

Abundant in Labors

by George Kulp

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, prayer, and exertion in the work of God, and highlights the relationship between the edification of believers and labor for sinners.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:6, Matthew 6:33, Luke 18:1, 1 Corinthians 9:22, Galatians 6:9, Ephesians 3:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, Hebrews 7:25, James 5:16, 1 Peter 4:8

Topics: "Personal Piety", "Evangelism"

Description

George Kulp preaches about the fervent dedication of Brother Smith to winning souls for Christ, emphasizing his reliance on the Word of God and the Spirit's guidance in his ministry. Brother Smith's personal piety and humility are highlighted through his letters, showcasing his deep love for Jesus and his passion for purity of heart. Kulp discusses the importance of a quickened state of piety among believers in bringing about conversions and the need for extraordinary efforts, increased desires for holiness, and a spirit of prayer in the Church. The sermon concludes with a powerful story of a missionary's encounter with a desperate family, illustrating the transformative power of faith and intercession in leading souls to salvation.

Transcript

"Cry aloud, spare not, sound an alarm."

"Give me children or I die."

"Though I preach the Gospel I have nothing to glory of."

"Nourished up in words of faith and good doctrine."

"This one thing I do" was eminently true of Brother Smith. In the closet, around the family altar, in his public ministrations, in his pastoral calling, he was ever alert for souls. The Word of God was the comfort and stay of his soul. Oftentimes while engaged in his devotions, some appropriate passage of Scripture would be brought to his mind by the Spirit. They only who have heard the voice of God can form an idea of the stability and repose which it communicates to the spirit. The subject of these pages was privileged at this stage of his ministry to have emphatic adaptation of the Word to his condition. In two several instances while engaged in prayer, passages of God's Word were applied with Divine power to his mind. The one was Prov. 3:6: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." The other, Matt.

6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Their united influence on the one hand soothed, and on the other stimulated him. From this period it is not thought that he was ever disturbed on the subject of his call to the ministry, and the following extracts will readily be admitted as indicative of the quickened state of his personal piety. The most interesting feature of the first is the emphasis with which its writer speaks on the subject of humanity; that virtue, the perfection of which is, perhaps of all the virtues in the Christian character, the least enjoyed, and the last attained.

To His Parents. -- "Oct. 22, 1817. -- Oh, what humblings I have had of late! My soul has been in the dust before the Lord, and at the same time I have felt the confidence of a little child. I love to be in this state. In your class, press the necessity of purity of heart; show that it is received and retained by faith; show it to be a privilege. Oh, what a happiness to be delivered from all anger, peevishness, pride, malice, etc., and to be filled with gentleness, patience, humility, love, etc.! Let us feast ourselves on Jesus. Let us contemplate Him, our infant Savior, in Bethlehem, and be humbled. Let us listen to Him, -- 'Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head,' -- and be humbled. Let us look at Him washing His disciples' feet, and be humbled. Let us walk with Him in the garden, view Him prostrate on the ground, sweating great drops of blood, hear Him crying 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me,' and be humbled. Let us behold Him on the cross, and be humbled: yet still let us be confident."

And this is evangelical humility; since that alone can consist with confidence. Nothing can be more anti-evangelical than the doctrine which makes inbred sin necessary to the production of humility. The lowliness of mind which the Gospel commends is the lowliness of love, and not the depression which results from the consciousness of our own depravity.

In another part of the same letter, Mr. Smith thus speaks of the work of God: "The work of the Lord is prospering, especially at Barnard Castle. Glory be to God, a spirit of prayer is given. Last Tuesday week four souls obtained liberty, on Sunday night after preaching two or three, and last night, one. There seems to be a good work on the minds of many. Oh, that God would pour out His Spirit upon us in an abundant manner! There are several seeking purity of heart. You are in a deplorable state at Cudworth, so many backsliders, So many who have been pricked to the heart and yet have not found the Lord. Oh, do not cease to cry unto God. Make an effort; do not be ashamed to be a fool for Christ's sake. You will remain low if extraordinary exertions are not made. Extraordinary effects are not produced by ordinary means."

The soundness of these views will be appreciated by all who have made themselves conversant with the indications of a prosperous and promising condition of the work of God. One of Mr. Smith's principles was that the world was to be benefited through the agency of the Church, and that signal manifestations of Divine power in awakening and conversion are to be expected through a quickened state of piety among believers. In the foregoing extract, he refers to the means, through the Divine blessing upon which we may rationally anticipate the salvation of sinners, and the enlargement of the tabernacles of the faithful. These are, increased desires after holiness, the spirit of prayer, and extraordinary effort among the people of God. And if those who are most holy are likely to be the most concerned for the salvation of men, and to have most of the power of the Holy Ghost; if God will hear the voice of His elect, who cry day and night to Him for the outpouring of the Spirit; and if they who are most scripturally diligent and energetic must be the most successful; it follows that the principle to which we have just alluded, with the practical illustration which accompanies it, is in the most perfect manner borne out in Scripture and matter of fact.

The converse must be equally true, that, where no sinners are converted, a church must be either defective in its views, or low in its attainments. Where there is no influence diffused without, the principle of piety is certainly languid within; where there is no shining, there is little burning light; where souls are not saved, Christians in general must be imperfect in the character or degree of their personal religion. The building up of believers in the most holy faith was a principal object of Mr. Smith's ministry; but he never considered this species of labor successful, except as its results were indicated in the conversion of sinners. That edification he justly deemed of a very low and questionable order which was not accompanied by a spirit of intercession for those who were without God, by the work of faith and labor of love. He rationally argued that where there were no answers to prayer, the throne of grace could not be very urgently importuned; where there was no outpouring of the Spirit, the promise of the Spirit could not be very definitely and earnestly pleaded; where there was no exertion for perishing men, there could not be much of the love of Christ. And whether that church can be correctly esteemed in a high and advancing state of improvement where prayer is cold and cursory, where faith is weak and love is listless, it requires no great sagacity to determine.

Our brother embraced every opportunity of attempting to rouse the consciences of such as were hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; but he anticipated extensive success, even in this respect, only as the faith and intercessions of God's people were brought to accompany his efforts, His labors, he knew, could be succeeded or frustrated by them alone. Hence he strove primarily to obtain the quickening influences of the Spirit upon them: nor was he unsuccessful. Had it been possible that his exertions for the conversion of sinners should prove utterly unavailing; had he never succeeded in awaking the most transient alarm in a stupefied conscience, or the smallest desire after goodness in a depraved heart; had he never plucked one brand from the fire, nor ever pointed a penitent to the blood of Christ; still his memory would be blessed in Zion, for the many instances in which, through his instrumentality, the Spirit was "poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness" became a "fruitful field," and what was once esteemed a "fruitful field," in the comparison, was "counted for a forest." In short, the retrospect of his labors furnishes the most satisfactory sanction to his favorite opinion on the subject, that he most certainly and perfectly edifies believers who is most ardently and scripturally laborious for the conversion of sinners.

The preacher who is in earnest to win souls, will make every effort to do so, though tired body and home comforts may plead with him. A preacher came home late, very tired, and had gone to bed to seek needed rest. The friend with whom he boarded awoke him out of his first refreshing sleep and informed him a little girl wanted to see him. Said he, "I turned impatiently over in my bed, and said, 'I am very tired; tell her to come in the morning, and I will see her.' My friend soon returned, and said, 'I think you had better get up. The girl is a poor little suffering thing. She is thinly clad, is without bonnet or shoes. She has seated herself on the doorstep, and says she must see you, and will wait till you get up.' I dressed myself, and opening the outside door, I saw one of the most forlorn-looking little girls I ever beheld. Want, sorrow, suffering, neglect seemed to struggle for the mastery. She looked up to my face, and said, 'Be you the man that preached last night, and said that Christ could save to the uttermost?' 'Yes.' 'Well, I was there, and I want you to come right down to my house, and try to save my poor father.' 'What's the matter with your father?' 'He's a very good father when he don't drink. He's out of work, and he drinks awfully. He's almost killed my poor mother; but if Jesus can save to the uttermost, He can save him. And I want you to come right to our house now.'

"I took my hat and followed my little guide, who trotted on before, halting as she turned the corners to see that I was coming. Oh! what a miserable den her home was! A low, dark, underground room, the floor all

slush and mud -- not a chair, table, or bed to be seen. A bitter cold night, and not a spark of fire on the hob; and the room not only cold, but dark. In the corner, on a little dirty straw, lay a woman. Her head was bound up, and she was moaning, as if in agony. As we darkened the doorway, a feeble voice said, 'O my child, my child! why have you brought a stranger into this horrible place?' Her story was a sad one, but soon told. Her husband, out of work; maddened with drink, and made desperate, had stabbed her because she did not provide him with a supper that was not in the house. He was then upstairs, and she was expecting every moment that he would come down and complete the bloody work he had begun. While the conversation was going on, the fiend made his appearance. A fiend he looked. He brandished the knife, still wet with the blood of his wife."

The missionary, like the man among the tombs, had himself belonged to the desperate classes. He was converted at the mouth of a coal-pit. He knew the disease and the remedy; knew how to handle a man on the borders of delirium tremens. Subdued by the tender tones, the madman calmed down and took a seat on a box. But the talk was interrupted by the little girl, who approached the missionary, and said: "Don't talk to father; it won't do any good. If talking would have saved him, he would have been saved long ago. Mother has talked to him so much, and so good. You must ask Jesus, who saves to the uttermost, to save my poor father."

Rebuked by the faith of the little girl, the missionary and the miserable sinner knelt down together. He prayed as he never prayed before; he entreated and interceded in tones so tender and fervent that it melted the desperate man, who cried for mercy. And mercy came. He bowed in penitence before the Lord, and lay down to sleep that night on his pallet of straw a pardoned soul.

Relief came to that dwelling. The wife was lifted from her dirty couch, and her home was made comfortable. On Sunday, the reformed man took the hand of his little girl, and entered the infant-class at Sunday School, to learn something about the Savior who "saves to the uttermost." He entered upon a new life; his reform was thorough. He found good employment, for, when sober, he was an excellent workman; and next to his Savior, he blesses God for the faith of his little girl who believed in a Savior who was able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

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