let it be carefully remembered that our flame must be kindled from on high. Nothing is more to be despised than a mere painted fire, the simulation of earnestness. Sooner let us have an honest death than a counterfeit life. The imitation of Baxter is detestable; but to be like Baxter is seraphic. If you would be like Whitefield, I would say be Whitefield. Let the fire be kindled by the Holy Ghost, and not by animal passion, the desire of honour, emulation of others, or the excitement of attending meetings. Let the terrible example of Nadab and Abihu for ever put away strange fire from our censers. Burn because you have been in solemn fellowship with the Lord our God.

Why are many earnest ministers worn and weary till heart and brain give way? They would be of little use if they did not run such a risk. All men, who are eminently useful, are made to feel their weakness in a supreme degree. Can the Spirit of God, even the Infinite Deity, ride in such frail chariots as these, without straining the axle, and making the whole machine to quiver, as if it would be utterly dissolved beneath its sacred burden? When God visits us with soul-saving power, it is as though devouring flame came forth from Heaven, and made its abode in our bosoms; and where this is the case, there may well be a melting away of all strength. Yet let it be so: we humbly invite the sacred burnings. Herod was eaten of worms, being cursed of God; but to be consumed by God for His own service, is to be blessed to the full. We have a choice between these two, to be eaten up by our corruptions, or by the zeal of God's house. It needs no hesitation, the choice of every man among us is to be wholly the Lord's,—ardently, passionately, vehemently the Lord's servants, let the Divine fervour cost us what it may of brain, and heart, and life. Our only hope of honour, and glory, and immortality lies in the fulfilment of our dedication unto God; as devoted things, we must be consumed with fire, or else be rejected. For us to turn aside from our life-work, and to seek distinction elsewhere, is absolute folly; a blight will be upon us, we shall not succeed in anything but the pursuit of God's glory through the teaching of the Word. "This people have I formed for Myself," saith God; "they shall shew forth My praise;" and if we will not do this, we shall do less than nothing. For this one thing we are created; and if we miss this, we shall live in vain.

III. The next thing necessary to us is FAITH; I might say the first, second, third, and last thing is FAITH. "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" and if we are pleasing God, it is not by our talent, but by our faith.

When these "cultivated" persons speak of us, they manifest great scorn, and affect to believe that we are natural fools. Ah, dear! People are not always what they are thought to be, and it may happen that a man sees himself as in a glass when he thinks he is looking out of the window at a neighbour. It is a sign of great weakness when persons are full of contempt for others. If, in any Review or pamphlet, a writer parades his culture, you may be sure that he has been lying fallow of late, and his affectations are the weeds which have come of it. If it came to a fair contest upon the matter of education and culture, the orthodox would be quite able to hold their own. Boasting is sorry work; but, sometimes, persons must be answered according to their folly, and I say boldly that, in any sort of mental tournament, we should not tremble to tilt with the men of "modern thought." Be it so or not, it is ours to believe. We believe that, when the Lord our God gave forth a revelation, He knew His own mind, and that He expressed Himself in the best and wisest manner, and in terms than can be understood by those who are teachable and truthful. We therefore believe that no new revelation is needed, and that the idea of other light to come is practically unbelief in the light which now is, seeing the light of truth is one. We believe that, though the Bible has been twisted and turned about by sacrilegious hands, it is still the infallible revelation of God. It is a main part of our religion humbly to accept what God has revealed. Perhaps the highest form of adoration possible, on this side the veil, is the bowing of our entire mental and spiritual being before the revealed mind of God; the kneeling of the understanding in that sacred presence whose glory causes angels to veil their faces. Let those who please to do so, worship science, reason, and their own clear judgments; it is our delight to prostrate ourselves before the Lord our God, and to say, "This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death."

We must have faith, not only in the form of fixity of creed, but also in the shape of constant dependence upon God. If I were asked what is the sweetest frame within the whole compass of human feeling, I should not speak of a sense of power in prayer, or abundant revelation, or rapturous joys, or conquest of evil spirits; but I should mention, as the most exquisite delight of my being, a condition of conscious dependence upon God. It has been often associated with great pain of body and deep humiliation of spirit, but it is inexpressibly delightful to lie passive in the hand of love, to die into the life of Christ. It is blessed to feel that: you do not know, but your Heavenly Father knows; that you cannot speak, but that "we have an Advocate;" that you can scarcely lift a hand, but that He worketh all your works in you. The entire submission of our soul to our Lord, the full content of the heart with God's will and way, the sure reliance of the mind upon the Lord's presence and power,—this is the nearest approach to Heaven that I know; and it is better than rapture, for one can abide in it without strain or reaction.

"Oh, to be nothing, nothing;

Only to lie at His feet!"

It is not so sublime a feeling as soaring aloft on the wings of eagles; but for sweetness,—deep, mysterious, indescribable,—it bears the palm. It is a blessedness which can bear to be thought of, a joy which never seems to be a stolen one; for surely a poor, frail child of God has an unquestioned right to depend upon his great Father, a right to be nothing in the presence of the all-supporting One.

It is essential that we should exhibit faith in the form of confidence in God. Brothers, it would be a great calamity if it could be said of any one of you, "He had an excellent moral character, and

remarkable gifts; but he did not trust God." Faith is a chief necessary. "Above all, taking the shield of faith," was the apostolic injunction. Alas! some men go to the fight, but leave their shield at home. It would be dreadful to think of a sermon as being all that a sermon ought to be in every respect except that the preacher did not trust in the Holy Spirit to bless it to the conversion of souls; such a discourse is vain. No sermon is what it ought to be if faith be absent: as well say that a body is in health when life is extinct. It is admirable to see a man humbly conscious of his own weakness, and yet bravely confident in the Lord's power to work through his infirmity. We may glory at large when God is our glory. Attempting great things, we shall not overdo ourselves in the attempt; and expecting great things, we shall not be disappointed in our expectation. Nelson was asked whether a certain movement of his ships was not perilous, and he replied, "Perilous it may be, but in naval affairs nothing is impossible, and nothing is improbable." I make bold to assert that, in the service of God, nothing is impossible, and nothing is improbable. Go in for great things, brethren, in the Name of God; risk everything on His promise, and according to your faith shall it be done unto you.

Let us attempt great things, for those who believe in the Name of the Lord succeed beyond all expectation. By faith, the worker lives. The right noble Earl of Shaftesbury said, the other afternoon, of Ragged-school teachers and their work, "It was evident to all thinking persons that we had a great danger in the ignorance of the children of the lower classes, and so the senators began to think of it, and the philosophers began to think of it, and good men of all sorts began to think of it; but while they were all engaged in thinking, a few plain, humble people opened Ragged-schools, and did it, This is the kind of faith of which we need more and more; we need so to trust in God as to put our hand to the plough in His Name. It is idle to spend time in making and altering plans, and doing nothing else; the best plan for doing God's work is to do it. Brothers, if you do not believe in anybody else, believe in God without stint. Believe up to the hilt. Bury yourselves, both as to your weakness and your strength, in simple trust in God. "Oh!" said one, "as to that man, there is no telling what mad thing he will start next." Let the sneer pass, though it may be as well to say, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but carry out works of truth and soberness." The end of all things will show that faith in God is sanctified common sense, without an atom of folly in it. To believe God's Word, is the most reasonable thing we can do; it is the plainest course that we can take, and the safest policy that we can adopt, even as to taking care of ourselves; for Jesus says, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it." Let us stake all upon the faithfulness of God, and we shall never be ashamed or confounded, world without end.

IV. It is time for me to talk of the fourth thing, namely, LIFE. The preacher must have life; he must have life in himself. Are you all alive, my brother? Of course you have been quickened as a plain believer; but, as a minister, are you altogether alive? If there is a bone in a man's body which is not alive, it becomes the nidus of disease; for instance, a decayed tooth may cause more serious injury than most people imagine. In a living system, a dead portion is out of place, and is sure sooner or later to create intense pain. It is a wise arrangement that it should be so, for decay has a tendency to spread, and mischief might be caused imperceptibly if pain did not sound the alarm bell. I hope that any part of our soul which is not truly alive may pain us till the evil is removed.

Labour to be alive in all your duties. John Bradford, the martyr, used to say, "I never go away from any part of the service of God till I feel thoroughly alive in it, and know that the Lord is with me in

it." Carry out this rule conscientiously. In confessing sin, go on confessing till you feel that your tears have washed the Saviour's feet. In seeking pardon, continue to seek till the Holy Spirit bears witness to your peace with God. In preparing a sermon, wait upon the Lord until you have communion with Christ in it, until the Holy Spirit causes you to feel the power of the truth which you are to deliver. "Son of man, eat this roll." Before you attempt to give out the Word to others, get it into yourself. Is there not too much dead praying, and dead preaching, and dead church work of all sorts? Do you not know churches which are like the ghostly ship in the legend,—the captain, the mate, and all the crew are dead men?

"The mariners all do work the ropes

As they've been wont to do;

They raise their limbs like lifeless tools,—

They are a ghastly crew.

"The body of my deacon's self

Stands by me knee to knee:

The body and I pull at one rope,

But nothing of life have we." This is a grim business, but I have beheld such a sight, though never have I seen a ghost. I recollect, long ago, preaching for a church which was almost defunct externally, and altogether defunct internally; and after the service, during which I felt a terrible chill of soul, I went into the vestry, and there I saw two important persons leaning heavily against the mantelpiece. I said to them, "Are you the deacons of the church?" They answered, "Yes, sir." I replied, "I thought so!" I did not explain further. These pillars of the church evidently needed propping up; but sluggish ease will not do in the work of the Lord.

Be full of life at all times, and let that life be seen in your ordinary conversation. It is a shocking state of things when good people say, "Our minister undoes in the parlour what he has done in the pulpit; he preaches very well, but his life does not agree with his sermons:" Our Lord Jesus would have us perfect even as our Father who is in Heaven is perfect. Every Christian should be holy; but we are laid under a sevenfold obligation to it: how can we expect the Divine blessing if it be not so? God help us so to live that we may be safe examples to our flocks!

V. The last thing, but not the least important, of which I have to speak, is LOVE. Assuredly, we must abound in love. It is a hard thing for some preachers to saturate and perfume their sermons with love; for their natures are hard, or cold, or coarse, or selfish. We are none of us all that we ought to be, but some are specially poverty-stricken in point of love. They do not "naturally care" for the souls of men, as Paul puts it. To all, but especially to the harder sort, I would say,—Be doubly earnest as to holy charity, for without this you will be no more than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Love is power. The Holy Spirit, for the most part, works by our affection. Love men to Christ; faith accomplishes much, but love is the actual instrument by which faith works out its desires in the Name of the Lord of love.

I can truthfully say that I do not know anybody in all the world with whom I would like to change places. "Ah!" say you, "that is very likely, for you have a fine position." I am quite of that opinion; but I thought just the same of my little pastorate at Waterbeach, and it was with the utmost reluctance that I removed from the first to the second. I still retain the belief that there were people in my first congregation whose like I shall never see again, and that, as a position of usefulness, there are great attractions about that Cambridgeshire village. It is a rule to which I know of no exception that, to prosper in any work, you must have an enthusiasm for it.

Above all, we must feel an intense love to God. Our dear brother, who led us in prayer this morning, rightly spoke of the power which girds us when we burn with love to God. Why is it that so many say to children and young people, "You must love Jesus in order to be saved"? That is not the gospel. The gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." We are careful to state the matter correctly to the grown people; why give it inaccurately to the young? If we make a difference at all, it will be wiser to tell the children to believe, and the old people to love: the error will be less injurious, for love is the great lack of most men. The holy grace of love needs to be more preached among us, and more felt by us. "Oh!" said a woman, when she was speaking of the Lord to her minister, "He has heard my prayer many a time, and I can have what I want of Him, for, by His grace, I am very thick with Him." She meant that communion had wrought sweet fellowship, and so her prayers were heard. Oh, that we lived on familiar terms with the Well-beloved, and felt His love within our bosoms always! Love to God will help a man to persevere in service when otherwise he would have given up his work. "The love of Christ constraineth us," said one whose heart was all his Master's. I heard one say, the other day, that "the love of Christ ought to constrain us." This is true, but Paul did not so much speak of a duty as of a fact; he said, "the love of Christ constraineth us."

Go on, brethren, preaching the same gospel; but preach it with more faith, and preach it better every day. Do not draw back: your place is to the front. Qualify yourselves for larger spheres, you who are in little places; but do not neglect your studies to look after better positions. Be prepared for an opening when it comes, and rest assured that the office will come to the man who is fit for the office. We are not so cheap that we need go hawking ourselves in every market; the churches are always on the lookout for really efficient: preachers. Men whose fitness for the ministry is doubtful are at a great discount nowadays; but for men of ability and usefulness there is great demand.

Brethren, consecrate yourselves to God afresh. Bring hither new cords; and bind the sacrifice again to the altar! Struggle as it may, anxious to escape the knife, fearful of the fire, yet bind it with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar; for until death, and in death, we are the Lord's. Entire surrender of everything to Jesus is our watchword this day. Only may the Lord accept the living sacrifice, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

## Strength in Weakness

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### Chapter 7

#### Strength in Weakness

MY DEAR BRETHREN,—I greatly value your prayers, and I feel intensely grateful for that Benjamin's share in them which is ever my portion. I never consciously needed your intercessions more than I do just now, for I may say with the psalmist, "He weakened my strength in the way." After my severe illness, I am trembling like a child who is only just commencing to use his feet. It is with difficulty that I keep myself up; what can you expect from one who can scarcely stand? During the last six weeks, I have considered from day to day what to say to you, but nothing has come of my consideration. My meditations have been a failure. I have gone to the pits and found no water, and returned with my vessel empty. My brain has been so occupied with sympathy for the poor body that it has not been able to mount aloft with the eagle, nor even to plume its wings for the lower flight which I must needs attempt this morning. One thing, however, is clear,—I am in special communion with my subject, and can speak, as the good old people used to say, "experimentally." I cannot, however, draw much aid from that fact; but I cast myself upon the power Divine, which has so many times been displayed in weakness. "The Lord hath been mindful of us: He will bless us."

Let it be understood, at the commencement, that OUR TEXT IS NOT TRUE IN EVERY SENSE IN WHICH IT MIGHT BE READ. Some brethren are weak with an emphasis, and always so; but I have never yet discovered that they are strong, except in the sense of being headstrong and willful. If obstinacy be strength, they are champions; and if conceit be strength, they are gigantic; but in no other respect are they strong.

Brethren, we must strive against all weakness which leads to sin, lest to us also some Delilah should bring destruction. Samson's unshorn locks denoted his Nazarite consecration, and if we ever become weak through failure of consecration, such weakness will be fatal to true usefulness. If the man who had "none of self, and all of God," grows downward till he craves for "some of self, and some of God," he is in a sad condition. If he, who once lived to win souls, now lives to win silver and gold, his money shall perish with him; if he, who once was famous for devotion to his Master, becomes his own master, he shall be infamous; for I trow that, even if we do nothing wrong in the eyes of man, it is wrong enough to have declined from whole-hearted service for God. It is this that demons laugh at, and that angels marvel at;—a man of God living like a man of the world! Even the Lord Himself stays a while to ask, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" The holy and the zealous grieve if they see a minister of Christ ministering to his own ambition. We are only strong as our consecration is perfect. Unless we live wholly for God, our strength will suffer serious leakage, and our weakness will be of that kind which degrades the believer till the ungodly scornfully inquire, "Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?"

And, dear friends, there is a kind of weakness which I hope none of you will ever cultivate, though it seems greatly in favor at the present day, namely, weakness of faith; for when I am weak in faith, then I am not strong in the Lord. When a man doubts his God, he weakens himself. A little time ago, persons who were full of distrust and unbelief were regarded as the possessors of a deep experience; but I hope the age has for ever gone by in which unbelief shall be regarded as a qualification for eminent saintship. If the gospel message were, "He that doubteth, and is not baptized, shall be saved;" there are many who have made their calling and election sure; but while ours is a gospel of faith, unbelief can never be regarded with complacency. Faith is our battle-axe and weapon of war; woe to the warrior who forgets it! Therefore, brethren, let us separate between weakness and weakness,—the weakness which is the token of strength, and weakness in faith which is the indication of spiritual decay.

We want, brethren,—oh, how we would pine for it!—to be delivered from all weakness of the spiritual life. We want to outgrow the weakness natural to us as babes in Christ, so that we may become young men who are strong; yea, we need to go beyond this, and to become fully-developed men in Christ Jesus, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." If we are weak in that respect, we are strong nowhere. As ministers, we ought to covet all the spiritual strength which God is ready to bestow. Would to God that the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us, found nothing within to impede Him, and nothing to restrain His influences! Oh, that the full Godhead of the blessed Spirit might as much manifest itself in these mortal bodies of ours as once the Godhead of the second Person of the Trinity manifested itself in the person of Christ Jesus, the Son of man! I mean not, of course, miraculously, nor in any way to make us rival the incommunicable glories of our Divine Master; but even to its fullness I would that our nature, like the bush in Horeb, were aglow with the indwelling Deity. Never mind though the bush should be consumed; it were well to be consumed so long as the Spirit of God would dwell in us, and manifest His power.

A second observation must be brought before you before I actually come to the text. THERE IS ANOTHER FORM OF IT WHICH IS CLEARLY TRUE. "When I am strong, then am I weak." That is true, almost as true as Paul's declaration, "When I am weak, then I am strong;"—of course, not true in all senses, but so nearly correct that I would recommend its acceptance as a proverb worthy to be quoted with the text itself.

Since we left the college benches, we have seen many strong men. I think I see one sitting down in his study. He has been reading the Reviews and Quarterlies, and a little of the latest modern thought: now he is looking out for a text. He perfectly understands it, whatever it may be. At any rate, if he does not understand it, who does? When he falls upon his text, he interprets it, not at all desiring to know what the men of God who lived before him have said upon it, for they were of a darker age, and he lives in the nineteenth century, that world of wonders, that region of wisdom, that flower and glory of all time. Now you shall see what you shall see when this cultured divine comes forth from his chamber as a giant refreshed with new wine. No dew of the Spirit of God is upon him, he does not require it; he drinks from other fountains. He speaks with astounding power, his diction is superb, his thought prodigious! But he is as weak as he is polished, as cold as he is pretentious; saints and sinners alike perceive his weakness, and by degrees the empty pews confirm it. He is too strong to ask to be strengthened of the Lord, and therefore he is too weak to bless a congregation. He seeks another sphere, and another, and yet another; but in no position is

he powerful, for he is too strong in self. His preaching is like a painted fire, no one is either cheered or alarmed by it.

I have known preachers who have been very weak, and yet they have been used of the Lord. For many, many years, my own preaching was exceedingly painful to me because of the fears which beset me before entering the pulpit. Often, my dread of facing the people has been overwhelming. Even the physical feeling, which came of the mental emotion, has been painful; but this weakness has been an education for me. I wrote, many years ago, to my venerable grandfather, and told him of many things that happened to me before preaching,—sickness of body, and terrible fears, which often made me really ill. The old gentleman wrote back, and said, "I have been preaching for sixty years, and I still feel many tremblings. Be content to have it so; for when your emotion goes away, your strength will be gone." When we preach and think nothing of it, the people think nothing of it, and God does nothing by it. An overwhelming sense of weakness should not be regarded as an evil, but should be accepted as helpful to the true minister of Christ.

An American divine, who says a great many things that are wise, and a few which are otherwise, says that the best preparation for preaching is to get a good night's rest, and to eat a good breakfast. According to his opinion, a fine constitution is a most efficient help to preaching the gospel. If you know nothing of the headache, and nothing of the heartache, and never allow anything to disturb the equilibrium of your mind, you may expect to be a very successful minister. It may be so. I would not depreciate health, appetite, a bounding spirit, and a good Saturday night's sleep; but these things are not all, nor much. *Mens sana in corpore sano*, by all means; but where that has been a good deal relied upon, it has displayed itself in fine sensational sermons; but, brethren, I question whether the next generation will say that it has proved itself fruitful in spiritual teaching which will feed the soul or move the conscience. Many of the noblest specimens of our sermonic literature have come from men who were patient sufferers. Men who have had the most touching pathos, the highest spirituality, the most marvelous insight into the deep things of God, have often known little of bodily health. Calvin labored under many fierce disorders, yet shall we ever see his like? Robert Hall was rarely free from pain, but who ever spoke more gloriously? And here I would mention one whom all of us love, Charles Stanford, who grows sweeter and sweeter as he grows weaker and weaker, and who sees all the more clearly now that his eyes grow dim. My brethren, physical force is not our strength; it may be our weakness. Health is to be desired, and carefully preserved where we have it; but if we lose it, we may count it all joy, and look forward to be able to exclaim with Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong." In some form or other, we must be tried. A preacher who has no cross to carry, a prophet of the Lord without a burden, is an unprofitable servant and a burden to the church.

Permit me here to say that, whenever a brother gets to be so strong as to talk much of his own holiness, then also he is weak. I have not observed yet that anybody who has had grace to make into flags has won the more victories in consequence. I have required, as far as I am concerned, all my grace to make into a sword; I have wanted all my power for real fighting; but, as to making a single banner out of it to display before men, I have not yet attained unto that, and must still take a very lowly position among the servants of God. Coleridge was once asked whether he believed in ghosts, and he said that he did not, for he had seen too many of them! If anyone asked me if I believed in perfect men, I should have to say that I have seen too many of them to believe in them. A ghost is a wonderful affair, and when you see it at first, it makes each particular hair of

your head "to stand on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine." But this does not occur a second time, for a suspicion of hollow turnip and candle steals over you. We heard of one, the other day, who even dared to squirt carmine over a spirit which had been conjured from the vasty deep at a séance. I have sometimes ventured to oppose a perfect man, and the warmth of his temper has been evidence to me that, while he may have been upon the verge of perfection among his own friends, he had not absolutely reached that consummation when exposed to the colder judgment of strangers. The pretender to perfection has usually avoided me from a distaste to my Protestantism against his holiness; and I have not bewailed my loss. I am not in love with that perfection which talks about itself. There is little virtue in the beauty which calls attention to itself; modest beauty is the last to extol its own charms. A number of persons, in company, were boasting of their graces and attainments, and only one brother sat silent. At last, one said to him, "Have you no holiness?" "Yes," he said, "but I never had any to boast of." All the holiness that can be had let us have, and let us press on toward perfection; but let us still recollect the fact that, when we are strong, then we are weak; that, when we think we have reached perfection, the blue mould of pride is coming over us. We have not afforded ourselves a complete inspection, or we should have found some fault to repent of, some evil yet to struggle against.

I. Here is, first, A DEPRESSING EXPERIENCE: "When I am weak." When is that? Truly we are so always. Is there ever a time when the strongest Christian is not comparatively weak?

This was Paul's worry, and it was sent to keep him humble. Paul might have gloried in wrestling with the devil; but this "thorn in the flesh" was a wretched business. To grapple with a great temptation, and to hurl it to the ground, has a grandeur in it which inspires you; but; it is very different when you are assailed by a thing so small that you despise yourself for taking notice of it, and yet it frets your soul. You say to yourself, "How weak I am! Why am I thus irritated and disturbed? If anyone else made half this fuss about a little thorn, I should say, 'You ought to know better;' and yet here am I, a preacher of the gospel, greatly tried by a trifle, and beseeching the Lord thrice to take it away from me, for I cannot bear it." Do we ever get into such a condition? I wish that, at such a time, we would confess our abject weakness, and cast ourselves upon God, for then should we be made strong.

But, dear brethren, having said this much by way of caveat, lest I should lead any of you to despair, let me now ask, Have we any of us fully felt the measure of our responsibility? If there be one such here, let him speak; but I shall not believe him. We have not done what we should have done, what we could have done, nor what we ought to have done, nor what we will yet do in God's strength. Perhaps we have worked up to the full of what was expected of us in quantity; but how about the quality? It may be we have attended quite enough meetings, and delivered quite enough sermons; but then, has this been done in an apostolic spirit, and night and day with tears have we warned men, and pleaded with them as in the sight of God? Our responsibilities, when they are thoroughly felt, crush us, and then are we weak indeed; but this weakness is the road to strength. "When I am weak, then am I strong."

Sometimes we grow depressed and weak because our sphere of labor seems specially difficult. This is not the time to dilate upon the peculiar trials of cur pastorates. Ministers in London could tell a tale that would astonish you, for they see things which are their burden day and night. As for our country brethren, what some of: them have had to put up with! They cannot move the deacons

and the church at all, perhaps the deacons wish to move them; they cannot get at the people, and though they preach their hearts out, they preach to empty pews. If we could only put certain men into the positions which their brethren faithfully occupy under great discouragement, they would know themselves better, and leave off boasting, and instead of finding fault, they would wonder that so much has been accomplished under such circumstances. By that way also we become strong; when God makes us feel that our work is impossible to us without His aid, then are we driven to His strength.

In addition to this, it may be that reproach comes undeservedly. A scandalous story from the father of lies may be forged against you, and you may be quite unable to defend yourself. You fear lest, in trying to erase the blot, you might spoil the page. Hearts are broken over this matter. Oh, how weak a man becomes when this is the case; he may half feel himself guilty after having heard the accusation repeated again and again; although all the while he is as pure as the driven snow. This brings a weakness which may paralyze a man. Oh, to be strong in the Lord at such times!

Certain brethren know nothing of this experience, they are not weak at all; but despise such confessions. Have you never met with preachers who can keep on and on, though they never did say anything, and never will? Yet they never know what it is to be weak; they are just as able today as ever they were. I have heard of an old Scotch preacher, whose divisions were very numerous, and whose subdivisions were almost innumerable; so one day the people, one by one, went away, until at last the boy took the keys up, and said to him, "You can lock the church up when you have done." Some are so very long in saying nothing, and are so surely emptying their places, that it would be wise to hand them the keys so that they might retire when they are quite through.

II. I conclude by speaking upon THE BLESSED EXPERIENCE: "When I am weak, then am I strong." How is it, and how can it be?

Next, we are strong when we are weak because we gain our strength by prayer, and our weakness is our best argument in supplication. Jacob never conquered until he limped, nay, until he fell. When the sinew shrank, the suppliant triumphed. When you are engaged in prayer, plead your strength, and you will get nothing; then plead your weakness, and you will prevail. There is no better plea with Divine love than weakness and pain; nothing can so prevail with the great heart of God as for your heart to faint and swoon. The man who rises in prayer to tears and agony, and feels all the while as if he could not pray, and yet must pray,—he is the man who will see the desire of his soul. Do not mothers always care most for the tiniest child, or for that one which is most sick? Do we not spend the greatest care upon that one of our children which has the least use of its limbs; and is it not true that our weakness holds God's strength, and leads Him to bow His omnipotence to our rescue?

Besides this, another form of strength comes of weakness, for by it our sympathy is educated. When you and I become weak, and are depressed in spirit, and our soul passes through the valley of the shadow of death, it is often on account of others. One Sabbath morning, I preached from the text, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and though I did not say so, yet I preached my own experience. I heard my own chains clank while I tried to preach to my fellow-prisoners in the dark; but I could not tell why I was brought into such an awful horror of darkness, for which I condemned myself. On the following Monday evening, a man came to see me who bore all the marks of despair upon his countenance. His hair seemed to stand upright, and his eyes were

ready to start from their sockets. He said to me, after a little parleying, "I never before, in my life, heard any man speak who seemed to know my heart. Mine is a terrible case; but on Sunday morning you painted me to the life, and preached as if you had been inside my soul." By God's grace, I saved that man from suicide, and led him into gospel light and liberty; but I know I could not have done it if I had not myself been confined in the dungeon in which he lay. I tell the story, brethren, because you sometimes may not understand your own experience, and the perfect people may condemn you for having it; but what know they of God's servants? You and I have to suffer much for the sake of the people of our charge. God's sheep ramble very far, and we have to go after them; and sometimes the shepherds go where they themselves would never roam if they were not in pursuit of lost sheep. You may be in Egyptian darkness, and you may wonder why such a horror chills your marrow; but you may be altogether in the pursuit of your calling, and be led of the Spirit to a position of sympathy with desponding minds. Expect to grow weaker, brethren, that you may comfort the weak, and so may become masters in Israel in the judgment of others; while, in your own opinion, you are less than the least of all saints.

Oh, it is a blessing when God casts a godly man into the middle of a mass of misery, and keeps him there! It may not be a pleasant thing for him, but it will bring a sevenfold reward in the end. I am glad that Howard felt that he must go through all the prisons in Europe. He had a comfortable home of his own, and yet he must roam through France, and Germany, and Russia, poking his nose into every pestilential dog hole where prisoners were to be found. He makes himself familiar with the unimaginable horrors of dungeon life, and suffers fevers born of the jail filth. He has a choice nose for the worst atmosphere; the fouler it is, the more needful that he should breathe it, for he has a passion for the discovery and destruction of prison cruelty. He comes home, and writes a book upon his pet subject: and then, after a little while, he is off again, and at last he dies a martyr to the cause he has espoused; yet it was worth while to be a Howard who could live and could die to rescue his fellow-men. Mr. Howard, it is because you are so very weak, and suffer so much from prison-on-the-brain, that you are strong; you will accomplish reforms while others are talking of them. I daresay there were some who said, "These things must be gradually ameliorated by the progress of better principles, and we must try new notions by degrees." Yes, this gradual reform is a prudent idea; but then Mr. Howard is such a weak-minded man that he goes raking up horrible stories, and insisting upon it that murder by imprisonment must cease at once. Brethren, may you become weak in like fashion,—almost out of your minds with restless resolve to save souls! If you break loose in an absurd way, and set the chill proprieties a-trembling, and the imbecilities ridiculing, it will cause me great joy. Little do I care if you become fools for Christ's sake. When our weakness verges upon fanaticism, it may have all the more power about it. Mr. Plimsoll did nobly when he stood up and pleaded against coffin-ships; but he was never so strong as when he lost himself, and broke the rules of the House of Commons in the ardor of his passion. It was very weak of him, but in that weakness lay his strength. Give us more of the speech which comes of a burning heart, as lava comes of a volcanic overflow. When the truth conquers us, we shall conquer by the truth.

"When I am weak, then am I strong." Because I cannot do much, therefore I will do all I can. Because I have little power, therefore I will use all the power I have. Do not the tradesmen say that "a nimble nine-pence is better than a lazy half-crown"? I am sure it is so. A sense of weakness may bestir us to a bravery which else we had not known. Look at our own country, ages ago, when

Spain tried to destroy her. See the Invincible Armada! Huge ships burden the sea, and Papal warriors are speeding to seize the prey. England must do her best. On the one side is Spain, mistress of empires, and on the other is a poor little island, with a brave queen, it is true, but with an army and navy slender to the last degree. The monster ships are off Plymouth; here they come, like a half-moon, or like jaws opening to swallow us up. What is happening in Britain? Why, everybody is preparing for the battle, and every man and every woman on the island will fight to the death. All the seafaring folk are on the alert. Our sailors in their diminutive vessels are hovering round the huge galleons, waiting for an opportunity to strike a blow, and the opportunity comes:

"Look how the Lion of the sea lifts up his ancient crown,

And underneath his deadly paw treads the gay lilies down."

God watches over England. He blows with His wind, and the sea covers the: Armada, and Spain is smitten, and England is saved. It was a sense of weakness that aroused the valor of our forefathers, and stirred the saints to cry to God for help. Go to, ye mighty ones, ye are not strong. Come ye up, ye weak ones, to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty, for ye are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

■FPRIVATE "TYPE=PICT;ALT= "And this, last of all, is the reason why we are strong when we are weak, namely, because the sacrifice is being consummated. When was Christ strongest but when He was weakest? When did He shake the kingdom of darkness but when He was nailed to the tree? When did He put away sin for His people but when His heart was pierced? When did He trample upon death and the old dragon but when He was Himself about to die? His victory was in the extremity of His weakness, namely, in His death; and it must be the same with His trembling Church. She has no might; she must suffer, she must be slandered, and derided, and so the Lord will triumph through her. The conquering sign is still the cross. Wherefore, brethren, let us be perfectly content to decrease even unto the end, that our right royal Lord and King may gloriously increase from day to day. Amen.

## What We Would Be

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### Chapter 8

What We Would Be\*("misc/aarm08.htm" \l "note") THIS ASSEMBLY begins to be venerable. For years, we were a band of young men; but now, our own sons are with us, comrades of our ministry, and we feel that we are, no longer striplings. We have not yet reached the sere and yellow leaf, nor have we come to our dotage, or our anecdotage; but we are tending toward maturity, and are impressed with the conviction that, if ever we are to do anything for our Lord Jesus, we must do it at once. To us remains no time for loitering, or even for leisure. To me, at least, eternity seems so near that I cannot frame an excuse for delay. "Now or never," sounds sternly in my ears.

RETROSPECT This will be a healthy feeling for the younger brethren, who are flushed with their first victories. Let them rise to a higher scale of expectancy, lest they readily become self-satisfied, and thus destroy all hope of a great life. Believe me, young brother, as our years sober us, we become more and more aware of our imperfections, and feel less and less inclined to admire our own performances. To me, a retrospect means a hearty psalm of praise, and a deep sigh of regret. Unto the Lord be glory forever; but unto me belong shame and confusion of face.

With regard to the prospect before us I may be supposed to be a prophet of evil; but I am not. I mourn the terrible defections from the truth which are now too numerous to be thought of in detail; nevertheless, I am not disquieted, much less dispirited. That cloud will blow over, as many another has done. I think the outlook is better than it was. I do not think the devil is any better: I never expected he would be; but he is older. Brethren, whether that is for the better or for the worse, I do not know; but, assuredly, the arch-enemy is not quite such a novelty among us as he was. We are not quite so much afraid of that particular form of devilry which is raging now, because we begin to perceive its shape. The unknown appeared to be terrible; but familiarity has removed alarm. At the first, this "modern thought" looked very like a lion; the roaring thereof was terrible, though to some ears there was always a suspicion of braying about it. On closer inspection, the huge king of beasts looked more like a fox, and now we should honor it if we likened it to a wild cat. We were to have been devoured of lions, but the monsters are not to be seen. Scientific religion is empty talk without either science or religion in it. The mountain has brought forth its mouse, or, at any rate, the grand event is near. Very soon, "advanced thought" will only be mentioned by servant girls and young Independent ministers. It has gradually declined till it may now be carried off with the slops. There is nothing in the whole bag of tricks.

Lovers of the eternal truth, you have nothing to fear! God is with those who are with Him. He reveals Himself to those who believe His revelation. Our march is not to and fro, but onward unto victory. "The Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever." Other enemies will arise, even as Amalekites, Hivites, Jebusites, Perizzites, and all the rest of them, rose up against Israel; but, in the Name of the Lord, we shall pass on to possess the promised heritage.

## PROPOSAL

Brethren, let us look well to our own steadfastness in the faith, our own holy walking with God. Some say that such advice is selfish; but I believe that, in truth, it is not selfishness, but a sane and practical love of others which leads us to be mindful of our own spiritual state. Desiring to do its level best, and to use its own self in the highest degree to God's glory, the true heart seeks to be in all things right with God. He who has learned to swim has fostered a proper selfishness, for he has thereby acquired the power of helping the drowning. With the view of blessing others, let us covet earnestly the best blessings for ourselves.

## PERSONAL AMBITION

One thing is past all question; we shall bring our Lord most glory if we get from Him much grace. If I have much faith, so that I can take God at His word; much love, so that the zeal of His house eats me up; much hope, so that I am assured of fruit from my labor; much patience, so that I can endure hardness for Jesus' sake; then I shall greatly honor my Lord and King. Oh, to have much consecration, my whole nature being absorbed in His service; then, even though my talents may be slender, I shall make my life to burn and glow with the glory of the Lord! This way of grace is open to us all. To be saintly is within each Christian's reach, and this is the surest method of honoring God. Though the preacher may not collect more than a hundred in a village chapel to hear him speak, he may be such a man of God that his little church will be choice seed-corn, each individual worthy to be weighed against gold. The preacher may not get credit for his work in the statistics which reckon scores and hundreds; but in that other book, which no secretary could keep, where things are weighed rather than numbered, the worker's register will greatly honor his Master.

## NEED OF GREAT CARE

Need I affectionately call upon you, my brethren, to stir up the gifts which are in you? Cultivate your natural and gracious qualifications for the ministry. The pastor knows far more than when he left College; has he learned all he ought to have learned in that interval? No doubt many of our brethren—

"Grow wiser than their teachers are,

And better know the Lord."

I am not so sure about those who are the most eager to assert this of themselves. Real progress may be usually reckoned by the gauge of humility. He knows most who is most aware that he knows little. We have all great need of much hard study if our ministry is to be good for anything. We have heard of the French peasants who sent to the Pope for a cure. "who had finished his education." They complained that their pastor was always studying, and they wanted a man who knew all that was necessary, and consequently needed no time for books and thoughts. What fools they must be in that part of France! We need exactly the kind of preacher whom they despised. He who has ceased to learn has ceased to teach. He who no longer sows in the study will no more reap in the pulpit.

I hope it will never get to be your notion that only a certain class of preachers can be soul-winners. Every preacher should labor to be the means of saving his hearers. The truest reward of our life

work is to bring dead souls to life. I long to see souls brought to Jesus every time I preach. I should break my heart if I did not see it to be so. Men are passing into eternity so rapidly that we must have them saved at once. We indulge no secret hope which can make it easy to lose present opportunities. From all our congregations a bitter cry should go up unto God, unless conversions are continually seen. If our preaching never saves a soul, and is not likely to do so, should we not better glorify God as peasants, or as tradesmen? What honor can the Lord receive from useless ministers? The Holy Ghost is not with us, we are not used of God for His gracious purposes, unless souls are quickened into heavenly life. Brethren, can we bear to be useless? Can we be barren, and yet content?

Brethren, I long that we may all be "apt to teach." The Church is never overdone with those whose "lips feed many." It should be our ambition to be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God." We all know certain able ministers who are expositors of the Word, and instructors of believers. You always bring something away when you hear them. They trade in precious things; their merchandise is of the gold of Ophir. Certain passages of Scripture are quoted and set in a new light; and certain specialties of Christian experience are described and explained. We come away from such preaching feeling that we have been to a good school. Brethren, I desire that we may each one exercise such an edifying ministry! Oh, that: we may have the experience, the illumination, the industry needful for so high a calling! Oh, for more richly-instructive sermons! Brethren, look at many modern sermons! What fire and fury! What flash and dash! What is it all about? To what purpose is this display? We often meet with sermons which are like kaleidoscopes, marvelously pretty, but what is there in them? See, there are several bits of colored glass, and one or two slips of mirror, and other trifles, and these are put into a tube! How they sparkle! What marvelous combinations! What fascinating transformations! But what are you looking at? You have not seen any more after twenty displays than you saw at first; for indeed there is no more. Some preachers excel in quotations of poetry; and others excel in apposition and alliteration, or in the quaintness of the division of their texts. Many are great in domestic sorrows, and death-bed spectacles, and semi-dramatic picturings. Very telling, very sensational; and, under gracious direction, useful in its own measure; but when souls are to be saved, and saved souls are to be fed, more solid matters must take a prominent place. We must feed the flock of God. We must deal with eternal verities, and grapple with heart and conscience. We must, in fact, live to educate a race of saints, in whom the Lord Jesus shall be reflected as in a thousand mirrors.

FATHERS The parental relation is one which requires much of us. A father should be a stable and established man. Something of solid worth and substantial judgment is looked for in a father. Many a preacher we could not call "father"; it would seem too ridiculous. The trifler, the brother of many ways of thinking, and the man who is of an angry spirit, are out of the list when we read over the roll of fathers. Something of weight, kindness, dignity, steadiness, and venerableness, goes to make up our idea of the father. Great truths are very dear to him, for he has had experience of their power for many years. When some of the boys tell him that he is behind the times, he smiles at their superior wisdom. Now and then, he tries to show them that he is right, though it is hard to make them see it. The boys think the fathers fools; the fathers do not think that of them,—there is no need. True fathers are patient; they do not expect to find old heads on young shoulders. They have the knack of waiting till tomorrow, for time brings with it many instructions; and while it may demonstrate the true, it may also explode the false. Father is not blown about by every wind of

doctrine, neither does he run after every new thing which is cried up by the skeptical or by the fanatical. A father knows what he does know, stands by what he has verified, and is rooted and grounded in the faith.

Does any brother exclaim, "I should like to fill a father's place in my church, for then I could rule it"? This is a sorry motive, and one which will disappoint you. The father of a family usually finds that his pre-eminence is one of superior self-denial, rather than of self-assertion. The best of fathers do really rule, but they never raise the question of "Who is master?" In a well-ordered house, "baby is king." Have you not seen how everything is set aside for him? The warmest welcome is for that little stranger, and the movements of the household are guided by his needs. If you were as great an autocrat as the King of the Cannibal Islands, it would make no difference,—baby must be attended to. What means this? Why, that the poorest, weakest, and most easily offended person in the whole church must rule you if you are a true father! You will study the most wayward, and yield your personal pleasure for the good of the most faulty. Somebody asked, "Why should we deny ourselves alcoholic drink because weak-minded persons are overcome by it? That would be to make the weakest persons the virtual rulers of our conduct, which would be absurd." Just so; but the absurdity appertains to the family of love. Our domestic affairs must seem absurd to unsympathetic strangers. Who likes to tell them to the uninitiated? It would be casting pearls before swine. I would say,—All hail to the absurdities of holy love: long may they reign! Baby is king: the weakest rule our hearts. The pace of the whole flock is slackened, lest we overdrive the lambs. Our ruling is carried out by seeing that none tread down the weak, and by setting the example of the greatest self-forgetfulness. He is not fit to be a father who does not see that this is the imperative law of love, and is, indeed, the secret: of power. We lay ourselves down for all men to go over us if thus they may come to Jesus.

A father must possess wisdom. But in this matter many are deceived, for they aspire to it from a wrong motive, and so become foolish. If you had wisdom, my brother, what would you do with it? Would you so use it as to make others feel your superiority? If so, you have little wisdom as yet. A minister's wisdom lies in endeavoring to be wise for others, not cunning for himself. Some use their wisdom in a very unwise way, and curse the church which they should bless. And so you would go about the church, and put everybody right, being so wise yourself! Herein is often great folly. A man I have heard of said, "I am not at all afraid of thieves breaking into my house. If I heard a burglar, I should touch this button, and in a moment an electric current would explode dynamite in the cellar, and that would blow up the burglar and the whole establishment." You laugh; but we have met with ministers who have acted in much the same manner. I am sorry to know a brother who has performed this feat in five or six churches. The moment he thinks that a member, especially a deacon, has gone wrong, he blows the whole thing to pieces, and calls it faithfulness. This is not acting the part of a wise father. If we have wisdom, we shall maintain peace, and shall attempt reforms with gentleness. Fathers do not kill their children because they are unphilosophical, or unsound in theology, or somewhat disobedient in conduct.

You know the weighty responsibility of a father towards his children; such is ours. I do not think that any of us would dare to say to our people, "Follow me in all things? And yet their tendency is to follow the pastor. In this tendency lies influence for the holy, and a dreadful power for mischief for the careless. Many beginners take readily to an earthly model; they find it more natural to copy a godly man, whom they have seen, than to imitate the Lord Jesus, whom they have not seen. I do

not commend them in this; but so it is, and we must be tender toward this weakness so that it may not become the occasion of evil. Children first obey their parents, and so learn the law of the Lord, and no doubt many of the weaker sort learn the way of holiness from their spiritual guides. A painter, who afterwards becomes a great original, is in his earliest days a disciple of a certain school of art; it is so in religion. The babe in grace is taught to walk by an older brother, and afterwards takes his own path. I believe that many weak ones in our churches are seriously injured, if not entirely broken down, by following the example of their ministers in matters wherein they come short of the Lord's mind. How grievous it would be; if any believers were dwarfed through our conduct! May we not fear that there are some in our churches today who are not what they might have been had we properly guided them? No doubt some have been coddled into weakness, and others have been allowed to grow more in one direction than in others. Do you say, "We cannot help this; it is no business of ours"? I tell you it is our business. Strangers may talk in a careless way, but fathers are conscious of great responsibility as to their children. If a family is not well ordered, a wise father begins to mend his own ways. If our people do wrong, we fret and blame ourselves. If we were better, our church-members would be better. It is little use to scold them; our wiser way is to humble ourselves before God, and find out the reason why our ministry does not produce better results.

We had need be kind and courteous, for even such a small thing as shaking hands, or giving a nod, may have an influence. One who is now a member of our church told me that he had often stood to shake hands with me at the back gate, as I left the building, long before he had come inside to hear me preach. The mere fact of a kindly notice which I gave him on going out had made him think of me, and inclined him to hear. He assured me that this simple matter was the first link between him and religion. He was drunken, and wretched, and ungodly; but he had, by a happy accident, become the friend of a minister of Christ, and this bond, though slight as a spider's thread, was the beginning of better things. Never be stiff and proud. "Be pitiful, be courteous." Children expect kindness from a father; let them not be disappointed. It is ours to be all things to all men, if by any means we may save some.

On the other hand, survey the picture of a father who sees his child returning from the error of his way. In the New Testament, you see the portrait divinely drawn. When the prodigal was a great way off, his father saw him. Oh, to have quick eyes to spy out the awakened! The father ran to meet him. Oh, to be eager to help the hopeful! He fell upon his neck, and kissed him. Oh, for a heart overflowing with love, to joy and rejoice over seeking ones! As that father was, such should we be; ever loving, and ever on the outlook. Our eyes, and ears, and feet should ever be given to penitents. Our tears and open arms should be ready for them. The father in Christ is the man to remember the best robe, and the ring, and the sandals; he remembers those provisions of grace because he is full of love to the returning one. Love is a practical theologian, and takes care to deal practically with all the blessings of the covenant, and all the mysteries of revealed truth. It does not hide away the robe and ring in a treasury of theology; but brings them forth, and puts them on.

But lest you should feel pleased with the fact that you desire this high honor, and fancy that the mere aspiration will fulfil itself, let me remind you how the Savior lived. He never settled down in desires and resolves, but girded Himself for constant service. He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." Soul-winning must be meat and drink to us. To do the

Lord's work must be as necessary as food to us. His Father's work is that in which we also are engaged, and we cannot do better than imitate our Lord. Tell me, then, how Jesus set about it. Did He set about it by arranging to build a huge Tabernacle, or by organizing a monster Conference, or by publishing a great book, or by sounding a trumpet before Him in any other form? Did He aim at something great, and altogether out of the common line of service? Did He bid high for popularity, and wear Himself out by an exhausting sensationalism? No; He called disciples to Him one by one, and instructed each one with patient care. To take a typical instance of His method, watch Him as He paused in the heat of the day. He sat upon a well, and talked with a woman,—a woman who was none of the best. This looked like slow work, and very commonplace action. Yet we know that it was right and wise.

As the Lord shall help us, let us lay our all upon the altar, and only breathe for Him. Certain of you will go abroad, some of you may find a grave on the banks of the Congo. We cannot all do this; but, brethren, we must all live unto the Lord, and lay down our lives for the brethren. The Thames and the Clyde must have their consecrated ones as well as the Congo and the Ganges. London and Bristol must witness to as true a heroism as Canton and Calcutta. Because we belong to Christ, the zeal of the Lord's house must eat us up.

■PRIVATE "TYPE=PICT;ALT= "I wish I could have spoken to you with all my strength, but it may be that my weakness may be used of God to greater purpose. My thoughts are few by reason of pain, which disorders my head; but they are all on fire, for my heart remains true to my Lord, to His gospel, and to you. May He use every man of us to the utmost of our capacity for being used, and glorify Himself by our health and our sickness, our life and our death! Amen.

#### NOTE

\* This address was delivered in great pain. It is not what we desired it to be. Our anguish made it hard to think, and almost impossible to think connectedly. Almost all that had been prepared was forgotten, and no new springs of thought could make channels for themselves while the mind was smothered up in physical suffering. The address may be regarded as a literary curiosity,—the talk of a man who could with difficulty keep himself from tears through acute suffering, and yet was resolved to take his part in a meeting which he had anticipated with solemn interest for months before. We may add that the revising of the address was accomplished under much the same conditions as the delivery of it.—C. H. S.

## Stewards

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### Chapter 9

Stewards MY BELOVED BRETHREN,—I might even say with Paul, "My dearly-beloved and longed-for,"—it gives me intense delight to look into your faces once again; and yet I feel weighted with a solemn responsibility in having to direct your thoughts at this time, so as to give the key-note to our solemn Conference. I ask your continued prayers that I may speak aright, saying the right thing in the right way.

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

We are MINISTERS. The word has a very respectable sound. To be a minister, is the aspiration of many a youth. Perhaps, if the word were otherwise rendered, their ambition might cool. Ministers are servants: they are not guests, but waiters; not landlords, but labourers. The word has been rendered "under-rowers", men who tug at the oars on the lowest bench. It was hard work to row a galley; those rapid strokes consumed the life-forces of the slaves. There were three banks of rowers: those on the upper bank had the advantage of fresh air; those who were beneath them were more closely shut in; but I suppose that the lowest bank of rowers would be faint with heat, as well as worn out with sore travail. Brethren, let us be content to wear out our lives even in the worst position, if by our labour we can speed the passage of our great Caesar, and help the progress of the trireme of the Church in which He has embarked. We are willing to be chained to the oar, and to work on through life to make His barque cleave the waves. We are not captains, nor owners of the galley, but only the oarsmen of Christ.

The text, however, does not call us simply ministers or servants, but it adds, "of Christ." We are not the servants of men, but of the Lord Jesus. Esteemed sir, if you think, because you subscribe to my support, that I am bound to do your bidding, you are under a mistake. Truly, we are "ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake;" but, in the highest sense, our sole responsibility is to Him whom we call Master and Lord. We obey superior orders; but we cannot yield to the dictation of our fellow-servants, however influential they may be. Our service is glorious, because it is the service of Christ: we feel honoured in being permitted to wait upon Him whose shoe's latchet we are not worthy to unloose.

1. First, a steward is a servant, and no more. Perhaps he does not always remember this; and it is a very pitiful business when the servant begins to think that he is "my lord." It is a pity that servants, when honoured by their master, should be so apt to give themselves airs. How ridiculous Jack-in-office makes himself! I do not refer now to butlers and footmen, but to ourselves. If we magnify ourselves, we shall become contemptible; and we shall neither magnify our office nor our Lord. We are the servants of Christ, and not lords over His heritage.

2. A steward is a servant of a peculiar kind, for he has to superintend the other servants, and that is a difficult thing to do. An old friend of mine, who is now with God, once said, "I have always been

a shepherd. Forty years I was a shepherd of sheep, and another forty years I was a shepherd of men, and the last flock was a deal more sheepish than the first." This witness is true. I think I have heard that a sheep has as many diseases as there are days in the year; but I am sure that the other sort of sheep are liable to ten times as many. A pastor's work is an anxious one. All sorts of difficulties occur with our fellow-servants; and, alas! unwise stewards make a great many more than there need be by expecting perfection in others, although they do not possess it themselves. Our fellow-servants are, after all, wisely selected; for He who put them into His household knew what He was doing; at any rate, they are His choice, and not ours. It is not our place to find fault with our Lord's own election. It is very common with some to revile the Church; but as the Church is the bride of Christ, it is rather dangerous work to criticize the Lord's beloved. I feel towards the Church somewhat as David felt towards Saul; I dare not lift up my hand against the Lord's anointed. Better far will it be for us to find fault with ourselves rather than with our people, when there is anything wrong with them.

The other servants will take their cue from us. A steward, who is dull, inert, and slow, will have a slow team of servants about him, and the business of his lordship will fare badly. Those who travel must have noticed that the servants in a hotel are very much like the landlord; if the landlord is cheery, attentive, and obliging, all the maids and waiters partake of his geniality; but if he looks sourly at you, and treats you with indifference, you will find that the whole establishment is of a disdainful order. A minister soon gets round him people like himself: "like priest, like people." Oh, that we may always be alive and earnest in the service of the Lord Jesus, that our people may be alive also! I have read of a Puritan divine, that he was so full of life that his people said he lived like one who fed on live things. Oh, for a life sustained by living bread!

3. Next, remember that stewards are servants under the more immediate command of the great Master. We should be as the steward who daily goes into his lord's private room to receive orders. John Ploughman was never in the squire's parlour, but the steward is often there. If he neglected to consult the squire, he would soon be doing amiss, and involving himself in heavy responsibility. How often ought you and I to say, "Lord, show me what Thou wouldst have me to do!" To cease to look up to God, so as to learn and practise His will, would be to quit our true position. What shall be done to a steward who never communicates with his master? Give him his wagers, and let him go. He who does his own will, and not his master's, is of no value as a steward.

4. Again, stewards are constantly giving account. Their account is given as they go along. A businesslike proprietor requires an account of outgoings and incomings, from day to day. There is great truth in the old proverb that "short reckonings make long friends." If we make short reckonings with God, we shall be long friends with Him. I wonder if any of you keep account of your faults and shortcomings. Perhaps the time will be better spent in constant efforts to serve your Master, and increase His estate. We ought each one to ask himself, "What am I doing by my preaching? Is it of the right kind? Am I giving prominence to those doctrines which my Lord would have me put in the forefront? Am I caring for souls as He would have me care for them?" It is a good thing thus to review one's whole life, and enquire, "Do I give sufficient time to private prayer? Do I study the Scriptures as intensely as I should? I hurry about to many meetings, but am I in all this fulfilling my Master's orders? May I not be gratifying myself with the appearance of doing much, whereas I should really be doing more if I were more attentive to the quality than to the quantity of the work?" Oh, to go often to the Master, and to be right and clear in our accounts with

Him!

We ought to increase our capital stock. Are all the young brethren doing that? Are you increasing in gift and capacity? My brethren, do not neglect yourselves. I observe that some brethren grow, and others stand still, dwarfed and stunted. Men, like horses, are very disappointing creatures; good colts drop suddenly lame, or develop a vice of which they were never before suspected. Alas! too many young men destroy our hopes; they are extravagant in their expenses, make an unfortunate marriage, fall into ill humours, wander after novel opinions, give way to laziness and self-indulgence, or in some other way fail to improve themselves. Yet the most needful and profitable labour is that which we spend upon our own mental and spiritual improvement. Whatever you do, take heed unto yourselves, and to your doctrine. Those who neglect thinking in order that they may be everlastingly "jawing", are very foolish; they resemble a bailiff who does nothing on the farm, but talks at great length about what ought to be done. Dumb dogs cannot bark, but wise dogs are not always barking. To be always giving out, and never taking in, tendeth to emptiness.

As a trustee, if my course of action is disputed, I keep to the letter of the bond; and if any quarrel over it, they must take their complaints to the proper Court, for I have no power to alter the record. We are simply administrators; and if we are not allowed to act, we will throw the whole thing into the heavenly Chancery. The dispute is not between us and modern thought, but between God and the wisdom of men. "Oh!" they say, "it is barbarous to go on prosing with this old, old story." We care not how old the story is; since it came from God, we repeat it in His Name. Call it what you like, it is in the Book from which we derive our authority. "But you surely have a judgment of your own?" May be we have, and as much of it as those who oppose us; but our judgment does not invent a trust, it simply guides us in the carrying of it out. Stewards must keep to their orders, and trustees must carry out the terms of their trust.

6. A steward's business is to dispense his master's goods according to their design. He is to bring forth things new and old; to provide milk for babes and strong meat for men, giving to each one his portion of meat in due season. At some tables, I fear the strong men have been waiting a long time for the meat, and there is small hope of its yet appearing; the milk-and-water is more plentiful by far. Someone went to hear a certain preacher, last Sunday, and complained that he did not preach Christ. Another remarked that perhaps it was not the due season; but, my brethren, the due season for preaching Christ is every time you preach. God's children are always hungry, and no bread will satisfy them but that which comes down from Heaven.

Brethren, take care that you use your talents for your Master, and for your Master only. It is disloyalty to our Lord if we wish to be soul-winners in order to be thought to be so. It is unfaithfulness to Jesus if we even preach sound doctrine with the view of being thought sound, or pray earnestly with the desire that we may be known as praying men. It is for us to pursue our Lord's glory with a single eye, and with our whole heart. We must use our Lord's gospel, and our Lord's people, and our Lord's talents, for our Lord, and for Him alone.

8. I shall cease from this picture when I have said that the steward represents his master. When the master is away, everybody comes to the steward for orders. He had need to behave himself well who represents such a Lord as ours. A steward should speak much more carefully and wisely when he speaks for his lord than when he speaks on his own account. Unless he is guarded in his

utterances, his lord may be forced to say to him, "You had better speak for yourself: I cannot allow you thus to misrepresent me." My beloved brethren and fellow-servants, the Lord Jesus is compromised by us if we do not keep His way, declare His truth, and manifest His spirit. Men infer the Master from the servant; are they not to be excused if they so do? Ought not the steward to act after his master's manner? You cannot dissociate the squire from the steward, the Lord from His representative. A Puritan was told that he was too precise; but he replied, "I serve a precise God." We should be gentle, for we represent the gentle Jesus. We should be zealous, for we represent One who was clad with zeal as with a cloak. Our best guide, when we are uncertain as to what to do, will be found in the answer to the question, "What would Jesus do?" When deliberating about going to a place of amusement, you may end the deliberation by saying, "I will go if my Master would have gone." If moved to speak with warmth, take heed that it is only such warmth as your Lord would have exhibited.

The second part of my address will be occupied with OUR OBLIGATIONS AS STEWARDS. "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." It is not required that a man be found brilliant, or that he be found pleasing to his associates, or even that he be found successful. All that is required is, that he be found faithful, and, truly, this is no small matter. It will need the Lord Himself to be both our wisdom and our strength, or we shall surely fail. Many are the ways by which we may come short of this requirement, however simple it may seem to be.

Brethren, our Master "endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself," and shall we be weary and faint in our minds? How can we be stewards of the gentle Jesus if we behave ourselves haughtily? Let us never ride the high horse, nor attempt to be lords over God's heritage; for He will not have it so, and we cannot be faithful if we give way to pride.

We are stewards, and not masters, and hence we must trade in our Master's Name, and not in our own. It is not ours to fabricate a religion, but to proclaim one; and even that proclamation is not to be made by our own authority, but it is ever to be based on that of our Lord. We are "labourers together with Him." If a brother sets up in business for himself, he will make a mess of it, and fall into spiritual bankruptcy before long. His credit will soon run out when his Master's Name is gone. We can do nothing in our heavenly merchandise without our Lord. Let us not attempt to act on our own account, but keep our place near our Chief in all lowliness of mind.

3. We shall not be found faithful stewards if we are idlers and triflers. Do you ever meet with lazy ministers? I have heard of them; but when mine eye sees them, my heart abhors them. If you plan to be lazy, there are plenty of avocations in which you will not be wanted; but, above all, you are not wanted in the Christian ministry. The man who finds the ministry an easy life will also find that it will bring a hard death. If we are not labourers, we are not true stewards; for we are to be examples of diligence to the King's household. I like Adam Clarke's precept: "Kill yourselves with work, and then pray yourselves alive again." We shall never do our duty either to God or man if we are sluggards.

4. When we misuse our Master's property, we are false to our trust. We are entrusted with a certain amount of talent, and strength, and influence, and we have to use this trust-money with a single purpose. Our purpose is to promote the Master's honour and glory. We are to seek God's glory, and nothing else. By all means, let every man use his best influence on the right side in politics; but no minister has liberty to use his position in the church to promote party ends. I do not

censure workers for temperance; but even this admirable movement must not push out the gospel: I trust it never does. I hold that no minister has a right to use his ability or office to cater for the mere amusement of the multitude. The Master has sent us to win souls: all is within the compass of our commission which tends towards that end; but that is chiefly our work which drives directly and distinctly at that end. The danger lies, at this time, in setting up theatricals, semi-theatricals, concerts, and so forth. Until I see that the Lord Jesus Christ has set up a theatre, or planned a miracle-play, I shall not think of emulating the stage or competing with the music-hall. If I mind my own business, by preaching the gospel, I shall have enough to do. One object is enough for most men: one such as ours is enough for any minister, however many his talents, however versatile his mind.

5. If we would be faithful as stewards, we must not neglect any one of the family, nor neglect any portion of the estate. I wonder whether we practise a personal observation of our hearers. Our beloved friend, Mr. Archibald Brown, is right when he says that London needs not only house-to-house visitation, but room-to-room visitation. We must in the case of our people go further, and practise man-to-man visitation. By personal intercourse alone, can certain persons be reached. If I had a number of bottles before me, and were to play upon them with a fire-engine, how much of the water would be lost; if I want to make sure of filling them, I must take them up one by one, and carefully pour the liquid into them. We must watch over our sheep one by one. This is to be done not only by personal talk, but by personal prayer.

Brethren, let us hunt up destitute localities, and see that no district is left without the means of grace. This applies not only to London, but also to villages, hamlets, and little groups of cottages. Heathenism hides away among the lone places, as well as in the crowded slums of our mammoth cities. May every piece of ground be rained upon by gospel influences!

But you are, perhaps, moved to answer me by saying, "Do not you, yourself, hold a high position in your own church?" I do; but how have I gained it? I gave no power but that which gentleness and love have brought me. How have I used my influence? Have I sought pre-eminence? Ask those who are round about me. But I forbear, and return to what I was saying: we must not allow sin to go unrebuked. Yield in all things personal, but be firm where truth and holiness are concerned. We must be faithful, lest we incur the sin and penalty of Eli. Be honest to the rich and influential; be firm with the wavering and unsteady; for the blood of these will be required at our hand. Brothers, you will need all the wisdom and grace you can get in order to fulfil your duties as pastors. There is an adaptation to rule men which would seem to be quite absent from certain preachers, and the place of it is supplied by an adaptation to set a house on fire, for they scatter firebrands and burning coals wherever they go. Be ye not like unto them. Strive not, and yet wink not at sin.

This expectation will tend to quicken our pace. The time is short; our Lord is at the door; we must work with all our might. We must not be eye-servants except in this sense that we labour in the Lord's presence since He is so near. I am impressed with the rapid flight of time, the swift approach of the last great audit. These Annual Conferences return so speedily: to some of us, it seems only a day or two since last year's gathering, the last of them hastens on. I shall soon be giving in the account of my stewardship; or, if I should survive for a while, others of you may be summoned to meet your Lord; you will soon go home to your Lord if your Lord does not soon come to you. We must work on from hour to hour with our eye upon the audit, that we may not be

ashamed of the record which will be found in the volume of the book.

The reward of all faithful stewards is exceeding great: let us aspire to it. The Lord will make the man who was faithful in a few things to be ruler over many things. That is an extraordinary passage where our Saviour says, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." It is wonderful that our Lord has already served us; but how can we comprehend that He will serve us again? Think of Jesus rising up from His throne to wait upon us! "Behold!" He cries, "here comes a man who served Me faithfully on earth; make way for him, ye angels, and principalities, and powers! This is the man whom the King delighteth to honour." And, to our surprise, the King girds Himself, and waits upon us. We are ready to cry, "Not so, my Lord." But He must, and will, keep His Word. This unspeakable honour He will pay to His true servants. Happy man, to have been the poorest and most despised of ministers, to be now served by the King of kings! Oh, to be of the number of those who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth! Brethren, can ye abide in your steadfastness? Can ye drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism? Remember that the flesh is weak. The trials of the present age are peculiarly subtle and severe. Cry to the Strong for strength, and yield yourselves to His almighty love.

Remember, if any of you are unfaithful, you win for yourselves a superfluity of condemnation. You were not forced to be ministers. You were not compelled to enter upon this sacred office. By your own choice you are here. In your youth, you aspired to this holy service, and thought yourselves happy in attaining your desire. Brethren, if we meant to be untrue to Jesus, there was no necessity to have climbed this sacred rock in order to multiply the horrors of our final fall. We could have perished quite sufficiently in the ordinary ways of sin. What need to qualify ourselves for a greater damnation? This will be a dreadful result if this is all that comes of our College studies, and our burning of the midnight oil in acquiring knowledge. My heart and my flesh tremble while I contemplate the possibility of any one of us being found guilty of treachery to our charge, and treason to our King. May the good Lord so abide with us that, at the last, we may be clear of the blood of all men! It will be seven heavens in one to hear our Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

## The Evils of the Present Time, and Our Object,

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### Chapter 10

The Evils of the Present Time, and Our Object, Necessities, and Encouragements\*("misc/aarm10.htm" \\ "note")

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE for us to converse together, during such a time of intense excitement, without alluding, or at least seeming to allude, to matters which are just now the subjects of severe controversy. It will be thought that things spoken by me this day are aimed at individuals who may not be in my mind at all. I am awkwardly circumstanced, and I might, therefore, speak with great reserve; but such is not my habit: as a rule, I blurt out my thoughts, for I have nothing to conceal. I have no intent to wound anyone, but I cannot help it if I do. I do not say this by way of apology, for I am now past all need of apology, and I have become a chartered libertine in the speaking of my mind, since I have found it utterly impossible to please, let me say or do what I will. One becomes somewhat indifferent when dealing with those whom every word offends. I notice that, when I have measured my words, and weighed my sentences most carefully, I have then offended most; while some of my stronger utterances have passed unnoticed. Therefore, I am comparatively careless as to how my expressions may be received, and only anxious that they may be in themselves just and true. Certainly, my criticisms have cost me more pain than they have inflicted. At the first, I said that he who ventured on the task which was laid upon me would get no honour from it: the prophecy has proved to be true, and I am content to have it so.

I would also add a word of caution to heated minds. Can we not draw a distinction between men and their opinions? An old Scotch wife once quarrelled with her minister. I think the difference arose out of some business transaction; perhaps the poor preacher was slow in his payments, or she had not been up to the mark in the goods supplied to him; but, anyhow, she felt bitterly towards him. Yet she came constantly to hear him preach; and when he asked her how she could abuse him as she did, and yet always attend his ministry, she answered, "Man, my quarrel is with you, not with the gospel." Our case is exactly opposite to hers. Our quarrel is not with the men, but with that other gospel, which is not another, with which they trouble us. Away with personalities, but let us earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. It may not be easy to keep clear the distinction between the men and their opinions; but, at any rate, let us labour to do so. Let us grind the falsehood to powder, but desire from our inmost souls the good of those who are deluded by it. I have heard of a stone being broken to atoms on the breast of a man, yet he who wielded the hammer hurt not the man in the least degree. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual wickedness. We fight neither with small nor great, save only with the deadly error which seeks to be king in Israel.

I want to speak to the times. We are exhorted to be "abreast of the age": I will look into its breast, and see whether it has there a sound mind, or an evil heart of unbelief. My subject is—

THE EVILS OF THE PRESENT TIME.

I suppose you have met, in your pastoral work, with the great evil of questioning fundamental truth. Brethren have always differed on minor points, and it has not been unusual for us to meet each other, and discuss matters of doctrine upon the basis of Holy Scripture. All were agreed that, whatever Scripture said, should be decisive; and we only wished to ascertain what the Lord had revealed. But another form of discussion has now arisen: men question the Scriptures themselves. A deacon of one of our churches said, the other day, concerning a certain doctrine, "Even if the Bible said so, I would not believe it." This is a new thing in our Israel. To some, the teaching of Scripture is not of final authority: their inner consciousness, their culture, or some other unknown quantity, is their fixed point, if they have a fixed point anywhere. The fount of inspiration is not now within the Book, and with the Holy Spirit, but within the man's own intelligence. We have no longer, "Thus saith the Lord;" but, "Thus saith modern thought."

When I note the clamour for "progress in theology," and mark the changing nature of modern opinion, I am reminded of the story of a prudent churchwarden who trembled for the spire of the parish church. A vane was to be placed on high; and when he saw it upon the ground, it struck him as being far too large to be safely fixed upon the spire. I suppose it was the image of Peter's cock; and when the good man looked upon it, he did not weep, but he trembled. "Surely," he said, "when the North wind blows, it will tear down the vane, and the steeple, too." He who had to fix the vane endeavoured to cheer him by the fact that, when the wind was blowing, the cock would turn round, so that the full force of the gale would not come upon it. That was a comfortable consideration, and it brought a grand idea into the churchwarden's mind. Those four letters, N., E., S., W., were of considerable size, and would offer a serious opposition to the wind: could not these also be made to revolve? Certainly this might mitigate the danger; but of what use would the vane be? Even so, they are trying, in certain quarters, to make the cardinal points of truth go round with the wind. To this, we object. Let the weathercocks spin round as much as they please, but we must have fixed points, of faith. Unless we have infallibility somewhere, faith is impossible. The true faith teaches us facts which cannot be questioned. Where is faith to build if there be no rock, and nothing left us but shifting sand? As for us, we find infallibility in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and our one desire is to have them opened up to our minds by the Holy Spirit. Those who choose to do so may invent a changing gospel; but we believe in "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

It is the same with other doctrines which we hold; they are constantly being misrepresented, or, at least, misinterpreted. If our opponents would state the case fairly, we should not mind it; but this would not serve their purpose. One said, the other day, "I hate that text which says, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.'" "Why?" said a friend; "what is the difficulty to your mind?" The reply was, "I cannot see why God should hate Esau." "Nay," said our friend, "I am not at all surprised that God hated Esau, but I am greatly amazed that God loved Jacob." That is indeed a marvel of grace; the other is one of the common-places of justice. Truth thus has its coat turned inside out, and then is dragged up and down the street in scorn. They make a straw man, and carry him about as a guy, hoping afterwards to burn him. This is fine sport for children, but great folly in men.

Yet misunderstanding and misrepresentation form an evil which we have to deal with constantly. I have no doubt that you find it in your churches, weakening your testimony, shaking the unstable, and causing unbelief in many minds. Our gospel is adapted to meet this difficulty. Let us not distrust it; but, at the same time, let us not shut our eyes to the fact that this form of evil is rife

among us, and must be met in the Name of the God of truth.

There will always be trouble in the churches so long as men are afraid to denounce sin and error. A negro preacher, in a certain village, said that among his flock he carefully abstained from preaching against the sin of stealing chickens, because it seemed so much to damp brotherly fellowship! Many a preacher touches the matter of strong drink very tenderly because certain of his supporters are in "the trade." Is there not a great deal of this suppression of unpalatable truth? Are not many unfaithful as to the sins around them? They are "all things to all men," but it is not that they may "save some." I have heard it whispered that it is in order that they may save a sum to the exchequer of the church. Are not important persons too much consulted? Is not position more valued than piety? Is there enough of downright faithfulness to truth and to Christ at all hazards? Brethren, we want grace to say, "I can be poor; I can be ridiculed; I can be abused; but I cannot be false to my Lord."

Another great evil of the times is the insatiable craving for amusements. That men should have rest from labour, and that they should enjoy such amusements as refresh both body and mind, nobody wishes to deny. Within suitable bounds, recreation is necessary and profitable; but it never was the business of the Christian Church to supply the world with amusements. Did Christ found His Church that it might offer to the public tableaux vivants, and living waxworks? A Dissenting congregation, to my own knowledge, commenced a series of special services with a social meeting, and the evening was spent in various silly dissipations; and among other things the assembled friends played at "Musical Chairs"! I do not know whether you understand what that childish game means. Think of ministers of the gospel and officers of a church playing at "Musical Chairs"! There is a bill extant which states that, next week, there is to be a "Punch and Judy" show in the same place of worship (so-called)! This is to go on side by side with the preaching of Thy bleeding sacrifice, O Christ of God! No, brethren, let me correct myself; the preaching of Christ usually ceases when these frivolities come in. These things are so opposed in spirit, that one or the other will have to be dropped; and we know which it will be.

Another of our difficulties lies in the lack of intense piety in many of the churches. Numbers of our brethren and sisters to-day are living, in a high degree, to the glory of God. I thank God that there is now as much of holy activity and hearty consecration as in any former period in the history of the Christian Church. Among us are men and women whose names will go down to posterity as examples of devotion. God has not left Himself without witness. But do you not notice how superficial is the religion of the mass of professors? How many servants might live in so-called Christian families without perceiving any difference between these houses and those of world-lings? Is not family prayer neglected in many instances? Have we not members who are never seen at a prayer-meeting? When enquiry is made, do you not find that the richer sort could not attend because the dinner-hour is at the same time as the gathering for prayer? No doubt they will be most careful to worship the god they favour most. In other cases, you find that busy men, who could not come out to pray, were quite able to attend a concert. Public dinners and sing-songs are more important ceremonials with many than the offering of prayer to God. Do we not meet with church-officers who say openly that they do not care for such old-fashioned things as prayer-meetings? This is a wretched sign of declension, and it is frequently to be seen. Our churches may well cause heartache to their pastors; but, for the most part, in such cases the pastors themselves have so much backslidden that they care nothing about it.

Not to make my jeremiad too long, I will mention only one more sad evil of the times; that is, the stolidity of the people outside with regard to the gospel. Compared with what it used to be, it is hard to win attention to the Word of God. I used to think that we had only to preach the gospel, and the people would throng to hear it. I fear I must correct my belief under this head. If the gospel does not attract men, nothing will; I mean, nothing which can do them good. Personally, I have no reason to doubt the attractiveness of the old, old gospel; but I am assured that some of my brethren, who faithfully preach the gospel of Christ, do not find the people flocking about them. We all feel that a hardening process is going on among the masses. In this vast city, we have street after street where the people are living utterly regardless of the worship of God. Those who attend church or chapel are marked men; and if you were to enquire for them, they would be pointed out to you as remarkable individuals. A curious circumstance came under my own notice lately; it seems that men may come to hear a preacher on a week-evening with less suspicion than on the Sunday. One who had attended a week-night service was asked to come on the Sabbath, but he replied, "Oh, no; I have not gone so far as that yet!" Attendance at a place of worship on the Sunday has in London become, to many people, a profession of religion. Merely to hear Spurgeon on a Thursday, is a different matter! It is a fact that thousands of persons live close to our notable sanctuaries, and never dream of entering them. Even curiosity seems dulled.

Apart from this intoxicating sensationalism, there is a sort of heaviness in the air. Do you not feel it? We are getting into the condition into which Germany fell not long ago. To this day, when talking with a German who is about joining our church, I usually find that he has lived in a country town. The devout German villager still attends public worship, but in the large towns a practical atheism is supreme. Why is this? The ministers have done it. They preached the people out of their faith in the Scriptures; they taught them to be doubters. The most mischievous servant of Satan that I know of is the minister of the gospel, who not only doubts the truth in his own soul, but propagates doubt in the minds of others by his criticisms, innuendoes, and triflings with words. Some ministers believe nothing except that nothing can be believed. Such a man's conscience is withered. In some modern ministers, the faculty wherewith to believe is extinct; they have played with words till they cannot be true if they try. Against this evil I have protested with my whole soul. People say, "Why did you not speak against these things twenty-five years ago?" I answer, "These evils were scarcely apparent then." Things are not now as in our early ministry. There has been a sudden growth of the toadstools of error. I never heard of Universalism then, nor of post-mortem salvation, nor of probation in the next state. Until very lately, I have not heard of ministers holding up the blood of Jesus to scorn. I will not, however, repeat the sad facts which have of late come to my knowledge, and pierced my heart. The times are out of joint. The world may well be careless, for the Church in many places is full of unbelief. I trust the present hurricane of evil may soon pass over; but anyone who has his wits about him will sorrowfully admit that the good ship of the Church is now tossed about with contrary winds, and needs that her Lord should come, and say to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still." So far, I have borne before you "the burden of the Lord."

How do you, at this time, look at your life's mission? What is that mission? What are you at? I think I hear you answer, "Our chief end is to glorify, God." We do not regard it as our first business to convert sinners, nor to edify saints; but to glorify God. If we have preached God's truth, and on any one occasion no souls have been saved thereby, we are still "unto God a sweet savour of Christ," as well in those that perish as in those that are saved. The preaching of Jesus Christ is the burning

of sweet odours before the throne of God, and to the Lord it is evermore an acceptable oblation. The sacrifice of Jesus is that which makes the world bearable to a holy God, and the preaching of that sacrifice is a savour of rest unto Him.

It is for us to keep our one object, come what may. The fisherman goes forth with his nets upon a calm, bright, summer's day. "Now, boatman, take thy guitar. Sit upon the bench, and delight us with sweet music." He answers, "I am not a musician, but a fisherman." A storm-cloud darkens the sky and the rain and sleet drive down. "Now, boatman, quit the deck. Make all trim above, and shelter thyself below." He smiles, and answers, "I am no yachtsman out on a pleasure-trip, but I am here to fish; and fish I will." Over go the nets!

Besides this, we have an intense desire to build up the Church; and it strikes me that, for this object, it is of perpetual necessity that we continue to preach always the same gospel. Is there to be no progress? Yes, within the lines of revealed truth; but there must be no departure from fixed principles. A boy at school commences with his first book in arithmetic; in due time, he needs another; but suppose that the second book put into his hand contradicted the first, where would the scholar find himself? Suppose you assure him that the multiplication table is worn-out, and that men now know better than to say that twice two are four! What progress could he make? A consistent ministry, carried out through many years preaching of the same truth, must, with God's blessing, produce a result upon a congregation.

If we would, as wise master-builders, really build up the Church, we must be careful as to our foundation at the first; and upon that foundation we must keep on building to the end. As far as I am concerned, the things which I taught at the first are those wherein I abide until this day. If I had chosen a new object, I might have selected new means for promoting it; but those truths which were for the glory of God thirty years ago, still produce the same result. We work to the same end, and trust in the same power, wherefore we change not our teaching.

Let us not judge ourselves by others, and say, with deadening self-complacency, "We are getting on well as compared with our brethren. There are not many additions to our churches, but we are as successful as others." O brothers, if some are still further behind in the course, that does not increase our hope of winning the race! While I was ill, a friend endeavoured to comfort me by remarking that many suffered far more than I did. He looked unutterable things when I replied, "None but a fiend could derive comfort from the greater agonies of others." Shall we, if we have but little of God's blessing, be thankful that others have still less? Did you tell me that John Johnston's potatoes are smaller than mine? I am not going to have my potatoes judged by John Johnston's; my standard as a gardener is not the worst specimen, but the best. Let us measure ourselves by our Master, and not by our fellow-servants: then pride will be impossible, but hopefulness will be natural. We are capable of much greater things; let us attempt them. It is time for us to live, for we are growing old.

The next thing necessary for the present time is that we should have more faith. We need to believe more intensely in God, so as to trust Him more practically and more unquestioningly. The things which we believe must become more real to us. I fear we often use words without feeling their true meaning. This is terrible. It is a sort of wilful murder to expel the soul from pious phrases, and still to use them. Let us be honest about the things of God; let us mean all that we say, and say only what we mean. It is a shocking thing for a man to talk all manner of Evangelical, gracious,

and sanctifying things, and yet to mean nothing by them. I fear our pulpits are not free from such word-mongers. Let us not hold forth shadows before the people. Let them, at any rate, be no shadows to us, but downright facts. You have heard of the old Scotch lady who was making her will. She was leaving £500 to this person, and £1,000 to another, till at length the lawyer remarked, "Have you as much money as this?" "May be not," said the old soul, "but it will show them my liberal intentions." It is to be feared that many preach Evangelical doctrine, not because they believe it, but that they may please the Evangelical. This will never do. Let us never lie open to such a suspicion. Let the doctrines we declare be as dear to us as our life, and as real as our own flesh and blood. We believe all Scripture to be true. When the Bible says that a man is lost, we believe that the loss is real and tremendous. Heaven and hell are realities with us, even though to others they may be dreams. To us Christ is a real Christ; and the Holy Ghost within a man brings real life from the dead. If we do not preach realities, I pray God we may be driven out of the ministry, in which we are only treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.

There must be also a more thorough spirit of self-sacrifice. I must speak tenderly here, because I am among brethren whose life is one of perpetual sacrifice in a pecuniary sense. With scarcely enough to keep body and soul together, they work on without complaint year after year. If they could gain a hundred times their present income in any other calling, they would not quit the pulpit and the pastorate. The work of Christ is more to them than their necessary food. Thank God, this Conference is well supplied with men who count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. But, my brethren, sacrifice is needed every day, that we may keep up the abundance of our service. Here also we have many who excel. They are not loiterers, but labourers. He who has an easy time of it, in his ministry here, will have a hard time of it in the account to be rendered by-and-by. I fear the idea of the ministry with some men is as much on the down-grade as their doctrine is. Their gentlemanly indifference reminds me of the British workman, who observed, "I have such a good master that I do not know how to do too much for him, but I'll take precious good care I don't." Into that spirit may we never enter! Let us live intensely for our Lord!

I will give you a little advice, which may be suitable for such a time as this. I would recommend you to go over the fundamental truths with your hearers very carefully. The bulk of the people do not know the first principles of the gospel. We assume too much when we take it for granted that our hearers, all of them, understand the gospel. Some of the old-fashioned dame-school teachers had a curious way of treating their scholars. They asked Mary to read a passage from a book, but Mary had not yet mastered her letters, and therefore she could not read as she was bidden to do. She was called a naughty child, and put into a corner, and told to study her book. She could do nothing at it, for she did not know the letters! If we have not taught our people their letters, how can we expect them to understand the truths that we preach? Let us go over the foundation truths again and again.

In the next place, labour distinctly for the immediate salvation of your hearers. Take aim. At Waterloo, they say that, for every man who was killed, his full weight in lead had to be fired. We must improve upon this, and use arms of precision. We must get at the people each time we address them. It is wise to make definite characters the point of attack. We must look to the application of each sermon. I have known a true doctor, in a very critical case, act the part of nurse as well as surgeon, and personally see his liniments and poultices applied to his patient. This

personal care gives surgery its best chance. We have great need to be very specific in applying truth to our hearers. If a doctor should prescribe a bitter medicine for children, to be taken every three hours, and then should leave it to the youngsters to take it themselves, I fear the doses taken would be small and few. Even so is it with unpalatable truth; we must not only set it forth in general terms, but we must measure it out in doses to each individual. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this must be our daily work. We want our hearers saved, and saved at once; and towards this design we must drive with all our power.

To this end, I would exhort you to be careful about the admission of members into the church. Doubtless there are some in our ranks who ought not to be there. This is to their own hurt, to the dishonour of the Lord Jesus, and to the injury of the church itself. Unconverted member's lower the whole tone of the church. How low that tone has now become, let spiritual men judge for themselves. If the members were converted, they would make short work of many of the ministers; but the people are like their priests. Many are the letters of sympathy which my protests upon this matter have drawn forth. It is clear that lax doctrine and lax living are pretty frequently associated. A weeping Hannah writes me concerning her husband who has been for years a lay preacher, but who now spends his evenings far into night at the billiard-table, for which he acquired a taste when he went in for new theology and religious entertainments. Many have, gone from the prayer-meeting to the amateur theatricals of the Mutual Improvement Society, and thence to the playhouse itself. This seems to be natural, if not inevitable. Oh, that we had a purer membership to work with! Do what we may, Judas will come in; but let us not invite him: let us not make it easy for a betrayer of Christ to be comfortable with us. To mix up the world with the church, is a crime; it brings with it an awful curse, and acts upon godliness as a blast and a mildew. Let the door of the church be opened to all sincere souls, but closed against all whose hearts are in the world. It is not even for the worldling's good that he should hold the form of godliness while he is a stranger to its power. As you love your Lord, and value men's souls guard well the entrance of the church.

Next, we must bind ourselves more closely together, and seek to render help to each other, and to all who are of the same mind in the Lord. Denominational divisions sink in the presence of the truth of God. To my mind, the grand distinction to be now observed is found in Evangelical doctrine, of which our Lord's substitutionary sacrifice is the centre and the soul. Where we see faithful brethren struggling, we ought to lay ourselves out to help them, for they are sure to be the objects of inveterate opposition. Lovers of the old faith should stand shoulder to shoulder, to remove the injustice of the past, and frustrate the opposition of the future. The struggle before us is severe; let us, at any rate, economize our strength by union.

The times are bad, but they have been bad before. You have to fight with Apollyon, but many have met this arch-enemy before your day. Gird up the loins of your mind, and stand fast, for the Lord is greater than the times. The days are evil, but evil days are followed by good days. History repeats itself, and this is one of the points in which history is very persistent. Let me read you a cheering passage from Witherspoon:—"Nothing is impossible to the power of God. I add, that the most remarkable times of the revival of religion, in this part of the United Kingdom, immediately succeeded times of the greatest apostasy, when 'truth' seemed to be 'fallen in the street, and equity could not enter.' This was the case immediately before the year 1638. Corruption in doctrine, looseness in practice, and slavish submission in politics, had overspread the Church of Scotland; and yet, in a little time, she appeared in greater purity, and in greater dignity, than ever

she had done before, or, perhaps, than ever she has done since that period. Let no Christian, therefore, give way to desponding thoughts. We plead the cause that shall at last prevail. Religion shall rise from its ruins; and its oppressed state at present should not only excite us to pray, but encourage us to hope for its speedy revival."

In New England, a certain church had elected a young man named Mr. Stoddard to be its pastor. After a while, the people found out that their new preacher was not a real Christian. What did they do? Did they find fault, and quarrel? No, they were wiser folks. One Sabbath night, when his day's work was over, the young minister saw the people flocking to the meeting-house. He was surprised at their coming in such numbers to a service at which he was not himself to preside. "Why are they meeting?" he asked. "Sir," said one, "they are coming together to pray that their minister may be converted." Young Stoddard went within doors, sought his chamber, prayed for himself, and found eternal life. Before the hour of prayer was over, he was converted, and went down to the meeting to tell the glad tidings. Was not that a glorious work of grace? Might we not win more victories if we more constantly used this weapon of all-prayer? All hell is vanquished when the believer bows his knee in importunate supplication. Beloved brethren, let us pray. We cannot all argue, but we can all pray; we cannot all be leaders, but we can all be pleaders; we cannot all be mighty in rhetoric, but we can all be prevalent in prayer. I would sooner see you eloquent with God than with men. Prayer links us with the Eternal, the Omnipotent, the Infinite; and hence it is our chief resort. Resolve to serve the Lord, and to be faithful to His cause, for then you may boldly appeal to Him for succour. Be sure that you are with God, and then you may be sure that God is with you.

#### NOTE

\* Although this address was delivered before the resolution of the Baptist Union, Concerning the "Down-grade" Controversy, was passed, nothing has occurred to require any softening, but much to emphasize it. The evils spoken of were at first denied, but surely none can now question that they exist, abound, and triumph.—C. H. S.

## The Preacher's Power, and the Conditions

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### Chapter 11

#### The Preacher's Power, and the Conditions of Obtaining It

BRETHREN, we want to do our work rightly and effectively, AND WE CANNOT DO IT WITHOUT POWER. Of course, no work of any kind is accomplished in this world without a certain expenditure of force, and the force employed differs according to the matter in hand. The sort of power of which we feel the need will be determined by our view of our work; and the amount of power that we shall long for will also very much depend upon our idea of how that work should be done. I speak as unto wise men, who know their object, and know also whence their strength must come. I speak also to men who mean to use their office as in the sight of God; but yet I think it desirable to stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance, and put you and myself in mind of the grand design for which we need power.

When this is the case among Nonconformists, it ruins the congregations, for it is death to every possibility of collecting people to hear; and still more is it murder to all hope of their being improved if they do hear. I should think it is by no means difficult, with a liturgy, to be read without much alteration all the year round, to become a fine example of either the Ding dong, or the Ding, ding; but with us, whose devotion is of a free sort, there is less excuse for monotony, and if we fall into the fault, the result will be more disastrous. It is possible, even without a liturgy, to pray in a very set and formal style; indeed, it is so possible as to be frequent, and then the long prayer becomes a severe infliction upon an audience, and the shorter prayers are not much better. When I have thought of the preaching of certain good men, I have wondered, not that the congregation was so small, but that it was so large. The people who listen to them ought to excel in the virtue of patience, for they have grand opportunities for exercising it.

I am bound to say, also, that our object certainly is not to please our clients, nor to preach to the times, nor to be in touch with modern progress, nor to gratify the cultured few. Our life-work cannot be answered by the utmost acceptance on earth; our record is on high, or it will be written in the sand. There is no need whatever that you and I should be chaplains of the modern spirit, for it is well supplied with busy advocates. Surely Ahab does not need Micaiah to prophesy smooth things to him, for there are already four hundred prophets of the groves who are flattering him with one consent. We are reminded of the protesting Scotch divine, in evil days, who was exhorted by the Synod to preach to the times. He asked, "Do you, brethren, preach to the times?" They boasted that they did. "Well, then," said he, "if there are so many of you who preach for the times, you may well allow one poor brother to preach for eternity." We leave, without regret, the gospel of the hour to the men of the hour. With such eminently cultured persons for ever hurrying on with their new doctrines, the world may be content to let our little company keep to the old-fashioned faith, which we still believe to have been once for all delivered to the saints. Those superior persons, who are so wonderfully advanced, may be annoyed that we cannot consort with them; but, nevertheless, so it is that it is not now, and never will be, any design of ours to be in harmony with the spirit of the

age, or in the least to conciliate the demon of doubt which rules the present moment.

How often have we heard an excuse for heresy made out of the desire to impress "thoughtful young men"! Young men, whether thoughtful or otherwise, are best impressed by the gospel, and it is folly to dream that any preaching which leaves out the truth is suitable to men, either old or young. We shall not quit the Word to please the young men, nor even the young women. This truckling to young men is a mere pretence; young men are no more fond of false doctrine than are the middle-aged; and if they are, there is so much the more necessity to teach them better. Young men are more impressed by the old gospel than by ephemeral speculations. If any of you wish to preach a gospel that will be pleasing to the times, preach it in the power of the devil, and I have no doubt that he will willingly do his best for you. It is not to such servants of men that I desire to speak just now. I trust that, if ever any of you should err from the faith, and take up with the new theology, you will be too honest to pray for power from God with which to preach that mischievous delusion if you should do so, you will be guilty of constructive blasphemy. No, brethren, it is not our object to please men, but our design is far nobler.

In this grand, yet delicate labour, we have to persevere year after year. What power can enable us to do this? While so many complain of the monotony of the old gospel, and feel a perpetual itching for something new, this disease may even infect our own hearts. This is an evil to be fought against with our whole being. When we feel dull and stale, we must not imagine that the truth of God is so; nay, rather, by returning more closely to the Word of the Lord, we must renew our freshness. To continue always steadfast in the faith, so that our latest testimony shall be identical in substance with our first testimony, only deeper, mellower, more assured, and more intense,—this is such a labour that for it we must have the power of God. Do you not feel this? I pray you, feel it more and more. O brethren, if you propose to be true witnesses for God, your proposal is a very glorious one, and it will tend to make you feel the truth of what I am about to say, namely, that a more than human power must guide you, and make you sufficient for the difficult enterprise!

I shall not attempt to teach a tiger the virtues of vegetarianism; but I shall as hopefully attempt that task as I would try to convince an unregenerate man of the truths revealed by God concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment to come. These spiritual truths are repugnant to carnal men, and the carnal mind cannot receive the things of God. Gospel truth is diametrically opposed to fallen nature; and if I have not a power much stronger than that which lies in moral suasion, or in my own explanations and arguments, I have undertaken a task in which I am sure of defeat. Well said the writer of one of our hymns, when he spake of the Holy Spirit,—

"'Tis Thine the passions to recall,

And upward bid them rise;

And make the scales of error fall

From reason's darkened eyes."

Except the Lord endow us with power from on high, our labour must be in vain, and our hopes must end in disappointment.

It seems to me that the Lord will follow up the lines of the Old Testament economy still, and separate to Himself a people who shall be in the midst of the world as the Lord's kings and priests,—a peculiar people, zealous for good works. I see, in the New Covenant, not less, but even more, of the election of grace, whereby a people is called out, and consecrated to the Lord. Through the chosen ones, myriads shall be born unto God; but, besides these, I know of no other kingdom. Brethren., the election of grace, which is so often denounced, is a fact which men need not speak against, since they do not themselves desire to be elected. I never can make out why a man should cavil at another's being chosen when he does not himself wish to be chosen. If he wishes that he were chosen to repentance, if he desires holiness, if he longs to be the Lord's, and if that desire be true, he is chosen already. But seeing that he does not desire anything of the kind, why does he rail at others who have received this blessing? Ask an ungodly man whether he will take up the humble, often-abused, and persecuted position of a lowly follower of Christ, and he scorns, the idea. If it were possible for him to get into that position for a time, how gladly would he shuffle out of it! He likes to be "in the swim," and to side with the majority; but to be a live fish, and to force his way up the stream, is not according to his desire. He prefers a worldly religion, with abundant provision for the flesh. Religious worldliness suits him very well; but to be out-and-out for Jesus, called out from the world, and consecrated to obedience, is not his ambition.

Stop: we have only yet begun. They are called out; but there is something further to be done through the instrumentality of our ministry: our hearers have to be born again, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, or else our preaching has done nothing for them. Ah, dear friends, we get into deep waters when we come to this great mystery! Does any unregenerate man know the meaning of being born again? Ask the learned doctors whether they know anything about it, and they will try to conceal their ignorance beneath a sneer. Ask them if they think there is anything in it, and they will perhaps reply, "Yes, there must be such a phenomenon, for many respectable and even scientific people have professed to be the subjects of it." Still, they smile, and express their wonder that it is so. The confession of many a candid scientist is that it may be so, but he is not himself able to comprehend it. Why, then, do they not hold their tongues? If they have not experienced the new birth, that fact is no proof that others have not. Why do they sneer as if they were our superiors? The regenerate in this matter are necessarily their superiors. A person who has only one eye is a king among blind men; let not the blind affect to despise him. If any of us have personally experienced the new birth, even though we may be ignorant of many other things, we are in this point better instructed than those who have never felt the Divine change.

Supposing that to be done, remember that those who are brought to God are to be kept and preserved to the end; and your longing is that your ministry should be the means of keeping them from stumbling, and holding them fast in the way of righteousness even to the end. Do you propose to do that of yourself? How presumptuous! Why, look at the temptations which pollute this city; and I suppose that the seductions of evil are much the same in smaller towns, and in the villages, though differing in form. Their name is legion, for they are many. Look at the temptations which assail our youth in the literature of the hour! Have you even a slender acquaintance with popular literature? Do you wonder that weak minds are made to stumble? The wonder is that any are preserved. Yet this is only one of the many death-bearing agencies.

If you have half a-dozen converts, how greatly you will praise God, if you pass, with that half-a-dozen at your side, safely through the gate of pearl! Certain of us know many thousands

whom we have, instrumentally, brought to the Saviour; but unless we have a power infinitely greater than our own, how shall we shepherd them to the end? We may announce them as our converts, we may associate with them as workers, and feel thankful for them as fellow-heirs; and yet bitter may be our disappointment, when all comes to all, and they turn aside unto perdition. How grievous to be, to all appearance, rich in usefulness, and on a sudden to find that our converts are like money put into a bag that is full of holes, and that our treasured converts fall out, because they were not truly gathered to the Lord Jesus after all!

This supernatural force is the power of the Holy Ghost, the power of Jehovah Himself. It is a wonderful thing that God should condescend to work His marvels of grace through men. It is strange that, instead of speaking, and saying with His own lips, "Let there be light," He speaks the illuminating word by our lips! Instead of fashioning a new heaven and a new earth, whereto dwelleth righteousness, by the mere fiat of His power, He couples Himself with our weakness, and so performs His purpose! Do you not marvel that He should treasure His gospel in these poor earthen vessels, and accomplish the miracles, which I have very briefly described, by messengers who are themselves so utterly unable to help Him in the essential parts of His heavenly work? Turn your wonder into adoration, and blend with your adoration a fervent cry for Divine power. O Lord, work by us to the praise of Thy glory!

Among those conditions I notice, first, a simplicity of heart. The Lord pours most into those who are most empty of self. Those who have least of their own shall have the most of God's. The Lord cares little what the vessel is, whether golden or earthen, so long as it is clean, and disengaged from other uses. He sees whether there is anything in the cup; and if so, he throws it all out. Only then is the cup prepared to receive the living water. If there was something in it before, it would adulterate the pure water of life; or if what was there before was very pure, it would, at least, occupy some of the room which the Lord seeks for His own grace. The Lord therefore empties us, that we may be clear from prejudice, self-sufficiency, and foregone conclusions as to what His truth ought to be. He would have us like children, who believe what their father tells them. We must lay aside all pretence of wisdom. Some men are too self-sufficient for God to use. If God were to bless them largely, they would talk in Wolsey's style of "Ego et rex meus" (I and my king); but the Lord will have none of it. That straight-backed, upstart letter "I" must bow itself down into its lower-case shape, and just look like a little pot-hook (i) of a thing, and be nothing more. Oh, to be rid of self! Oh, to quit every pretence of wisdom!

Brethren, may the Lord give us great humility of mind! It ought not to be an extraordinary thing for us to accept what God says. It ought not to take much humility for such poor creatures as we are to sit at the feet of Jesus. We ought to look upon it as an elevation of mind for our spirit to lie prostrate before infinite wisdom. Assuredly, this is needful to the reception of power from God.

There are certain defects which cut a man off from the Divine employ, and anything like a sinister motive is one of them. If you aim at making money, winning ease, securing approbation, or obtaining position, or even if you aim at the exhibition of rhetorical talent, you will not be fit for the Master's use. God would not have us entangled with subordinate designs. You do not keep a servant to go to the door that people may say, "What a fine girl she is, and how charmingly she dresses!" You may smile if it is so, and put up with it; but your sole wish is to have your message promptly and faithfully delivered. How contemptible it is when a minister so acts as to give the idea

of childish display! He stands up to deliver his Lord's message, but his hope is that people will say, "What a nice young man! How properly' he speaks, and how prettily he quotes Browning!" Self-display is death to power. God cannot greatly bless men with such small ideas. It is beneath the dignity of the Godhead for the Lord largely to use an instrument so altogether unadapted for His sublime purposes.

When some men come to die, the religion which they have themselves thought out and invented will yield them no more confidence than the religion of the Roman Catholic sculptor who, on his death-bed, was visited by his priest. The priest said, "You are now departing out of this life;" and, holding up a beautiful crucifix, he cried, "Behold your God, who died for you" "Alas!" said the sculptor, "I made it." There was no comfort for him in the work of his own hands; and there will be no comfort in a religion of one's own devising. That which was created in the brain cannot yield comfort to the heart. The man will sorrowfully say, "Yes, that is my own idea; but what does God say?" Brethren, I believe in that which I could not have invented. I believe that which I cannot understand. I believe that which compels me to adore, and I thank God for a rock that is higher than I am. If it were not higher than I am, it would be no shelter for me.

I have mentioned simplicity of character, singleness of eye, and subordination of mind; and next to these, I notice, also, that, if God will speak to us, there must be a deep seriousness of heart. Let me remind you again of that text which I mentioned a minute ago: "To this man will I look, even to him that trembleth at My Word." When George Fox was called a Quaker, because he trembled at the Name of God, the title was an honour to him. The man was so God-possessed that he quaked, as well he might. Habakkuk describes the same feeling as having been his own, and this is no unusual experience with the true child of God. In fact, God never comes to us without causing us to tremble. The old Romish legend is that the tree that bore the Saviour was the aspen, whose leaves continually quiver; and he that bears Christ within him, and feels the weight of the Divine glory, must be filled with awe. Our brother Williams just now said that he feared and trembled for all the goodness that God had made to pass before him-this is my feeling, and yours also. We are so weak, and these Divine inspirations are so weighty, that we are subdued into awe, and there is no room for levity.

One thing more upon this head. This power, which we so greatly need in getting our message, will only come where there is a sympathy with God. Brethren, do you know what it is to be in tender sympathy with God? Perhaps no man among us knows what perfect sympathy with God means; yet we must, at least, be, in such accord with God as to feel that He could not do or say anything which we would question. We could not doubt any truth which He could reveal; neither, in our heart of hearts, would we quarrel with anything which His will could appoint. If anything in us is not in perfect agreement with the Lord, we regard it as evil, and groan to be set free from it. If anything in us contends against God, we contend against it, for we are one with God in intent and desire. We hear much, nowadays, of sympathy with man; and, in a measure, we agree with it. Sympathy with the fallen, the suffering, the lost, is good; but my sympathies are also with the Lord my God. His Name is dishonoured; His glory is trailed in the mire. It is His dear, bleeding Son who is used worst of all. Oh, to think that He should love so well, and yet be refused! That such beauty as His should be unacknowledged, such redemption rejected, such mercy scorned! What are men, after all, compared with God? If they are like myself, it were a pity that they were ever made! As for God, does He not fill all things with goodness as well as with being?

I can hardly tell you how high a value I set upon this enthusiasm for God. We must be in harmony with all His designs of love towards men, whilst in secret we receive His message. To become apparently warm in the pulpit, is, not of much account unless we are much more intense when alone with God. Heart-fire is true fire. A housewife, who perseveres in the old method of making her own bread, does not want a great blaze at the mouth of the oven. "Oh, no!" she says, "I want to get my faggots far back, and get all the heat into the oven itself, and then it becomes of use to me." Sermons are never baked by the fire and flash at the mouth; they must be prepared through the heating of the inmost soul. That precious Word, that Divine shewbread, must be baked in the centre of our nature by the heat that is put there by the in-dwelling Spirit.

Follow me, my brethren, while I speak upon THE POWER THAT IS NEEDED WHEN WE ARE DELIVERING THE MESAGES ITSELF.

The greatest generator of force which is available to man is heat. I suppose that nothing produces so much power for human purposes as fire; and even so, the burning and consuming element in the spiritual world is a great factor in the development of spiritual strength. We must be in downright earnest, and must feel the burnings of a zeal which consumes us, or we shall have little force. We must decrease; we must be burning if we would be shining lights. We cannot save our lives and save others; there must be a destruction of self for the salvation of men.

In order to have the Holy Spirit with us, there must be a very close adhesion to the truth of God, with clearness, boldness, and fidelity in the utterance of it. Do not dream that, to have a formal creed, or a something which is said not to be a creed, but "a declaration", or some other style of confession,—I know not how to mention the nondescript invention,—is enough. Without intensely hearty belief of truth, these precious documents are wretched affairs. Declarations of the kind I refer to may be compared to flags, which may be useful if carried by brave standard-bearers; or they may be tawdry ornaments, used for meaner ends. A teacher was once instructing a class in patriotism and nationality. He happened to see the national flag hanging up upon the wall, and he asked a child, "Now, my boy, what is that flag?" "It is the English flag, sir." "And what is the, use of it?" The truthful boy replied, "It is used to cover the dirty place in the wall behind it." I need not interpret the parable. Let modern ecclesiastical history point the moral.

The truth of God is the best of all guests; entertain it, as Abraham did the angels. Spare not the best you have for its maintenance; for it leaves a rich blessing with those who deny themselves for it. But do not entertain any of the inventions of man; for these will betray you, as Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss. Do not be dismayed by the caricatures of truth which are manufactured by malicious minds. Nowadays, it is the policy of men to misrepresent gospel doctrines. They remind me of Voltaire, of whom it is said that he could take any book that he read, and make whatever he liked out of it, and then hold it up to ridicule. Remember the Roman practice in persecuting times; they wrapped the Christians in skins of bears, and then set dogs to tear them to pieces. They treat us the same, morally, if we hold by unpopular truth. I have seen myself in several skins lately; I can only say they were no skins of mine. I return them to those who arrayed me in them. If our declarations of truth are fairly and honestly stated, and then argued against,—well and good; but when they are misrepresented, and tortured to mean what we never meant them to mean, then we are not careful to reply. When this happens to you, count it no strange thing. Reckon that, because they cannot overcome 'the truth itself, they fashion an image of it stuffed with straw, and then burn

it with childish exultation. Let them enjoy their game as they may.

Beloved, have a genuine faith in the Word of God, and in its power to save. Do not go up into the pulpit preaching the truth, and saying, "I hope some good will come of it" but confidently believe that it will not return void, but must work the eternal purpose of God. Do not speak as if the gospel might have some power, or might have none. God sends you to be a miracle-worker; therefore, say to the spiritually lame, "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk," and men will rise up and walk; but if you say, "I hope, dear man, that Jesus Christ may be able to make you rise up and walk," your Lord will frown upon your dishonouring words. You have lowered Him, you have brought Him down to the level of your unbelief and He cannot do many mighty works by you. Speak boldly; for if you speak by the Holy Spirit, you cannot speak in vain.

This suspicion is born of want of fidelity in ministers. I saw, just now, outside the shop of a marine-store dealer, a placard which runs thus: "Fifty tons of bones wanted." "Yes," I said to myself, "mostly backbones." Fifty tons of them! I could indicate a place where they could take fifty tons, and not be overstocked. As for us, let us be able to say, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." Let us have a genuine faith in everything that God has revealed. Have faith, not only in its truth, but in its power; faith in the absolute certainty that, if it be preached, it will produce glorious results.

Do not some show, by their manner of preaching, that their heart is not in it? They have come to preach, and they will get through what they have to say; but their deepest thoughts and liveliest emotions would come out better at a political meeting. They have not all their wits about them when preaching. They remind me of the legend of the two learned doctors down in the fen country, who thought that they would have a day's shooting of wild ducks. They were extremely learned, but they were not at home in common pursuits. They came to a piece of water, into which it was necessary for them to wade to get at the ducks; and one said to the other, "I have not put on my water-boots." The other replied, "I have forgotten my boots, too; but never mind." They both waded in, for they were keen sportsmen. They reached a sufficient nearness for shooting the ducks. Then one whispered, "Now, brother, fire at them." The brother replied, "I've forgotten my gun; haven't you brought yours?" "No," said the other, "I did not think of it." There were fine sportsmen for you! Their deep thoughts had made them unpractical: their Hebrew roots had displaced their common sense. Have you never seen such preachers? They are "not there": their minds are in the profound abysses of critical unbelief. The Holy Ghost will not bless men of this sort. He spake by an ass once, but that ass showed its sense by never speaking any more. I know creatures of a similar kind that are not half so wise.

If we would have the Lord with us in the delivery of our message, we must be in dead earnest, and full of living zeal Do you not think that many sermons are "prepared" until the juice is crushed out of them, and zeal could not remain in such dry husks? Sermons which are studied for days, written down, read, re-read, corrected, and further corrected and emended, are in great danger of being too much cut and dried. You will never get a crop if you plant boiled potatoes. You can boil a sermon to a turn, so that no life remaineth in it. I like, in a discourse, to hear the wild-bird notes of true nature and pure grace; these have a charm unknown to the artificial and elaborate address. The music which we hear of a morning, in the spring, has a freshness in it which your tame birds cannot reach; it is full of rapture, and alive with variety and feeling. It is a treat to hear a really good local preacher tell out his experience of how he came to Christ; and relate it in his own hearty,

unaffected way. Nature beats art all to nothing. A simple, hearty testimony is like grapes cut fresh from the vine: who would lay a bunch of raisins by the side of them? Give us sermons, and save us from essays! Do you not all know the superfine preacher? You ought to listen to him, for he is clever; you ought to be attentive to his words, for every sentence of that paper cost him hours of toilsome composition; but somehow it falls flat, and there is an offensive smell of stale oil. I speak advisedly when I say that some speakers want locking out of their studies, and turning out to visit their people. A very good preacher once said to me, "I feel discouraged; for, the other Sunday, I did not feel at all well, and I preached a sermon without much study; in fact, it was such a talk as I should give if I sat up in bed in the middle of the night, and in my shirt-sleeves told out the way of salvation. Why, sir, my people came to me, and said, "What a delightful sermon! We have so enjoyed it!" I felt disgusted with them. When I have given them a sermon that took a full week, and perhaps more, to prepare, they have not thought anything of it; but this unstudied address quite won their hearts." I replied to him, "If I were you, I would accept their judgment, and give them another sermon of the same sort."

The Holy Spirit will help us in our message, if there is an entire dependence upon Him. Of course, you all accept this truth at once; but do you entirely depend upon the Holy Spirit? Can you, dare you, do that? I would not urge any man to go into the pulpit, and talk out whatever first came into his head, under the pretence of depending upon the Holy Spirit; but, still, there are methods of preparation which denote the utter absence of any trust in the Holy Spirit's help in the pulpit. There is no practical difficulty in reconciling our own earnest endeavours with humble dependence upon God; but it is very hard to make this appear logical, when we are merely discussing a theory. It is the old difficulty of reconciling faith and works. I heard of a good man who had family prayer, and commended his house and household to the care of God during the night-watches. When burglaries became numerous in the neighbourhood, he said to a friend, "After you have asked the Lord to protect your house, what do you do?" His friend answered that he did nothing more than usual. "Well," said the first, "we have put bolts, top and bottom, upon all the doors, and we have a lock and also a chain; beside that, we have the best patent fastenings on all the windows." "All that is well enough," said his friend; "is not that enough?" "No," said he; "when we go to bed, my wife and I have two bolts on the door of the bedroom, and a lock and chain on the door. I have also got a spear-head fixed on a pole, and my wife has an electric apparatus which will ring a bell, and give an alarm outside." His friend smiled, and said, "And all that is faith in God, is it?" The good man replied, "Faith without works is dead." "Yes," said the other, "but I should think that faith with so many works would be likely to be smothered."

Above all, dear friends, if you want the blessing of God, keep up constant communion with God. We get into fellowship with God at this Conference; do not let us get out of communion with God when we go home. When may a Christian safely be out of communion with God? Never. If we always walk with God, and act towards Him as children towards a loving father, so that the spirit of adoption is always in us, and the spirit of love always flows forth from us, we shall preach with power, and God will bless our ministry: for then we shall know and utter the mind of God.

Even worldlings look with scorn upon loose habits in a preacher. I know a certain clergyman who is fond of cards. Speaking to a man-servant, a friend said, "Where do you go on Sunday? I suppose you attend the church;"—the place being very near. "No," said the man, "I never go and hear that gentleman." "Why not?" "Well," he said, "you know he is very much taken up with

card-playing." "Yes," said my friend, "but you play cards yourself." This was the answer, "Yes, I play cards; but I would not trust my soul with a man who does it. I want a better man than myself to be my spiritual guide." The remark is open to many criticisms, but there is about it a ring of common sense. That is how the world regards matters. Now, if even men of the world judge trifling preachers to be unfit for their work, depend upon it the Holy Ghost has not a better opinion of them, and He must be sorely vexed with unspiritual, unholy intruders into the sacred office. If we can lie, if we can be unkind to our families, if we do not pay our debts, if we are notorious for levity, and little given to devotion, how can we expect a blessing? "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." As I have said before, He does not mind what the vessel is, even though it be but of earth or of wood; but it must be clean. It is not fit for the Master's use if it is not clean. Oh, that God would keep us pure, and then take us in His own hand for His own purposes!

Love for souls will operate in many ways upon our ministry. Among other things, it will make us very plain in our speech. We shall say to ourselves, "No: I must not use that hard word, for that poor woman in the aisle would not understand me. I must not point out that recondite difficulty, for yonder trembling soul might be staggered by it, and might not be relieved by my explanation." I heard a sentence, the other day, which stuck to me because of its finery rather than its weight of meaning. An admirable divine remarked, "When duty is embodied in a concrete personality, it is eminently simplified." You all understand the expression; but I do not think that the congregation to which it was addressed had more than a hazy idea of what it meant. It is our old friend, "Example is better than precept." It is a fine thing to construct sounding sentences, but it is only an amusement; it ministers nothing to our great end. Some would impress us by their depth of thought, when it is merely a love of big words. To hide plain things in dark sentences, is sport rather than service for God. If you love men better, you will love phrases less. How used your mother to talk to you when you were a child? There! do not tell me. Don't print it. It would never do for the public ear. The things that she used to say to you were childish, and earlier still, babyish. Why did she thus speak, for she was a very sensible woman? Because she loved you. There is a sort of tutoyage, as the French call it, in which love delights.

I will mention a few things more which are necessary to the full display of the power which regenerates sinners, and builds up saints. Much care should be bestowed upon our surroundings. Brethren, do not think that if you go, next Lord's-day, to a place you have never visited before, you will find it as easy to preach there as it is at home among a loving, praying people. Are you not conscious, when going into some assemblies, that they are cold as ice-wells? You say to yourself, "How can I preach here?" You do not quite, know why, but you are not happy. There is no quickening atmosphere, no refreshing dew, no heavenly wind. Like your Lord, you cannot do anything because of the unbelief around you. When you begin to preach, it is like speaking inside a steam-boiler. No living hearts respond to your heart. They are a sleepy company, or a critical society; you can see it, and feel it. How they fix their eyes on you, and concentrate their spectacles! You perceive that they are in what a countryman called "a judgmental frame of mind." No good will come of your warm-hearted address.

Some churches are in such a state that they are enough to baffle any ministry. A brother-minister told me of a Congregational chapel in which there has not been a prayer-meeting for the last fifteen years; and I did not wonder when he added that the Congregation had nearly died out, and the minister was removing. It was time he should. What a blessing he will not be somewhere else!

"But," said he, "I cannot say much about this state of things; for, in my own church, I cannot get the people to pray. The bulk of them have not been in the habit of taking public part in the prayers, and it seems impossible to get them to do so. What shall I do?" "Well," I replied, "it may help you if you call in your church-officers on Sunday mornings, before the service, and ask them to pray for you, as my deacons and elders do for me. My officers know what a trembling creature I am; and when I ask them to seek strength for me, they do so with loving hearts." Don't you think that such exercises tend to train men in the art of public prayer? Besides, men are likely to hear better when they have prayed for the preacher. Oh, to get around us a band of men whose hearts the Lord has touched! If we have a holy people about us, we shall be the better able to preach. Tell me not of a marble pulpit; this is a golden pulpit.

For large blessing, we must have union among our people. God the Holy Spirit does not bless a collection of quarrelling professors. Those who are always contending, not for the truth, but for petty differences, and family jealousies, are not likely to bring to the church the dove-like Spirit. Want of unity always involves want of power. I know that some churches are greatly at fault in this direction; but certain ministers never have a harmonious people, although they change frequently; and I am afraid it is because they are not very loving themselves. Unless we are ourselves in good temper, we cannot expect to keep the people in good temper. As pastors, we must bear a great deal; and when we think we have borne as much as possible, and cannot bear any more, we must go over it again, and bear the same things again. Strong in the love which "endureth all things, hopeth all things," we must quietly resolve not to take offence; and, before long, harmony will be created where discord reigned, and then we may expect a blessing.

It may even happen that, when you come down from the mount where you have been with God, and preached with your soul on fire, that you come right down into a cold bath of common-place remark, which lets you see that some of your hearers are out of sympathy both with your subject and yourself. Such a thing is a great hindrance, not only to your spirit, but to the Spirit of God; for the Holy One notices all this unkind and unspiritual behaviour. Brethren, what a work we have to do! What a work we have to do! Unless the Spirit of God comes to sanctify these surroundings, how can it ever be done? I am sure you feel the necessity of having a truly praying people. Be much in prayer yourself, and this will be more effectual than scolding your people for not praying. Set the example. Draw streams of prayer out of the really gracious people by getting them to pray whenever they come to see you, and by praying with them yourself whenever you call upon them. Not only when they are ill, but when they are well, ask them to join in prayer with you. When a man is upstairs in bed, and cannot do any hurt, you pray for him. When he is downstairs, and can do no end of mischief, you do not pray for him. Is this wise and prudent? Oh, for a pleading people! The praying legion is the victorious legion. One of our most urgent necessities is fervent, importunate prayer.

I have done when I say just this. Let each man bethink him of the responsibility that rests upon him. I should not like to handle the doctrine of responsibility with the view of proving that it squares with the doctrine of predestination. It does do so, assuredly. I believe in predestination without cutting and trimming it; and I believe in responsibility without adulterating and weakening it. Before you, the man of God places a quiver full of arrows, and he bids you shoot the arrow of the Lord's deliverance. Bestir yourself, and draw the bow! I beseech you, remember that every time you shoot there shall be victory for Israel. Will you stop at the third shooting? The man of God will feel

angry and grieved if you are thus straitened, and he will say, "Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times, and then Syria would have been utterly destroyed." Do we not fail in our preachings, in our very ideal of what we are going to do, and in the design we set before us for accomplishment? Having laboured a little, are we not very satisfied? Shake off such base content! Let us shoot many times. Brethren, be filled with a great ambition; not for yourselves, but for your Lord. Elevate your ideal! Have no more firing at the bush. You may, in this case, shoot at the sun himself; for you will be sure to shoot higher, if you do so, than if some grovelling object were your aim. Believe for great things of a great God.

I would enhance our sense of responsibility by the remembrance of the death-beds of our people. Unless we are faithful to them, it will be a painful sight to be present when they come to die. Suppose that any one of our hearers should stretch out his bony hand, and say, "I am lost, and you never warned me; you always gave me some idea that it might be a little way roundabout, but I should get right all the same; and I chose the roundabout way of 'the larger hope,' instead of the Divine hope that is set before us in the gospel." I would rather never have been born than have anybody speak thus to me when he shall come to die. My brother said to me, the other day, what Charles Wesley said to John Wesley, "Brother, our people die well!" I answered, "Assuredly they do!" I have never been to the sick-bed of any one of our people without feeling strengthened in faith. In the sight of their glorious confidence, I could sooner battle with the whole earth, and kick it before me like a football, than have a doubt in my mind about the gospel of our Lord. They die gloriously. I saw, last week, a dear sister, with cancer just under her eye. How did I find her? Was she lamenting her hard fate? By no means; she was happy, calm, joyful, in bright expectation of seeing the face of the King in His beauty. I talked with a tradesman, who fell asleep not long ago, and I said, "You seem to have no fears." "No," he said, "how can I have any? You have not taught us what will make us fear. How can I be afraid to die, since I have fed these thirty years on the strong meat of the Kingdom of God? I know whom I have believed." I had a heavenly time with him. I cannot use a lower word. He exhibited a holy mirth in the expectation of a speedy removal to the better world.

Brethren, I resolve, God helping me, to be among those that shall walk with our Lord in white, for they are worthy. "These are they," it is said, "who have not defiled themselves,"—entered into no contracts and confederacies that would have stained their consciences, and polluted their hearts. These are they who have walked apart for His dear sake, obeying this word, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." A special enjoyment of adoption is given to the conscience that is true to the separated path, and is; never degraded by compromise. God help you to be faithful in this matter! I believe that, in fidelity, will be your power. "You may well make a little slit in your conscience," said one to a Puritan, "for other people make great rents in theirs." But the godly man thought not so; and I would remind you of that solemn word, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." This jealousy burns like coals of fire, and it is cruel as the grave; for God is so sternly jealous of those He loves much, that He will not bear in them that which He will endure in others. The greater His love, the more fierce His jealousy if in any way His chosen depart from Him.

"I shall be gone from you ere long. You will meet, and say to one another, "The President has departed. What are we going to do?" I charge you, be faithful to the gospel of our Lord Jesus

Christ, and the doctrine of His grace. Be ye faithful unto death, and your crowns will not be wanting. But, oh! let none of us die out like dim candles, ending a powerless ministry in everlasting blackness. The Lord Himself bless you! Amen.

## The Minister in These Times

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### Chapter 12

#### The Minister in These Times

BELOVED BRETHREN, I desire, on this occasion, to say something that shall be suitable for the times. I have never, according to the current phrase, preached to the times, but yet I would speak for the times, believing that a timely word now may bless all times to come. The times impress me in so many ways, and in such various modes, that I must take up a roving commission, and touch briefly upon a wide range of matters, instead of confining myself to one subject. Accept from me "here a little, and there a little," instead of much upon one subject.

Many are the aspects under which we must regard our Divine Lord, but I must always give the greatest prominence to His saving character as Christ our Sacrifice and Sin-bearer. If ever there was a time when we should be clear, pronounced, and vehement upon this point, it is now. Now the banner of the cross must lead the way. We cannot afford to put the atonement upon the shelf as a truth to be taken for granted, and left among the curiosities of unpractical belief. We cannot now afford to use orthodox words and phrases upon this subject as one might repeat the language of a liturgy; we must livingly and intensely believe the truth ourselves, and we must enforce it with the full energy of our being. The vital truth of our Lord's expiation must be preached often, clearly, and with emphasis; and, if it be not so, we have not correctly learned Christ, neither shall we successfully teach Him. To attempt to preach Christ without His cross, is to betray Him with a kiss.

We have no home-made theory; but our solemn witness is, that He "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." Even if it be called immoral, as some have impudently asserted, we yet believe that God "hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him," for "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" It would do us all good to look through the texts, in the Old and New Testaments, which refer to this fundamental truth; they are many, and definite. If we use language in its natural sense, we cannot get away from the assured belief that the Scripture teaches us to come to God through Jesus Christ, believing that He took our sin upon Himself, and suffered on its account, that He might render to God's moral government a recompense for the dishonor which man's rebellion had put upon it. Through His blood, there is forgiveness; and by reason of His vicarious satisfaction, guilt is put away, and the believer is "accepted in the Beloved."

We shall not cease, dear brethren, in our ministry, most definitely and decidedly to preach the atoning sacrifice; and I will tell you why I shall be sure to do so. I have not personally a shadow of a hope of salvation from any other quarter: I am lost if Jesus be not my Substitute. I have been driven up into a corner by a pressing sense of my own personal sin, and have been made to despair of ever doing or being such that God can accept me in myself. I must have a righteousness, perfect and Divine; yet it is beyond my own power to create. I find it in Christ: I read

that it will become mine by faith, and by faith I take it. My conscience tells me that I must render to God's justice a recompense for the dishonor that I have done to His law, and I cannot find anything which bears the semblance of such a recompense till I look to Christ Jesus. Do I not remember when I first looked to Him, and was lightened? Do I not remember how often I have gone as a sinner to my Savior's feet, and looked anew at His wounds, and believed over again unto eternal life, feeling the old joy repeated by the deed? Brethren, I cannot preach anything else, for I know nothing else. New dogmas may or may not be true; but of the truth of this doctrine, I am sure.

Next, we hold that Christ Jesus is the sole Mediator and High Priest. And this makes us look with indignation upon the claims of superstition. We have in England still, what we thought, in our younger days, had become extinct, namely, the gospel of priestcraft,—the priestcraft of old Rome, without its venerableness of age. There are men among us who claim to be priests in a sense other than that in which all believers are priests unto God. According to this dream, our Lord Jesus is not, in Himself, an all-sufficient Mediator; that is to say, He may go a certain distance Godward; but, manward, between sinful man and the Lord Christ, there is a gap which can only be filled by a participator in a fancied apostolical succession. Of course, the sacraments, duly administered, are described as certain conduits of grace. Still we hear the words, "Baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." In priestly hands, bread and wine undergo a miraculous change, very near akin to Popish transubstantiation. Sacraments are magnified, because they are administered by priests, and thus they are but a footstool upon which the priest can mount a little higher. The church, the altar, the priest, these are cried up beyond measure; yet these are not our Lord Jesus, but rivals to His priesthood. We hear it asserted, and our poor are continually taught it, that anyone who undertakes to teach the gospel, though he can prove his doctrine from the Bible, and may have an evident blessing resting on his ministry, is to be denounced as a schismatic, unless he has received episcopal laying on of hands. To break bread together as believers in the Lord Jesus, is not allowable to ordinary Christians; and if they dare to do so, they are guilty of schism,—an awful crime, which would seem to be several degrees worse than adultery or murder. You might be forgiven, and it might even be difficult to keep you from the sacraments, though guilty of fornication; but schism, if persevered in, puts you beyond hope.

We must be zealous to have no measure of complicity in this superstition. My brethren, be not priests yourselves. It is very possible to give yourselves the airs of hierarchs, even though you are avowedly nothing more than Nonconformist pastors. There is a style of dress,—the affectation of it is not praiseworthy. There is a style of language,—the imitation of it is not commendable. There is an assumption of superiority, looking down upon the common people as mere laity; this piece of pompousness is ridiculous. Avoid the way of certain clerics who seem intent on making their people feel that a minister is a dignified individual, and that the rest of the members of the church should hardly venture to differ from him. Say what we like about all believers in Christ being a generation of priests, we still find vain fellows among us who would be thought of as possessors of a mystic specialty. Our office, as pastors, deserves to be respected, and will be if properly carried out; but I have observed that some who are very anxious to magnify their office, really try to magnify themselves. Yet, as the official has gone up, the man has gone down. One has wondered how so small a man has obtained so great an office. I heard, yesterday, a question to which I have not yet found a satisfactory answer; it was this: "Which is worse, the man who can preach and

won't preach, or the man who cannot preach and will preach?" We have, I fear, some of the latter sort among us; but if they suppose that the mere fact of their being chosen to a pastorate has endowed them with peculiar powers, they deceive themselves.

In the next place, let us see to it that we set forth our Lord Jesus Christ as the infallible Teacher, through His inspired Word. I do not understand that loyalty to Christ which is accompanied by indifference to His words. How can we reverence His person, if His own words and those of His apostles are treated with disrespect? Unless we receive Christ's words, we cannot receive Christ; and unless we receive His apostles' words, we do not receive Christ; for John saith, "He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." We must love and reverence all the teaching of our Lord; and we build our houses on the sand if we do not. It is as important to know Christ as the truth, as it is to know Christ as the way and the life. Some excellent brethren seem to think more of the life than of the truth; for when I warn them that the enemy has poisoned the children's bread, they answer, "Dear brother, we are sorry to hear it; and, to counteract the evil, we will open the window, and give the children fresh air." Yes, open the window, and give them fresh air, by all means. You cannot do a better thing, in view of many purposes; but, at the same time, this ought you to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Arrest the poisoners, and open the windows, too. While men go on preaching false doctrine, you may talk as much as you will about deepening their spiritual life, but you will fail in it. While you do one good thing, do not neglect another. Instead of saying that the life is more important, or the truth is more important, or the way is more important, let us be united in the firm belief that they are each one equally important, and that one cannot be well sustained and thoroughly carried out without the rest.

Some fall into doubt through an inward crookedness. Certain men start new doctrines because "something is rotten in the state of Denmark," and out of rottenness fungoid growths must come. You may have read Pliny's "Natural History." If you have not read it, you need not do so, for the history is not generally natural, but fabulous. Pliny tells us that, when the elephant goes to a pool of water, and sees himself in it, he is moved with such disgust at his own ugliness, that he straightway stirs the water, and makes it muddy, that he may not see himself. Such an elephant never lived; but I have seen men who have been very comparable to it. Holy Scripture has not agreed with them,—so much the worse for Holy Scripture! Such-and- such doctrines do not suit their tastes, so they must be misrepresented, or denied. An unregenerate heart lies at the bottom of "modern thought." Men are down-grade in doctrine because they were never put on the up-grade by the renewal of their minds.

Next, brethren, we must growingly insist that Christ is the one Law-giver and only Ruler in the Church. We have systems of religion among us in which the whole organization is an invention; it could not have been discovered in the Bible, but has been brought to it to have a text hung round its neck as a label. We have, for our neighbors, religionists who would hardly attempt to prove that their system was ever sanctioned by our Lord and His apostles. This has been the case for so long a period that we have been obliged to tolerate all kinds of things; but to tolerate is not the same thing as to approve and imitate. We should, in our own churches, keep to apostolic precedent, and follow the rule of Christ in all things. No venerable name is sufficient authority for going aside from Holy Scripture. "To the law and to the testimony;" if a doctrine or a ceremony is not there, it is nowhere for you and for me. Our sole authority is the Word of the Lord.

You may quit the rule of your Lord in another way. A brother is going to decide upon his course of action on a certain important Christian matter; but he first wants to know what is the opinion of gentlemen who subscribe considerable sums to church work. If any one of you does this, I shall cry, "Who is thy master, after all? Judas with his bag in the corner, or the Christ whom he kisses with a traitor's kiss?" Be true, and dare all things. If we do not do so, Christ Jesus is not Law-giver to us. Scorn the bribe, though it be a covert one, and lose all for truth, if need be.

Once more, I trust that we shall always hold Christ as Lord and God. Whatever else He is, He is Lord and God to us. Therefore He is to be spoken of and thought upon with deepest reverence of soul. The spirit that trifles with the Word of God, and the things of Christ, is almost more vicious than the action which comes out of it. I have read many things which I have shuddered at; but I have shuddered much more at the state of mind into which a man must have come to be able to write them. Let us cultivate the highest reverence for our Divine Lord, and the surest confidence in His power, and in His ultimate victory. Trust in that hand which He keeps on the helm. Have no shadow of a doubt that His wisdom and might will cause all things to end well. Go, therefore, and speak in His Name. When you have done stating a doctrine, command your hearers, in the Name of Jesus, to believe it. Be daring enough for that. As the apostles commanded lame men to stand, and even dead men to live, so, in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, command sinners to turn unto Him, and to live. He who gives you faith will answer to His own word.

The most striking view of it comes before us in meditating upon the fact, that, as He stood in our stead, we also stand in His stead. To our hearers we can truly say, "We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Our Lord Jesus lays His pierced hands upon our shoulders, and He says, "As the Father hath sent Me into the world, even so send I you." We are commissioned to plead for Christ, even as He is commissioned to plead for us. For Him we climb those stairs, to point that sick and ignorant woman to the blood of reconciliation. For Him we stand in the pulpit, and speak of sin, and righteousness, and judgment to come. In His place we cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Beloved brethren, do we always feel that we are not only laboring for Christ, but in His stead? Could we set forth some of our sermons as having been preached in Christ's stead? Should we not expect our own conscience to cry out against us if we were to make such a claim for those discourses? Some of our hearers would think, if they did not say so, "If that sermon is in Christ's stead, there is an awful falling off from what it would have been had Jesus spoken on His own account." Of course, there would necessarily be a falling off in Divine authority and ability; but there should be none as to truthful and earnest purpose.

If we be in Christ's stead, we shall not bully, but tenderly persuade. We shall have true sympathy, and so we shall plead with sinners unto tears, as though their ruin were our woe, and their salvation would be our bliss. We shall weep over them, because Jesus would have done so; and we shall be patient with them, because of His Divine long-suffering. We shall watch for opportunities, and use them with perseverance; for so would Jesus have done. We shall deal with our hearers as a shepherd with his lost sheep, and we shall never rest till we have brought them home upon our shoulders rejoicing; for so was it with our Lord.

Therefore, brethren, we must love sinners for Christ's sake. Are there not a great many in your congregation whom you could not love for any other reason? Could the Lord Jesus Christ ever

have loved you for your merit's sake? He loved you and me for a reason which He found in His own heart; and so must we love our hearers, from causes which are not so much in them as in our own hearts. He "loved me, and gave Himself for me;" and if now He says to me, "Love others, and give yourself for them," shall I not do it? Every angry temper must be chased out. The fallen, the frivolous, the captious, the indifferent, and even the malicious must share our love. We must love them to Jesus. With cords of a man and bands of love must we draw them. Our mission is to perpetuate on earth the love of the Savior.

When Alexander led his men into Persia, and they had to cut through a very mountain of ice and snow, they were ready to turn back, and therefore Alexander alighted from his horse, and took an ice-ax in his hand, and went forward, often up to his waist in snow, cleaving the blocks of ice, and leading the way. Then the Macedonians felt that they would cut through the world with Alexander in front of them. With Christ your Lord cleaving His way by the agonies on the cross, will not you follow where He leads, and fill up the measure that may be wanted of toil, and labor, and suffering, for the salvation of those whom He has redeemed by blood? Nothing was more affecting in our supplications this morning than the prayers of those who had been great sufferers. Through suffering comes blessing. When our Lord means to give His household wine, that our festivals may be full of gladness, what does He do? He says, "Fill the waterpots with water." We must be filled with affliction to the brim. We must have as much of it as we can hold, and then He will say, "Draw out now." This is His beginning of miracles; and some of us rejoice that it was not only wrought at Cana in Galilee, but it is still wrought in this island of the sea.

Our afflictions come to us as blessings, though they frown like curses. I have heard of one who was generous, but extremely eccentric. A man, who was deeply in debt, passed his door, and he knew that the poor debtor was terribly exercised about the matter. One day, this odd man of wealth, generous as he was, was so cruel as to throw a heavy bag at the poor debtor. The man was hurt by the missile, and looked round to see what it was. He saw no man who had inflicted the injury. He picked up the bag. He heard the chink of the coin, and when he opened the bag, he found enough to pay his debt, and he heard a voice saying, "Keep it for yourself." He never summoned that man for an assault; but thanked him for the gift. Ofttimes has Providence, with a rough hand, thrown countless gain in our way in the form of the trial of our faith, which is much more precious than gold. Blessed be the Lord, our temporary bruise is soon forgotten, but the spiritual gain abides for ever. In any case, the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ is our cause, and we are linked with Him in a fellowship which cannot be broken, whatever it may involve. We have counted the cost, and we can say, "From henceforth let no man trouble me. I am the branded slave of Jesus, and my ear is bored for Him."

I think, again, that we shall do well to stand towards Christ as those who are conscious of His power and presence. Brethren, our Lord is with us. The best of all is, that He is with us indeed and of a truth. If we are with Jesus, and preach His truth, Jesus is assuredly with us; for He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." That promise was not a pretty piece of romance: it is true that He is with us at this hour. Let us believe it, and act accordingly. If we do not always feel His brightness, let us, like the flowers, turn towards the sun. When the sun is not shining, the flowers know where there is most of light, and their faces turn that way. Let us be true heliotropes, or turners to the sun. When we get into the pulpit, let us look Christward and lean Christward. What a wondrous place the pulpit is when Jesus is there! In the study, when we sit

down, and begin to rub our foreheads, and anxiously enquire, "What shall we preach about?" let us turn towards our Lord, and pray with our window open towards His cross and His throne. May we ever feel an influence drawing us Christ-ward when the Bible is open before us! If it be so, our weakness will all vanish, for His strength will be remembered

Some preachers evidently do not believe that the Lord is with their gospel, because, in order to attract and save sinners, their gospel is insufficient, and they have to add to it inventions of men. Plain gospel preaching must be supplemented,—so they think. Bridget was very busy catching and killing flies. Her mistress said to her, "Bridget, what are you doing?" She answered, "You see, ma'am, we have bought some fly-papers, and we must have the flies caught on them; and as they don't go on of themselves, I am sticking them on." I should not care for fly-papers of that sort. If the gospel must be a failure unless we attract the people by some extraneous method, it is a poor business. If the fly-paper does not attract the flies, and hold them, we may as well burn the flypaper. If your gospel cannot bring the people to hear you, and if, when they come, your gospel will not impress and convert them, well, then, give it up. Open a coffee-shop, or start in the ginger-beer line; but do not call your useless talk the blessed gospel. If you are not conscious of a supernatural power and presence with the Word of the Lord, let it alone. A man said to me, "You told a dead sinner to believe." I pleaded guilty, but told him I would do it again. He said, "I could not do it, I should feel that it was of no use to do so." I answered, "Possibly, it might be of no use for you to do it, for you have not the necessary faith; but, as I believe that God bids me do so, I deliver the message in the Name of the Lord, and the dead sinners believe and live." I do not trust in the dead sinner's power to live, but in the power of the gospel to make him live. Now, if your gospel has not the power of the Holy Ghost in it, you cannot preach it with confidence, and you are tempted to have a performance in the schoolroom to allure the people, whom Christ crucified does not draw. If you are depending on sing-song, and fiddles, and semi-theatricals, you are disgracing the religion which you pretend to honor.

Now for two or three words to finish with, upon OUR POSITION INDIVIDUALLY. Peradventure, some sentence may come with power to this man and to that.

In the next place, we must learn, in these times, to be selective in our companionships. When a man is himself right, let him not compromise himself by association with those who are not clear in their standing. Why be drawn down by holding on to the wreck which is sinking? Continual consorting with those who have no sympathy with the great truths of the gospel, is running into perpetual peril. For my part, I find association with persons of loose views a thing too painful for me. Worldly-minded men are wretched company for spiritual minds. Gordon Cumming describes a territory in Africa as "a forest of fish-hooks, relieved with patches of penknives." Men of new views, loose habits, and unspiritual talk, are quite as uncomfortable as acquaintances; especially when they pretend to be very orthodox, and yet believe nothing of the old faith. Clear yourselves of all connections which bring your own faithfulness into question. Do not talk about separation from that which is evil, and then remain in fellowship with it. Be as chaste in your companionships as in your own persons, or evil will come of it.

Be diligent in action. Put all your irons into the fire. Use every faculty for Jesus. Be wide-awake to watch opportunities, and quick to seize upon them. Believe that the smallest sphere has in it or around it glorious openings for enlargement. In a very small village, infinite results may be

realized. If one place be evangelized, strike out for another; and ever, like the dwellers on a common, keep up a rolling fence, which encloses a little more and a little more. Content with what we are doing must be far from us, while there is yet very much land to be possessed. May you feed your flocks as pastors, and increase them by being evangelists! In this respect, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. We must use every energy, and be of an adventurous and industrious spirit in these days, that we may checkmate the incessant activities of the prince of darkness.

There is no room for fear; at least, I see none while we hold fast to the truth. You never met an old salt, down by the sea, who was in trouble because the tide had been ebbing out for hours. No! He waits confidently for the turn of the tide, and it comes in due time. Yonder rock has been uncovered during the last half-hour, and if the sea continues to ebb out for weeks, there will be no water in the English Channel, and the French will walk over from Cherbourg. Nobody talks in that childish way, for such an ebb will never come. Nor will we speak as though the gospel would be routed, and eternal truth driven out of the land. We serve an almighty Master. Pompeii, when asked what he would do if his foes attacked him, replied, "Sir, if I stamp my foot, all Italy will swarm with soldiers." Thus he boasted; but it is no boast to say that, if our Lord does but stamp His foot, He can win for Himself all the nations of the earth against heathenism, and Mohammedanism, and Agnosticism, and Modern-thought, and every other foul error. Who is he that can harm us if we follow Jesus? How can His cause be defeated? At His will, converts will flock to His truth as numerous as the sands of the sea. Is it not written, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: Thou hast the dew of Thy youth"? Wherefore, be of good courage, and go on your way singing,—

"The winds of hell have blown,

The world its hate hath shown,

Yet it is not o'erthrown.

Hallelujah for the Cross!

It shall never suffer loss!" The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.

NOTE

\* The Salt-Cellars. Being a Collection of Proverbs, together with Homely Notes thereon, By C. H. SPURGEON. 2 vols.

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