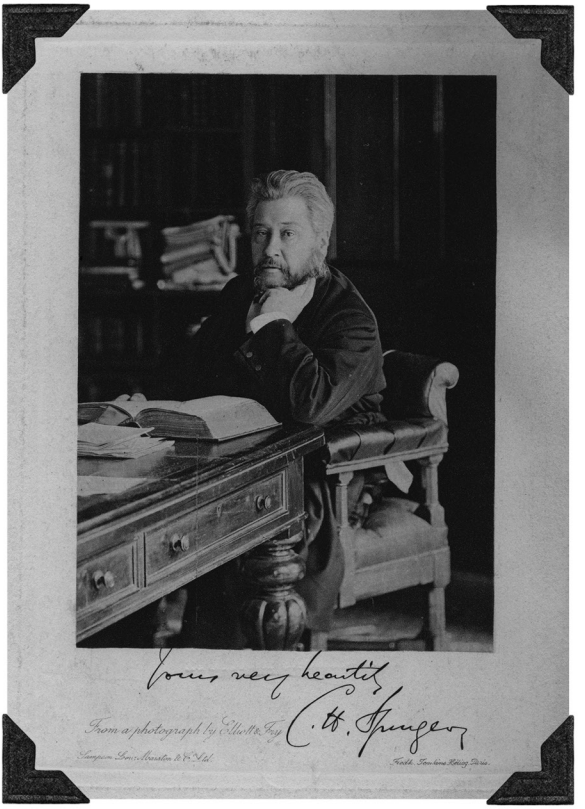
LECTURES TO MY STUDENTS



by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. SPURGEON - LECTURES TO MY STUDENTS

By C.H. Spurgeon. Abridged by Mike Focht.
Edited by Fred Bahrenburg.

Minimal wording and spelling were updated for the modern reader

Reprinted 2026
Printed under public domain

By Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia
13500 Philmont Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19116
www.ccphilly.org

Cover designed by Joanna Liegel

C.H Spurgeon picture on the cover used with permission from
The National Portrait Gallery, London www.npg.org.uk

©David / Adobe Stock
(Red Leather Texture Background 1788633785)

ISBN 979-8-99562-150-8

I would like to dedicate this book in thanks to my father, Joe Focht, my personal Prince of Preachers. It is through your encouragement and example that I first picked up Spurgeon's Lectures To My Students and many other rich volumes of spiritual wealth.

C.H. SPURGEON
LECTURES TO MY STUDENTS

Table of Contents

1. **The Minister's Self-Watch** **11**

2. **The Call To The Ministry** **32**

3. **The Preacher's Private Prayer** **58**

4. **Our Public Prayer** **73**

5. **Sermons – Their Matter** **96**

6. **On Spiritualizing** **111**

7. **Attention!** **129**

8. **The Minister's Fainting Fits** **147**

9. **The Minister's Ordinary Conversation** **163**

10. **The Holy Spirit In Connection With Our Ministry**...**175**

11. **The Necessity Of Ministerial Progress**.....**201**

12. **The Need Of Decision For The Truth**.....**220**

13. **Earnestness: Its Marring And Maintenance** **238**

14. **The Blind Eye And The Deaf Ear**.....**260**

15. **On Conversion As Our Aim** **279**

PREFACE

Abridging *Lectures To My Students* was both daunting and delightful. It was daunting in the sense that no lesser preacher should lightly dare to trim Charles Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers, himself! I updated some words to modern spellings and changed a very select few archaic terms, while doing my utmost to keep Spurgeon's gifted voice natural and unchanged. Despite my trepidation, it was a delight to make the wisdom and blessing I have personally found in these lectures even more accessible to the modern preacher. As I reread this manuscript, God once again used the truths and wisdom distilled by Spurgeon to instruct, correct, and humble me. I pray he does the same for you.

My aim in this project was simple. I sought to remove the chapters that no longer hold as much practical or spiritual value for the common preacher today as they did for the common preacher in Spurgeon's day. Specifically, I had in mind the Calvary Chapel family of churches and our blessed ranks of expository preachers.

In that vein, I removed chapters such as: *On The Voice* and *To Workers With Slender Apparatus* (Which are now largely obsolete with the use of microphones and audio-visual tech); *Open-Air Preaching* (Which is no longer a common practice or a necessity in most American settings); and I also removed a few chapters on topics that are more practical, cultural, or related to preference such as *Posture, Action, Gesture, Etc.* and various chapters on illustrations and science.

What I kept were the chapters that I felt held timeless wisdom, instruction, and exhortation for any faithful preacher of the everlasting gospel today. The modern pastor needs the Lord's wisdom to number his days. The time the Lord gives us is precious. We are all pressed in numerous directions. The books we read should be worth our time and the time our

congregations will invest in listening to us. I firmly believe a sincere and prayerful reading of this book will prove to be a well-spent investment in the life and ministry of my pastoral brethren.

May God continue to sanctify us through the truth. His Word is truth.

Mike Focht
Assistant Pastor at Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia

1

THE MINISTER'S SELF-WATCH

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine."
1 Timothy 1:16

EVERY workman knows the necessity of keeping his tools in a good state of repair, for "if the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength." If the workman lose the edge from his blade, he knows that there will be a greater draught upon his energies, or his work will be badly done. Michael Angelo, the elect of the fine arts, understood so well the importance of his tools, that he always made his own brushes with his own hands, and in this he gives us an illustration of the God of grace, who with special care fashions for himself all true ministers. It is true that the Lord, like Quintin Matsys in the story of the Antwerp well-cover, can work with the faultiest kind of instrumentality, as he does when he occasionally makes very foolish preaching to be useful in conversion; and he can even work without agents, as he does when he saves men without a preacher at all, applying the word directly by his Holy Spirit; but we cannot regard God's absolutely sovereign acts as a rule for our action. He may, in his own absoluteness, do as pleases him best, but we must act as his plainer dispensations instruct us; and one of the facts which is clear enough is this, that the Lord usually adapts means to ends, from which the plain lesson is, that we shall be likely to accomplish most when we are in the best spiritual condition; or in other words, we shall usually do our Lord's work best when our gifts and graces are in good order, and we shall do worst when they are most out of trim. This is a practical truth for our guidance. When the Lord makes exceptions, they do but prove the rule.

We are, in a certain sense, our own tools, and therefore must keep ourselves in order. If I want to preach the gospel, I can only use my own voice; therefore I must train my vocal powers. I can only think with my own brains, and feel with my own heart, and therefore I must educate my intellectual and emotional faculties. I can only weep and agonise for souls in my own renewed nature, therefore must I watchfully maintain the tenderness which was in Christ Jesus. It will be in vain for me to stock my library, or organize societies, or project schemes, if I neglect the culture of myself; for books, and agencies, and systems, are only remotely the instruments of my holy calling; my own spirit, soul, and body, are my nearest machinery for sacred service; my spiritual faculties, and my inner life, are my battle axe and weapons of war. M'Cheyne, writing to a ministerial friend, who was travelling with a view to perfecting himself in the German tongue, used language identical with our own:

> "I know you will apply hard to German, but do not forget the culture of the inner man-I mean of the heart. How diligently the cavalry officer keeps his sabre clean and sharp; every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember you are God's sword, his instrument- I trust, a chosen vessel unto him to bear his name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfection of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God."

For the herald of the gospel to be spiritually out of order in his own proper person is, both to himself and to his work, a most serious calamity; and yet, my brethren, how easily is such an evil produced, and with what watchfulness must it be guarded against! Travelling one day by express from Perth to Edinburgh, on a sudden we came to a dead stop, because a very small screw in one of the engines–every railway locomotive consisting virtually of two engines-had been broken, and

when we started again we were obliged to crawl along with one piston-rod at work instead of two. Only a small screw was gone, if that had been right the train would have rushed along its iron road, but the absence of that insignificant piece of iron disarranged the whole. A train is said to have been stopped on one of the United States' railways by flies in the grease-boxes of the carriage wheels.

The analogy is perfect; a man in all other respects fitted to be useful, may by some small defect be exceedingly hindered, or even rendered utterly useless. Such a result is all the more grievous, because it is associated with the gospel, which in the highest sense is adapted to effect the grandest results. It is a terrible thing when the healing balm loses its efficacy through the blunderer who administers it. You all know the injurious effects frequently produced upon water through flowing along leaden pipes; even so the gospel itself, in flowing through men who are spiritually unhealthy, may be debased until it grows injurious to their hearers.

It is to be feared that Calvinistic doctrine becomes most evil teaching when it is set forth by men of ungodly lives, and exhibited as if it were a cloak for licentiousness; and Arminianism, on the other hand, with its wide sweep of the offer of mercy, may do most serious damage to the souls of men, if the careless tone of the preacher leads his hearers to believe that they can repent whenever they please; and that, therefore, no urgency surrounds the gospel message. Moreover, when a preacher is poor in grace, any lasting good which may be the result of his ministry, will usually be feeble and utterly out of proportion with what might have been expected. Much sowing will be followed by little reaping; the interest upon the talents will be inappreciably small. In two or three of the battles which were lost in the late American war, the result is said to have been due to the bad gunpowder which was served out by certain "shoddy" contractors to the army, so that the due effect of a cannonade was not produced. So it may be with us. We may miss our mark, lose our end and aim, and waste our time, through not possessing true vital force within ourselves, or not possessing it in such a degree that God could

consistently bless us. Beware of being "shoddy" preachers.

It should be one of our first cares that we ourselves be saved men.

That a teacher of the gospel should first be a partaker of it is a simple truth, but at the same time a rule of the most weighty importance. We are not among those who accept the apostolical succession of young men simply because they assume it; if their college experience has been rather vivacious than spiritual, if their honors have been connected rather with athletic exercises than with labors for Christ, we demand evidence of another kind than they are able to present to us. No amount of fees paid to learned doctors, and no amount of classics received in return, appear to us to be evidences of a call from above. True and genuine piety is necessary as the first indispensable requisite; whatever "call" a man may pretend to have, if he has not been called to holiness, he certainly has not been called to the ministry.

"First be trimmed thyself, and then adorn thy brother, "say the rabbins. "The hand," saith Gregory, "that means to make another clean, must not itself be dirty." If your salt be unsavory how can you season others? Conversion is a sine qua non in a minister. Ye aspirants to our pulpits, "ye must be born again." Nor is the possession of this first qualification a thing to be taken for granted by any man, for there is very great possibility of our being mistaken as to whether we are converted or not. Believe me, it is no child's play to "make your calling and election sure." The world is full of counterfeits, and swarms with panderers to carnal self-conceit, who gather around a minister as vultures around a carcass. Our own hearts are deceitful, so that truth lies not on the surface, but must be drawn up from the deepest well. We must search ourselves very anxiously and very thoroughly, lest by any means after having preached to others we ourselves should be castaways.

How horrible to be a preacher of the gospel and yet to be unconverted! Let each man here whisper to his own inmost soul, "What a dreadful thing it will be for me if I should be ignorant of the power of the truth which I am preparing to

proclaim!" Unconverted ministry involves the most unnatural relationships. A graceless pastor is a blind man elected to a professorship of optics, philosophising upon light and vision, discoursing upon and distinguishing to others the nice shades and delicate blendings of the prismatic colors, while he himself is absolutely in the dark! He is a dumb man elevated to the chair of music; a deaf man fluent upon symphonies and harmonies! He is a mole professing to educate eaglets; a barnacle elected to preside over angels. To such a relationship one might apply the most absurd and grotesque metaphors, except that the subject is too solemn. It is a dreadful position for a man to stand in, for he has undertaken a work for which he is totally, wholly, and altogether unqualified, but from the responsibilities of which this unfitness will not screen him, because he wilfully incurred them. Whatever his natural gifts, whatever his mental powers may be, he is utterly out of court for spiritual work if he has no spiritual life; and it is his duty to cease the ministerial office till he has received this first and simplest of qualifications for it.

Unconverted ministry must be equally dreadful in another respect. If the man has no commission, what a very unhappy position for him to occupy! What can he see in the experience of his people to give him comfort? How must he feel when he hears the cries of penitents; or listens to their anxious doubts and solemn fears? He must be astonished to think that his words should be owned to that end! The word of an unconverted man may be blessed to the conversion of souls, since the Lord, while he disowns the man, will still honor his own truth. How perplexed such a man must be when he is consulted concerning the difficulties of mature Christians! In the pathway of experience, in which his own regenerate hearers are led, he must feel himself quite at a loss. How can he listen to their deathbed joys, or join in their rapturous fellowships around the table of their Lord?

In many instances of young men put to a trade which they cannot endure, they have run away to sea sooner than follow an irksome business; but where shall that man flee who is apprenticed for life to this holy calling, and yet is a total

stranger to the power of godliness? How can he daily bid men come to Christ, while he himself is a stranger to his dying love? O sirs, surely this must be perpetual slavery. Such a man must hate the sight of a pulpit as much as a galley-slave hates the oar.

And how unserviceable such a man must be. He has to guide travellers along a road which he has never trodden, to navigate a vessel along a coast of which he knows none of the landmarks! He is called to instruct others, being himself a fool. What can he be but a cloud without rain, a tree with leaves only. As when the caravan in the wilderness, all athirst and ready to die beneath the broiling sun, comes to the long, desired well, and, horror of horrors! finds it without a drop of water; so when souls thirsting after God come to a graceless ministry, they are ready to perish because the water of life is not to be found. Better abolish pulpits than fill them with men who have no experimental knowledge of what they teach.

Alas! the unregenerate pastor becomes terribly mischievous too, for of all the causes which create infidelity, ungodly ministers must be ranked among the first. I read the other day, that no phase of evil presented so marvellous a power for destruction, as the unconverted minister of a parish, with a £1200 organ, a choir of ungodly singers, and an aristocratic congregation. It was the opinion of the writer, that there could be no greater instrument for damnation out of hell than that. People go to their place of worship and sit down comfortably, and think they must be Christians, when all the time all that their religion consists in, is listening to an orator, having their ears tickled with music, and perhaps their eyes amused with graceful action and fashionable manners; the whole being no better than what they hear and see at the opera–not so good, perhaps, in point of aesthetic beauty, and not an atom more spiritual. Thousands are congratulating themselves, and even blessing God that they are devout worshippers, when at the same time they are living in an unregenerate Christless state, having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. He who presides over a system which aims at nothing higher than formalism, is far more a servant of the devil than

a minister of God.

A formal preacher is mischievous while he preserves his outward equilibrium, but as he is without the preserving balance of godliness, sooner or later he is almost sure to make a trip in his moral character, and what a position is he in then! How is God blasphemed, and the gospel abused!

Terrible is it to consider *what a death must await such a man! and what must be his after-condition!* The prophet pictures the king of Babylon going down to hell, and all the kings and princes whom he had destroyed, and whose capitals he had laid waste, rising up from their places in Pandemonium, and saluting the fallen tyrant with the cutting sarcasm," Art thou become like unto us?" And cannot you suppose a man who has been a minister, but who has lived without Christ in his heart, going down to hell, and all the imprisoned spirits who used to hear him, and all the ungodly of his parish rising up and saying to him in bitter tones, "Art thou also become as we are? Physician, didst thou not heal thyself? Art thou who claimed to be a shining light cast down into the darkness for ever?" Oh! if one must be lost, let it not be in this fashion! To be lost under the shadow of a pulpit is dreadful, but how much more so to perish from the pulpit itself:

There is an awful passage in John Bunyan's treatise, entitled *Sighs from Hell,* which full often rings in my ears:

> How many souls have blind priests been the means of destroying by their ignorance? Preaching that was no better for their souls than rats-bane to the body. Many of them, it is to be feared, have whole towns to answer for. Ah! friend, I tell thee, thou that hast taken in hand to preach to the people, it may be thou hast taken in hand thou canst not tell what. Will it not grieve thee to see thy whole parish come bellowing after thee into hell? crying out, 'This we have to thank thee for, thou wast afraid to tell us of our sins, lest we should not put meat fast enough into thy mouth. O cursed wretch, who wast not content, blind guide as thou wast,

> to fall into the ditch thyself, but hast also led us thither with thee.'

Richard Baxter, in his *Reformed Pastor*, amid much other solemn matter, writes as follows:

> Take heed to yourselves lest you should be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others, and be strangers to the effectual working of that gospel which you preach; and lest, while you proclaim the necessity of a Savior to the world, your hearts should neglect him, and you should miss of an interest in him and his saving benefits. Take heed to yourselves, lest you perish while you call upon others to take heed of perishing, and lest you famish yourselves while you prepare their food. Though there be a promise of shining as stars to those that turn many to righteousness (Dan.12: 3), this is but on supposition that they be first turned to it themselves: such promises are made) caeteris paribus, et suppositis supponendis. Their own sincerity in the faith is the condition of their glory simply considered, though their great ministerial labors may be a condition of the promise of their greater glory. Many men have warned others that they come not to that place of torment, which yet they hasted to themselves; many a preacher is now in hell, that hath an hundred times called upon his hearers to use the utmost care and diligence to escape it.
>
> Can any reasonable man imagine that God should save men for offering salvation to others, while they refused it themselves, and for telling others those truths which they themselves neglected and abused? Many a tailor goes in rags that maketh costly clothes for others; and many a cook scarce licks his fingers, when he hath dressed for others the most costly dishes. Believe

> it, brethren, God never saved any man for being a preacher, nor because he was an able preacher; but because he was a justified, sanctified man, and consequently faithful in his Master's work.
>
> Take heed, therefore, to yourselves first, that you be that which you persuade others to be, and believe that which you persuade them daily to believe, and have heartily entertained that Christ and Spirit which you offer unto others. He that bade you love your neighbors as yourselves, did imply that you should love yourselves and not hate and destroy both yourselves and them.

My brethren, let these weighty sentences have due effect upon you. Surely there can be no need to add more; but let me pray you to examine yourselves, and so make good use of what has been addressed to you.

This first matter of true religion being settled, **It is of the next importance to the minister that his piety be vigorous.**

He is not to be content with being equal to the rank and file of Christians, he must be a mature and advanced believer; for the ministry of Christ has been truly called "the choicest of his choice, the elect of his election, a church picked out of the church." If he were called to an ordinary position, and to common work, common grace might perhaps satisfy him, though even then it would be all indolent satisfaction; but being elect to extraordinary labors, and called to a place of unusual peril, he should be anxious to possess that superior strength which alone is adequate to his station. His pulse of vital godliness must beat strongly and regularly; his eye of faith must be bright; his foot of resolution must be firm; his hand of activity must be quick; his whole inner man must be in the highest degree of sanity.

It is said of the Egyptians that they chose their priests from the most learned of their philosophers, and then they esteemed their priests so highly, that they chose their kings from them. We require to have for God's ministers the pick

of all the Christian host; such men indeed, that if the nation wanted kings they could not do better than elevate them to the throne. Our weakest minded, most timid, most carnal, and most ill-balanced men are not suitable candidates for the pulpit.

There are some works which we should never allot to the invalid or deformed. A man may not be qualified for climbing lofty buildings, his brain may be too weak, and elevated work might place him in great danger; by all means let him keep on the ground and find useful occupation where a steady brain is less important: there are brethren who have analogous spiritual deficiencies, they cannot be called to service which is conspicuous and elevated, because their heads are too weak. If they were permitted a little success they would be intoxicated with vanity-a vice all too common among ministers, and of all things the least becoming in them, and the most certain to secure them a fall.

Should we as a nation be called to defend our hearths and homes, we should not send out our boys and girls with swords and guns to meet the foe, neither may the church send out every fluent novice or inexperienced zealot to plead for the faith. The fear of the Lord must teach the young man wisdom, or he is barred from the pastorate; the grace of God must mature his Spirit, or he had better tarry till power be given him from on high.

The highest moral character must be sedulously maintained. Many are disqualified for office in the church who are well enough as simple members. I hold very stern opinions with regard to Christian men who have fallen into gross sin; I rejoice that they may be truly converted, and may be with mingled hope and caution received into the church; but I question, gravely question whether a man who has grossly sinned should be very readily restored to the pulpit. As John Angell James remarks:

> ‘When a preacher of righteousness has stood in the way of sinners, he should never again open his lips in the great congregation until his repentance is as

notorious as his sin.'

Let those who have been shorn by the sons of Ammon tarry at Jericho till their beards be grown; this has often been used as a taunt to beardless boys to whom it is evidently inapplicable, it is an accurate enough metaphor for dishonored and characterless men, let their age be what it may. Alas! the beard of reputation once shorn is hard to grow again.

Open immorality, in most cases, however deep the repentance, is a fatal sign that ministerial graces were never in the man's character. Caesar's wife must be beyond suspicion, and there must be no ugly rumours as to ministerial inconsistency in the past, or the hope of usefulness will be slender. Into the church such fallen ones are to be received as penitents, and into the ministry they may be received if God puts them there; my doubt is not about that, but as to whether God ever did place them there; and my belief is that we should be very slow to help back to the pulpit men, who having been once tried, have proved themselves to have too little grace to stand the crucial test of ministerial life.

For some work we choose none but the strong; and when God calls us to ministerial labor we should endeavor to get grace that we may be strengthened into fitness for our position, and not be mere novices carried away by the temptations of Satan, to the injury of the church and our own ruin. We are to stand equipped with the whole armor of God, ready for feats of valor not expected of others: to us self-denial, self-forgetfulness, patience, perseverance, long suffering, must be every-day virtues, and who is sufficient for these things? We had need live very near to God, if we would approve ourselves in our vocation.

Recollect, as ministers, that your whole life, your whole pastoral life especially, will be affected by the vigor of your piety. If your zeal grows dull, you will not pray well in the pulpit; you will pray worse in the family, and worst in the study alone. When your soul becomes lean, your hearers, without knowing how or why, will find that your prayers in public have little savor for them; they will feel your barrenness,

perhaps, before you perceive it yourself.

Your discourses will next betray your declension. You may utter as well-chosen words, and as fitly-ordered sentences, as aforetime; but there will be a perceptible loss of spiritual force. You will shake yourselves as at other times, even as Samson did, but you will find that your great strength has departed. In your daily communion with your people, they will not be slow to mark the all-pervading decline of your graces. Sharp eyes will see the grey hairs here and there long before you do.

Let a man be afflicted with a disease of the heart, and all evils are wrapped up in that onestomach, lungs, viscera, muscles, and nerves will all suffer; and so, let a man have his heart weakened in spiritual things, and very soon his entire life will feel the withering influence.

Moreover, as the result of your own decline, everyone of your hearers will suffer more or less; the vigorous amongst them will overcome the depressing tendency, but the weaker sort will be seriously damaged. It is with us and our hearers as it is with watches and the public clock; if our watch be wrong, very few will be misled by it but ourselves; but if the Horse Guards or Greenwich Observatory should go amiss, half London would lose its reckoning. So is it with the minister; he is the parish-clock, many take their time from him, and if he be incorrect, then they all go wrongly, more or less, and he is in a great measure accountable for all the sin which he occasions.

This we cannot endure to think of, my brethren. It will not bear a moment's comfortable consideration, and yet it must be looked at that we may guard against it.

You must remember, too, that we have need of very vigorous piety, because our danger is so much greater than that of others. Upon the whole, no place is so assailed with temptation as the ministry. Despite the popular idea that ours is a snug retreat from temptation, it is no less true that our dangers are more numerous and more insidious than those of ordinary Christians. Ours may be a vantageground for height, but that height is perilous, and to many the ministry has proved

a Tarpeian rock.

If you ask what these temptations are, time might fail us to particularize them; but among them are both the coarser and the more refined; the coarser are such temptations as self-indulgence at the table, enticements to which are superabundant among a hospitable people; the temptations of the flesh, which are incessant with young unmarried men set on high among an admiring throng of young women: but enough of this, your own observation will soon reveal to you a thousand snares, unless indeed your eyes are blinded.

There are more secret snares than these, from which we all less easily escape; and of these the worst is the temptation to ministerialism–the tendency to read our Bibles as ministers, to pray as ministers, to get into doing the whole of our religion as not ourselves personally, but only relatively, concerned in it. To lose the personality of repentance and faith is a loss indeed. "No man," says John Owen, "preaches his sermon well to others if he doth not first preach it to his own heart." Brethren, it is eminently hard to keep to this. Our office, instead of helping our piety, as some assert, is through the evil of our natures turned into one of its most serious hindrances; at least, I find it so. How one kicks and struggles against officialism, and yet how easily doth it beset us, like a long garment which twists around the racer's feet and impedes his running! Beware, dear brethren, of this and all the other seductions of your calling; and if you have done so until now, continue still to watch till life's latest hour.

We have noted but one of the perils, but indeed they are legion. The great enemy of souls takes care to leave no stone unturned for the preacher's ruin. "Take heed to yourselves," says Baxter, "because the tempter will make his first and sharpest onset upon you. If you will be the leaders against him, he will spare you no further than God restraineth him. He beareth you the greatest malice that are engaged to do him the greatest mischief. As he hateth Christ more than any of us, because he is the General of the field, and the 'Captain of our salvation,' and doth more than all the world besides against the kingdom of darkness; so doth he note the leaders under him

more than the common soldiers, on the like account, in their proportion. He knows what a rout he may make among the rest, if the leaders fall before their eyes. He hath long tried that way of fighting, 'neither with small nor great,' comparatively, but these; and of 'smiting the shepherds, that he may scatter the flock.' And so great has been his success this way, that he will follow it on as far as he is able. Take heed, therefore, brethren, for the enemy hath a special eye upon you. You shall have his most subtle insinuations, and incessant solicitations, and violent assaults. As wise and learned as you are, take heed to yourselves lest he overwit you. The devil is a greater scholar than you, and a nimbler disputant; he can 'transform himself into an angel of light' to deceive. He will get within you and trip up your heels before you are aware; he will play the juggler with you undiscerned, and cheat you of your faith or innocency, and you shall not know that you have lost it; nay, he will make you believe it is multiplied or increased when it is lost. You shall see neither hook nor line, much less the subtle angler himself, while he is offering you his bait. And his baits shall be so fitted to your temper and disposition, that he will be sure to find advantages within you, and make your own principles and inclinations to betray you; and whenever he ruineth you, he will make you the instrument of your own ruin. Oh, what a conquest will he think he hath got, if he can make a minister lazy and unfaithful; if he can tempt a minister into covetousness or scandal! He will glory against the church, and say, 'These are your holy preachers: you see what their preciseness is, and whither it will bring them.' He will glory against Jesus Christ himself, and say, 'These are thy champions! I can make thy chiefest servants to abuse thee; I can make the stewards of thy house unfaithful.' If he did so insult against God upon a false surmise, and tell him he could, make Job to curse him to his face (Job 1:11), what would he do if he should indeed prevail against us? And at last he will insult as much over you that ever he could draw you to be false to your great trust, and to blemish your holy profession, and to do him so much service that was your enemy. O do not so far gratify Satan; do not make him so much sport: suffer him not

to use you as the Philistines did Samson first to deprive you of your strength, and then to put out your eyes, and so to make you the matter of his triumph and derision."

Once more. We must cultivate the highest degree of godliness *because our work imperatively requires it*. The labor of the Christian ministry is well performed in exact proportion to the vigor of our renewed nature. Our work is only well done when it is well with ourselves. As is the workman, such will the work be. To face the enemies of truth, to defend the bulwarks of the faith, to rule well in the house of God, to comfort all that mourn, to edify the saints, to guide the perplexed, to bear with the froward, to win and nurse souls-all these and a thousand other works beside are not for a Feeble-mind or a Ready-to-halt, but are reserved for Great-heart whom the Lord has made strong for himself. Seek then strength from the Strong One, wisdom from the Wise One, in fact, all from the God of all.

Thirdly, let the minister take care **that his personal character agrees in all respects with his ministry.**

We have all heard the story of the man who preached so well and lived so badly, that when he was in the pulpit everybody said he ought never to come out again, and when he was out of it they all declared he never ought to enter it again. From the imitation of such a Janus may the Lord deliver us. May we never be priests of God at the altar, and sons of Belial outside the tabernacle door; but on the contrary, may we, as Nazianzen says of Basil, "thunder in our doctrine, and lighten in our conversation." We do not trust those persons who have two faces, nor will men believe in those whose verbal and practical testimonies are contradictory. As actions, according to the proverb, speak louder than words, so an ill life will effectually drown the voice of the most eloquent ministry. After all, our truest building must be performed with our hands; our characters must be more persuasive than our speech.

Here I would not alone warn you of sins of commission, but of sins of omission. Too many preachers forget to serve God when they are out of the pulpit, their lives

are negatively inconsistent. Abhor, dear brethren, the thought of being clockwork ministers who are not alive by abiding grace within, but are wound up by temporary influences; men who are only ministers for the time being, under the stress of the hour of ministering, but cease to be ministers when they descend the pulpit stairs. True ministers are always ministers. Too many preachers are like those sand-toys we buy for our children; you turn the box upside down, and the little acrobat revolves and revolves till the sand is all run down, and then he hangs motionless; so there are some who persevere in the ministrations of truth as long as there is an official necessity for their work, but after that, no pay, no prayer; no salary, no sermon.

It is a horrible thing to be an inconsistent minister. Our Lord is said to have been like Moses, for this reason, that he was "a prophet mighty in word and in deed." The man of God should imitate his Master in this; he should be mighty both in the word of his doctrine and in the deed of his example, and mightiest, if possible, in the second. It is remarkable that the only church history we have is, *The Acts of the Apostles*. The Holy Spirit has not preserved their sermons. They were very good ones, better than we shall ever preach, but still the Holy Spirit has only taken care of their "acts." We have no books of the resolutions of the apostles; when we hold our church-meetings we record our minutes and resolutions, but the Holy Spirit only puts down the "acts." Our acts should be such as to bear recording, for recorded they will be. We must live as under the more immediate eye of God, and as in the blaze of the great all-revealing day.

Holiness in a minister is at once his chief necessity and his goodliest ornament. Mere moral excellence is not enough, there must be the higher virtue; a consistent character there must be, but this must be anointed with the sacred consecrating oil, or that which makes us most fragrant to God and man will be wanting. Old John Stoughton, in his treatise entitled "The Preacher's Dignity and Duty," insists upon the minister's holiness in sentences full of weight.

> If Uzzah must die but for touching the ark of God, and that to stay it when it was like to fall; if the men of Beth-shemesh for looking into it; if the very beasts that do but come near the holy mount be threatened; then what manner of persons ought they to be who shall be admitted to talk with God familiarly, to 'stand before him,' as the angels do, and 'behold his face continually;' 'to bear the ark upon their shoulders,' 'to bear his name before the Gentiles;' in a word, to be his ambassadors? 'Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord;' and were it not a ridiculous thing to imagine, that the vessels must be holy, the vestures must be holy, all must be holy, but only he upon whose very garments must be written 'holiness to the Lord,' might be unholy; that the bells of the horses should have an inscription of holiness upon them, in Zechariah, and the saints' bells, the bells of Aaron, should be unhallowed? No, they must be 'burning and shining lights,' or else their influence will dart some malignant quality; they must 'chew the cud and divide the hoof,' or else they are unclean; they must' divide the word aright,' and walk uprightly in their life, and so join life to learning. If holiness be wanting, the ambassadors dishonor the country from whence they come, and the prince from whom they come; and this dead Amasa, this dead doctrine not quickened with a good life, lying in the way, stops the people of the Lord, that they cannot go on cheerfully in their spiritual warfare.

The life of the preacher should be a magnet to draw men to Christ, and it is sad indeed when it keeps them from him. Sanctity in ministers is a loud call to sinners to repent, and when allied with holy cheerfulness it becomes wondrously attractive. Jeremy Taylor in his own rich language tell us, "Herod's doves could never have invited so many strangers to their dove-cotes, if they had not been besmeared with

opobalsamum: but, said Didymus; 'make your pigeons smell sweet, and they will allure whole flocks;' and if your life be excellent, if your virtues be like a precious ointment, you will soon invite your charges to run *'in odorem unguentorum,'* 'after your precious odors;' 'but you must be excellent, not *'tanquam unus de populo,'* but *'tanquam homo Dei;'* you must be a man of God, not after the common manner of men, but 'after God's own heart;' and men will strive to be like you, if you be like to God: but when you only stand at the door of virtue, for nothing but to keep sin out, you will draw into the folds of Christ none but such as fear drives in. *'Ad majorem Dei gloriam,'* 'To do what will most glorify God,' that is the line you must walk by: for to do no more than all men needs must is servility, not so much as the affection of sons; much less can you be fathers to the people, when you go not so far as the sons of God: for a dark lantern, though there be a weak brightness on one side, will scarce enlighten one, much less will it conduct a multitude, or allure many followers by the brightness of its flame."

Another equally admirable episcopal divine has well and pithily said, "The star which led the wise men unto Christ, the pillar of fire which led the children unto Canaan, did not only shine, but go before them. (Matt. 2:9; Exod. 13:21). The voice of Jacob will do little good if the hands be the hands of Esau. In the law, no person who had any blemish was to offer the oblations of the Lord (Lev.21:17-20); the Lord thereby teaching us what graces ought to be in his ministers. The priest was to have in his robes bells and pomegranates; the one a figure of sound doctrine, and the other of a fruitful life. (Exod. 28: 33, 34). The Lord will be sanctified in all those that draw near unto him (Isa. 52:11); for the sins of the priests make the people abhor the offering of the Lord (1 Sam. 2:17); their wicked lives do shame their doctrine; *Passionem Christi annunciant profitendo, male agendo exhonorant*, as St. Austin speaks: with their doctrine they build, and with their lives they destroy. I conclude this point with that wholesome passage of Hierom ad Nepotianum. Let not, saith he, thy works shame thy doctrine, lest they who hear thee in the church tacitly answer,

Why doest thou not thyself what thou teachest to others? He is too delicate a teacher who persuadeth others to fast with a full belly. A robber may accuse covetousness. *Sacerdotis Christi os, mens, manusque concordent;* a minister of Christ should have his tongue, and his heart, and his hand agree."

Very quaint also is the language of Thomas Playfere in his *"Say Well, Do Well."* "There was a ridiculous actor in the city of Smyrna, who, pronouncing *O coelum!* O heaven! Pointed with his finger towards the ground; which when Polemo, the chiefest man in the place, saw, he could abide to stay no longer, but went from the company in a great chafe, saying 'This fool hath made a solecism with his hand, he has spoken false Latin with his finger.' And such are they who teach well and do ill; that however they have heaven at their tongue's end, yet the earth is at their finger's end; such as do not only speak false Latin with their tongue, but false divinity with their hands; such as live not according to their preaching. But he that sits in the heaven will laugh them to scorn, and hiss them off the stage, if they do not mend their action."

Even in little things the minister should take care that his life is consistent with his ministry. He should be especially careful never to fall short of his word. This should be pushed even to scrupulosity; we cannot be too careful; truth must not only be in us, but shine from us.

A celebrated doctor of divinity in London, who is now in heaven I have no doubt-a very excellent and godly man-gave notice one Sunday that he intended to visit all his people, and said, that in order to be able to get round and visit them and their families once in the year, he should take all the seatholders in order. A person well known to me, who was then a poor man, was delighted with the idea that the minister was coming to his house to see him, and about a week or two before he conceived it would be his turn, his wife was very careful to sweep the hearth and keep the house tidy, and the man ran home early from work, hoping each night to find the doctor there. This went on for a considerable time. He either forgot his promise, or grew weary in performing it, or for some other reason never went to this poor man's house, and

the result was this, the man lost confidence in all preachers, and said, "They care for the rich, but they do not care for us who are poor." That man never settled down to any one place of worship for many years, till at last he dropped into Exeter Hall and remained my hearer for years till providence removed him. It was no small task to make him believe that any minister could be an honest man, and could impartially love both rich and poor. Let us avoid doing such mischief, by being very particular as to our word.

We must remember that we are very much looked at. Men hardly have the impudence to break the law in the open sight of their fellows, yet in such publicity we live and move. We are watched by a thousand eagle eyes; let us so act that we shall never need to care if all heaven, and earth, and hell, swelled the list of spectators. Our public position is a great gain if we are enabled to exhibit the fruits of the Spirit in our lives; take heed, brethren, that you throw not away the advantage.

When we say to you, my dear brethren, take care of your life, we mean be careful of even the minutiae of your character. Avoid little debts, unpunctuality, gossipping, nicknaming, petty quarrels, and all other of those little vices which fill the ointment with flies. The self indulgences which have lowered the repute of many must not be tolerated by us. The familiarities which have laid others under suspicion, we must chastely avoid. The roughnesses which have rendered some obnoxious, and the fopperies which have made others contemptible, we must put away. We cannot afford to run great risks through little things. Our care must be to act on the rule, "giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed."

By this is not intended that we are to hold ourselves bound by every whim or fashion of the society in which we move. As a general rule, I hate the fashions of society, and detest conventionalities, and if I conceived it best to put my foot through a law of etiquette, I should feel gratified in having it to do. No, we are men, not slaves; and are not to relinquish our manly freedom, to be the lacqueys of those who affect

gentility or boast refinement. Yet, brethren, anything that verges upon the coarseness which is akin to sin, we must shun as we would a viper. The rules of Chesterfield are ridiculous to us, but not the example of Christ; and he was never coarse, low, discourteous, or indelicate.

Even in your recreations, remember that you are ministers. When you are off the parade you are still officers in the army of Christ, and as such demean yourselves. But if the lesser things must be looked after, how careful should you be in the great matters of morality, honesty, and integrity! Here the minister must not fail. His private life must ever keep good tune with his ministry, or his day will soon set with him, and the sooner he retires the better, for his continuance in his office will only dishonor the cause of God and ruin himself.

2

THE CALL TO THE MINISTRY

Any Christian has a right to disseminate the gospel who has the ability to do so; and more, he not only has the right, but it is his duty so to do as long as he lives. (Rev. 22:17). The propagation of the gospel is left, not to a few, but to all the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ: according to the measure of grace entrusted to him by the Holy Spirit, each man is bound to minister in his day and generation, both to the church and among unbelievers. Indeed, this question goes beyond men, and even includes the whole of the other sex; whether believers are male or female, they are all bound, when enabled by divine grace, to exert themselves to the utmost to extend the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our service, however, need not take the particular form of preaching–certainly, in some cases it must not, as for instance in the case of females, whose public teaching is expressly prohibited: (1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:34). But yet if we have the ability to preach, we are bound to exercise it. I do not, however, in this lecture allude to occasional preaching, or any other form of ministry common to all the saints, but to the work and office of the bishopric, in which is included both teaching and bearing rule in the church, which requires the dedication of a man's entire life to spiritual work, and separation from every secular calling, (2 Tim. 2:4); and entitles the man to cast himself for temporal supplies upon the church of God, since he gives up all his time, energies, and endeavors, for the good of those over whom he presides. (1 Cor. 9: 11; 1 Tim. 5:18). Such a man is addressed by Peter in the words, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof." (1

Pet. 5:2).

Now, all in a church cannot oversee, or rule–there must be some to be overseen and ruled; and we believe that the Holy Ghost appoints in the church of God some to act as overseers, while others are made willing to be watched over for their good. All are not called to labor in word and doctrine, or to be elders, or to exercise the office of a bishop; nor should all aspire to such works, since the gifts necessary are nowhere promised to all; but those should addict themselves to such important engagements who feel, like the apostle, that they have "received this ministry." (2 Cor. 4:1). No man may intrude into the sheepfold as an under-shepherd; he must have an eye to the chief Shepherd, and wait his beck and command. Or ever a man stands forth as God's ambassador, he must wait for the call from above; and if he does not so, but rushes into the sacred office, the Lord will say of him and others like him, "I sent them not, neither commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord." Jer. 23:32.

By reference to the Old Testament, you will find the messengers of God in the old dispensation claiming to hold commissions from Jehovah. Isaiah tells us that one of the seraphim touched his lips with a live coal from off the altar, and the voice of the Lord said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isa. 6:8). Then said the prophet, "Here am I, send me." He ran not before he had been thus especially visited of the Lord and qualified for his mission. "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" were words as yet unuttered, but their solemn meaning was well understood. Jeremiah details his call in his first chapter:

> Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I

> command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build, and to plant. (Jer. 1:4-10).

Varying in its outward form, but to the same purport, was the commission of Ezekiel; it runs thus in his own words:

> 'And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the Spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day.' (Ezek. 2:1-3).
> 'Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.' (Ezek. 3:1-4).

Daniel's call to prophesy, although not recorded, is abundantly attested by the visions granted to him, and the exceeding favor which he had with the Lord, both in his solitary meditations and public acts. It is not needful to pass all the other prophets in review, for they all claimed to speak with "thus saith the

Lord." In the present dispensation, the priesthood is common to all the saints; but to prophesy, or what is analogous thereto, namely, to be moved by the Holy Ghost to give oneself up wholly to the proclamation of the gospel, is, as a matter of fact, the gift and calling of only a comparatively small number; and surely these need to be as sure of the rightfulness of their position as were the prophets; and yet how can they justify their office, except by a similar call?

Nor need any imagine that such calls are a mere delusion, and that none are in this age separated for the peculiar work of teaching and overseeing the church, for the very names given to ministers in the New Testament imply a previous call to their work. The apostle says, "Now then we are ambassadors for God;" but does not the very soul of the ambassadorial office lie in the appointment which is made by the monarch represented? An ambassador unsent would be a laughing-stock. Men who dare to avow themselves ambassadors for Christ, must feel most solemnly that the Lord has "committed" to them the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor.5:18, 19). If it be said that this is restricted to the apostles, I answer that the epistle is written not in the name of Paul only, but of Timothy also, and hence includes other ministry besides apostleship. In the first epistle to the Corinthians we read, "Let a man so account of us (the us here meaning, Paul and Sosthenes, 1. Cor. 1:1), as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." (1 Cor. 4:1). Surely a steward must hold his office from the Master. He cannot be a steward merely because he chooses to be so, or is so regarded by others. If any of us should elect ourselves stewards to the Marquis of Westminster, and proceed to deal with his property, we should have our mistake very speedily pointed out to us in the most convincing manner. There must evidently be authority ere a man can legally become a bishop, "the steward of God." (Titus 1:7).

The Apocalyptic title of Angel (Rev. ii. 1) means a messenger; and how shall men be Christ's heralds, unless by his election and ordination? If the reference of the word Angel to the minister be questioned, we should be glad to have it

shown that it can relate to anyone else. To whom would the Spirit write in the church as its representative, but to some one in a position analogous to that of the presiding elder?

Titus was bidden to make full proof of his ministry– there was surely something to prove. Some are "vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." (2 Tim.2:21). The Master is not to be denied the choice of the vessels which he uses, he will still say of certain men as he did of Saul of Tarsus, "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles." (Acts 9:15). When our Lord ascended on high he gave gifts unto men, and it is noteworthy that these gifts were men set apart for various works: "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11); from which it is evident that certain individuals are, as the result of our Lord's ascension, bestowed upon the churches as pastors; they are given of God, and consequently not self-elevated to their position.

Brethren, I trust you may be able one day to speak of the flock over whom" the Holy Ghost has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28), and I pray that every one of you may be able to say with the apostle of the Gentiles, that your ministry is not of man, neither by man, but that you have received it of the Lord. (Gal. 1:1). In you may that ancient promise be fulfillled, "I will give them pastors according to mine heart." (Jer. 3:15). "I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them." (Jer. 23:4). May the Lord himself fulfilll in your several persons his own declaration: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night." May you take forth the precious from the vile, and so be as God's mouth. (Jer. 15:19). May the Lord make manifest by you the savor of the knowledge of Jesus in every place, and make you "unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." (2 Cor. 2:15). Having a priceless treasure in earthen vessels, may the excellency of the divine power rest upon you, and so may you both glorify God and clear yourselves from the blood of all men. As the Lord Jesus went up to the Mount and called to him whom he would,

and then sent them forth to preach (Mark 3:13), even so may he select you, call you upward to commune with himself, and send you forth as his elect servants to bless both the church and the world. How may a young man know whether he is called or not? That is a weighty enquiry, and I desire to treat it most solemnly. O for divine guidance in so doing! That hundreds have missed their way, and stumbled against a pulpit is sorrowfully evident from the fruitless ministries and decaying churches which surround us. It is a fearful calamity to a man to miss his calling, and to the church upon whom he imposes himself, his mistake involves an affliction of the most grievous kind. It would be a curious and painful subject for reflection–the frequency with which men in the possession of reason mistake the end of their existence, and aim at objects which they were never intended to pursue. The writer who penned the following lines must surely have had his eye upon many ill-occupied pulpits:

Declare, ye sages, if ye find
'Mongst animals of every kind,
Of each condition, sort, and size,
From whales and elephants to flies,
A creature that mistakes his plan,
And errs so constantly as man!

Each kind pursues its proper good,
And seeks enjoyment, rest and food,
As nature points, and never errs
In what it chooses or prefers;
Man only blunders, though possessed
Of reason far above the rest.

Descend to instances and try:
An ox will not attempt to fly,
Or leave his pasture in the wood
With fishes to explore the flood.
Man only acts of every creature
In opposition to his nature.

When I think upon the all but infinite mischief which may result from a mistake as to our vocation for the Christian pastorate, I feel overwhelmed with fear lest any of us should be slack in examining our credentials; and I had rather that we stood too much in doubt, and examined too frequently, than that we should become cumberers of the ground. There are not lacking many exact methods by which a man may test his call to the ministry if he earnestly desires to do so. It is imperative upon him not to enter the ministry until he has made solemn quest and trial of himself as to this point. His own personal salvation being secure, he must investigate as to the further matter of his call to office; the first is vital to himself as a Christian, the second equally vital to him as a pastor. As well be a professor without conversion, as a pastor without calling. In both cases there is a name and nothing more.

1. The first sign of the heavenly call is an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work. In order to a true call to the ministry there must be an irresistible, overwhelming craving and raging thirst for telling to others what God has done to our own souls; what if I call it a kind of στοργη, such as birds have for rearing their young when the season is come; when the mother-bird would sooner die than leave her nest. It was said of Alleine by one who knew him intimately, that "he was infinitely and insatiably greedy of the conversion of souls." When he might have had a fellowship at his university, he preferred a chaplaincy, because he was "inspired with an impatience to be occupied in direct ministerial work."

"Do not enter the ministry if you can help it," was the deeply sage advice of a divine to one who sought his judgment. If any student in this room could be content to be a newspaper editor, or a grocer, or a farmer, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or a senator, or a king, in the name of heaven and earth let him go his way; he is not the man in whom dwells the Spirit of God in its fulness, for a man so filled with God would utterly weary of any pursuit but that for which his inmost soul pants. If on the other hand, you can say that for all the wealth of both the Indies you could not and dare not espouse any other calling so as to be put aside from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ,

then, depend upon it, if other things be equally satisfactory, you have the signs of this apostleship. We must feel that woe is unto us if we preach not the gospel; the word of God must be unto us as fire in our bones, otherwise, if we undertake the ministry, we shall be unhappy in it, shall be unable to bear the self-denials incident to it, and shall be of little service to those among whom we minister. I speak of self-denials, and well I may; for the true pastor's work is full of them, and without a love to his calling he will soon succumb, and either leave the drudgery, or move on in discontent, burdened with a monotony as tiresome as that of a blind horse in a mill.

> There is a comfort in the strength of love;
> Twill make a thing endurable which else
> Would break the heart.

Girt with that love, you will be undaunted; divested of that more than magic-belt of irresistible vocation, you will pine away in wretchedness.

This desire must be a thoughtful one. It should not be a sudden impulse unattended by anxious consideration. It should be the outgrowth of our heart in its best moments, the object of our reverent aspirations, the subject of our most fervent prayers. It must continue with us when tempting offers of wealth and comfort come into conflict with it, and remain as a calm, clear-headed resolve after everything has been estimated at its right figure, and the cost thoroughly counted.

When living as a child at my grandfather's in the country, I saw a company of huntsmen in their red coats riding through his fields after a fox. I was delighted! My little heart was excited; I was ready to follow the hounds over hedge and ditch. I have always felt a natural taste for that sort of business, and, as a child, when asked what I would be, I usually said I was going to be a huntsman. A fine profession, truly! Many young men have the same idea of being parsons as I had of being a huntsman–a mere childish notion that they would like the coat and the horn-blowing; the honor, the respect, the ease; and they are probably even fools enough to think,

the riches of the ministry. (Ignorant beings they must be if they look for wealth in connection with the Baptist ministry.) The fascination of the preacher's office is very great to weak minds, and hence I earnestly caution all young men not to mistake whim for inspiration, and a childish preference for a call of the Holy Spirit.

Mark well, that the desire I have spoken of must be thoroughly disinterested. If a man can detect, after the most earnest self examination, any other motive than the glory of God and the good of souls in his seeking the bishopric, he had better turn aside from it at once; for the Lord will abhor the bringing of buyers and sellers into his temple: the introduction of anything mercenary, even in the smallest degree, will be like the fly in the pot of ointment, and will spoil it all.

This desire should be one which continues with us, a passion which bears the test of trial, a longing from which it is quite impossible for us to escape, though we may have tried to do so; a desire, in fact, which grows more intense by the lapse of years, until it becomes a yearning, a pining, a famishing to proclaim the Word. This intense desire is so noble and beautiful a thing, that whenever I perceive it glowing in any young man's bosom, I am always slow to discourage him, even though I may have my doubts as to his abilities. It may be needful, for reasons to be given you further on, to repress the flame, but it should always be reluctantly and wisely done. I have such a profound respect for this "fire in the bones," that if I did not feel it myself, I must leave the ministry at once. If you do not feel the consecrated glow, I beseech you return to your homes and serve God in your proper spheres; but if assuredly the coals of juniper blaze within, do not stifle them, unless, indeed, other considerations of great moment should prove to you that the desire is not a fire of heavenly origin.

2. In the second place, combined with the earnest desire to become a pastor, there must be *aptness to teach and some measure of the other qualities needful for the office of a public instructor.* A man to prove his call must make a successful trial of these. I do not claim that the first time a man rises to speak he must preach as well as Robert Hall did

in his later days. If he preaches no worse than that great man did at the first, he must not be condemned. You are aware that Robert Hall broke down altogether three times, and cried, "If this does not humble me, nothing will." Some of the noblest speakers were not in their early days the most fluent. Even Cicero at first suffered from a weak voice and a difficulty of utterance. Still, a man must not consider that he is called to preach until he has proved that he can speak. God certainly has not created behemoth to fly and should leviathan have a strong desire to ascend with the lark, it would evidently be an unwise aspiration, since he is not furnished with wings. If a man be called to preach, he will be endowed with a degree of speaking ability, which he will cultivate and increase. If the gift of utterance be not there in a measure at the first, it is not likely that it will ever be developed.

I have heard of a gentleman who had a most intense desire to preach, and pressed his suit upon his minister, until after a multitude of rebuffs he obtained leave to preach a trial sermon. That opportunity was the end of his importunity, for upon announcing his text he found himself bereft of every idea but one, which he delivered feelingly, and then descended the rostrum. "My brethren," said he, "if any of you think it an easy thing to preach, I advise you to come up here and have all the conceit taken out of you." The trial of your powers will go far to reveal to you your deficiency, if you have not the needed ability. I know of nothing better. We must give ourselves a fair trial in this matter, or we cannot assuredly know whether God has called us or not; and during the probation we must often ask ourselves whether, upon the whole, we can hope to edify others with such discourses.

We must, however, do much more than put it to our own conscience and judgment, for we are poor judges. A certain class of brethren have a great facility for discovering that they have been very wonderfully and divinely helped in their declamations; I should envy them their glorious liberty and self-complacency if there were any ground for it; for alas! I very frequently have to bemoan and mourn over my non-success and shortcomings as a speaker. There is not much

dependence to be placed upon our own opinion, but much may be learned from judicious, spiritual-minded persons. It is by no means a law which ought to bind all persons, but still it is a good old custom in many of our country churches for the young man who aspires to the ministry to preach before the church. It can hardly ever be a very pleasant ordeal for the youthful aspirant, and, in many cases, it will scarcely be a very edifying exercise for the people; but still it may prove a most salutary piece of discipline, and save the public exposure of rampant ignorance. The church book at Arnsby contains the following entry:

> A short account of the Call of Robert Hall, Junior, to the work of the Ministry, by the Church at Arnsby, August 13th, 1780. "The said Robert Hall was born at Arnsby, May 2nd, 1764; and was, even from his childhood, not only serious, and given to secret prayer before he could speak plain, but was always wholly inclined to the work of the ministry. He began to compose hymns before he was quite seven years old, and therein discovered marks of piety, deep thought, and genius. Between eight and nine years he made several hymns, which were much admired by many, one of which was printed in the Gospel Magazine about that time. He wrote his thoughts on various religious subjects, and select portions of Scripture. He was likewise possessed of an intense inclination for learning, and made such progress that the country master under whom he was could not instruct him any further. He was then sent to Northampton boarding school, under the care of the Rev. John Ryland, where he continued about a year and a-half, and made great progress in Latin and Greek. In October, 1778, he went to the Academy at Bristol, under the care of the Rev. Mr. Evans; and on August 13th, 1780, was sent out to the ministry by this church, being sixteen years and three months old, The manner in which the church obtained satisfaction with

> his abilities for the great work, was his speaking in his turn at conference meetings from various portions of Scripture; in which, and in prayer, he had borne a part for upwards of four years before; and having when at home, at their request, frequently preached on Lord's-day mornings, to their great satisfaction. They therefore earnestly and unanimously requested his being in a solemn manner set apart to public employ. Accordingly, on the day aforesaid, he was examined by his father before the church, respecting his inclination, motives, and end, in reference to the ministry, and was likewise desired to make a declaration of his religious sentiments. All which being done, to the entire satisfaction of the church, they therefore set him apart by lifting up their right hands, and by solemn prayer. His father then delivered a discourse to him from (2 Tim, 2:1), 'Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.' Being thus sent forth, he preached in the afternoon from (2 Thess.1:7, 8). 'May the Lord bless him, and grant him great success!'"
> *(Biographical Recollections of the Rev, Robert Hall, A.M. By J. M. Morris, 1833.)*

Considerable weight is to be given to the judgment of men and women who live near to God, and in most instances their verdict will not be a mistaken one. Yet this appeal is not final nor infallible, and is only to be estimated in proportion to the intelligence and piety of those consulted. I remember well how earnestly I was dissuaded from preaching by as godly a Christian matron as ever breathed; the value of her opinion I endeavored to estimate with candor and patience-but it was outweighed by the judgment of persons of wider experience. Young men in doubt will do well to take with them their wisest friends when next they go out to the country chapel or village meeting-room and essay to deliver the Word. I have noted-and our venerable friend, Mr. Rogers, has observed the same–that you, gentlemen, students, as a body, in your judgment of one

another, are seldom if ever wrong. There has hardly ever been an instance, take the whole house through, where the general opinion of the entire college concerning a brother has been erroneous. Men are not quite so unable to form an opinion of each other as they are sometimes supposed to be. Meeting as you do in class, in prayer-meeting, in conversation, and in various religious engagements, you gauge each other; and a wise man will be slow to set aside the verdict of the house.

I should not complete this point if I did not add, that mere ability to edify, and aptness to teach is not enough, there must be other talents to complete the pastoral character. Sound judgment and solid experience must instruct you; gentle manners and loving affections must sway you; firmness and courage must be manifest; and tenderness and sympathy must not be lacking. Gifts administrative in ruling well will be as requisite as gifts instructive in teaching well. You must be fitted to lead, prepared to endure, and able to persevere. In grace, you should be head and shoulders above the rest of the people, able to be their father and counsellor. Read carefully the qualifications of a bishop, given in 1 Tim. 3:2-7, and in Titus 1:6-9. If such gifts and graces be not in you and abound, it may be possible for you to succeed as an evangelist, but as a pastor you will be of no account.

3. In order further to prove a man's call, after a little exercise of his gifts, such as I have already spoken of, he must see a measure of conversion-work going on under his efforts, or he may conclude that he has made a mistake, and, therefore, may go back by the best way he can. It is not to be expected that upon the first or even twentieth effort in public we shall be apprized of success; and a man may even give himself a life trial of preaching if he feels called to do so, but it seems to me, that as a man to be set apart to the ministry, his commission is without seals until souls are won by his instrumentality to the knowledge of Jesus. As a worker, he is to work on whether he succeeds or no, but as a minister he cannot be sure of his vocation till results are apparent.

How my heart leaped for joy when I heard tidings of my first convert! I could never be satisfied with a full

congregation, and the kind expressions of friends; I longed to hear that hearts had been broken, that tears had been seen streaming from the eyes of penitents. How did I rejoice, as one that findeth great spoil, over one poor laborer's wife who confessed that she felt the guilt of sin, and had found the Savior under my discourse on Sunday afternoon: I have the cottage in which she lived in my eye now; believe me, it always appears picturesque. I remember well her being received into the church, and her dying, and her going home to heaven. She was the first seal to my ministry, and, I can assure you, a very precious one indeed. No mother was ever more full of happiness at the sight of her first-born son. Then could I have sung the song of the Virgin Mary, for my soul did magnify the Lord for remembering my low estate, and giving me the great honor to do a work for which all generations should call me blessed, for so I counted the conversion of one soul.

There must be some measure of conversion-work in your irregular labors before you can believe that preaching is to be your life-work. Remember the Lord's words by the prophet Jeremiah; they are very much to the point, and should alarm all fruitless preachers. "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." (Jer. 23:21, 22). It is a marvel to me how men continue at ease in preaching year after year without conversions. Have they no bowels of compassion for others? No sense of responsibility upon themselves? Dare they, by a vain misrepresentation of divine sovereignty, cast the blame on their Master? Or is it their belief that Paul plants and Apollos waters, and that God gives no increase? Vain are their talents, their philosophy, their rhetoric, and even their orthodoxy, without the signs following.

How are they sent of God who bring no men to God? Prophets whose words are powerless, sowers whose seed all withers, fishers who take no fish, soldiers who give no wounds-

are these God's men? Surely it were better to be a mud-raker, or a chimney-sweep, than to stand in the ministry as an utterly barren tree. The meanest occupation confers some benefit upon mankind, but the wretched man who occupies a pulpit and never glorifies his God by conversions is a blank, a blot, an eyesore, a mischief. He is not worth the salt he eats, much less his bread; and if he writes to newspapers to complain of the smallness of his salary, his conscience, if he has any, might well reply, "And what you have is undeserved." Times of drought there may be; ay, and years of leanness may consume the former years of usefulness, but still there will be fruit in the main, and fruit to the glory of God; and meanwhile the transient barrenness will fill the soul with unutterable anguish. Brethren, if the Lord gives you no zeal for souls, keep to the lapstone or the trowel, but avoid the pulpit as you value your heart's peace and your future salvation.

4. A step beyond all this is however needful in our enquiry. The will of the Lord concerning pastors is made known through the prayerful judgment of his church. It is needful as a proof of your vocation that your preaching should be acceptable to the people of God. God usually opens doors of utterance for those whom he calls to speak in his name. Impatience would push open or break down the door, but faith waits upon the Lord, and in due season her opportunity is awarded her. When the opportunity comes then comes our trial. Standing up to preach, our spirit will be judged of the assembly, and if it be condemned, or if, as a general rule, the church is not edified, the conclusion may not be disputed, that we are not sent of God. The signs and marks of a true bishop are laid down in the Word for the guidance of the church; and if in following such guidance the brethren see not in us the qualifications, and do not elect us to office, it is plain enough that however well we may evangelize, the office of the pastor is not for us. Churches are not all wise, neither do they all judge in the power of the Holy Ghost, but many of them judge after the flesh; yet I had sooner accept the opinion of a company of the Lord's people than my own upon so personal a subject as my own gifts and graces.

At any rate, whether you value the verdict of the church or no, one thing is certain, that none of you can be pastors without the loving consent of the flock; and therefore this will be to you a practical indicator if not a correct one. If your call from the Lord be a real one you will not long be silent. As surely as the man wants his hour, so surely the hour wants its man. The church of God is always urgently in need of living ministers; to her a man is always more precious than the gold of Ophir. Formal officials do lack and suffer hunger, but the anointed of the Lord need never be without a charge, for there are quick ear's which will know them by their speech, and ready hearts to welcome them to their appointed place. Be fit for your work, and you will never be out of it. Do not run about inviting yourselves to preach here and there; be more concerned about your ability than your opportunity, and more earnest about your walk with God than about either. The sheep will know the Godsent shepherd; the porter of the fold will open to you, and the flock will know your voice.

At the time of my first delivery of this lecture, I had not read John Newton's admirable letter to a friend on this subject; it so nearly tallies with my own thoughts, that at the risk of being thought to be a copyist, which I certainly am not in this instance, I will read you the letter:

"Your case reminds me of my own; my first desires towards the ministry were attended with great uncertainties and difficulties, and the perplexity of my own mind was heightened by the various and opposite judgments of my friends. The advice I have to offer is the result of painful experience and exercise, and for this reason, perhaps, may not be unacceptable to you. I pray our gracious Lord to make it useful.

"I was long distressed, as you are, about what was or was not a proper call to the ministry. It now seems to me an easy point to solve; but, perhaps, it will not be so to you, till the Lord shall make it clear to yourself in your own case. I have not room to say so much as I could. In brief, I think it principally includes three things:

'1. A warm and earnest desire to be employed in this

service. I apprehend the man who is once moved by the Spirit of God to this work, will prefer it, if attainable, to thousands of gold and silver; so that, though he is at times intimidated by a sense of its importance and difficulty, compared with his own great insufficiency (for it is to be presumed a call of this sort, if indeed from God, will be accompanied with humility and self-abasement), yet he cannot give it up. I hold it a good rule to enquire in this point, whether the desire to preach is most fervent in our most lively and spiritual frames, and when we are most laid in the dust before the Lord? If so, it is a good sign. But if, as is sometimes the case, a person is very earnest to be a preacher to others, when he finds but little hungerings and thirstings after grace in his own soul, it is then to be feared his zeal springs rather from a selfish principle than from the Spirit of God.

'2. Besides this affectionate desire and readiness to preach, there must in due season appear some competent sufficiency as to gifts, knowledge, and utterance. Surely, if the Lord sends a man to teach others, he will furnish him with the means. I believe many have intended well in setting up for preachers, who yet went beyond or before their call in so doing. The main difference between a minister and a private Christian, seems to consist in those ministerial gifts, which are imparted to him, not for his own sake, but for the edification of others. But then I say these are to appear in due season; they are not to be expected instantaneously, but gradually, in the use of proper means. They are necessary for the discharge of the ministry, but not necessary as pre-requisites to warrant our desires after it. In your case, you are young, and have time before you; therefore, I think you need not as yet perplex yourself with enquiring if you have these gifts already. It is sufficient if your desire is fixed, and you are willing, in the way of prayer and diligence, to wait upon the Lord for them; as yet you need them not. [We should hesitate to speak precisely in this manner. The gifts must be somewhat apparent before the desire should be encouraged. Still in

the main we agree with Mr. Newton.]

'3. That which finally evidences a proper call, is a correspondent opening in providence, by a gradual train of circumstances pointing out the means, the time, the place, of actually entering upon the work. And until this coincidence arrives, you must not expect to be always clear from hesitation in your own mind. The principal caution on this head is, not to be too hasty in catching at first appearances. If it be the Lord's will to bring you into his ministry, he has already appointed your place and service, and though you know it not at present, you shall at a proper time. If you had the talents of an angel, you could do no good with them till his hour is come, and till he leads you to the people whom he has determined to bless by your means. It is very difficult to restrain ourselves within the bounds of prudence here, when our zeal is warm: a sense of the love of Christ upon our hearts, and a tender compassion for poor sinners, is ready to prompt us to break out too soon; but he that believeth shall not make haste. I was about five years under this constraint; sometimes I thought I must preach, though it was in the streets. I listened to everything that seemed plausible, and to many things which were not so. But the Lord graciously, and as it were insensibly, hedged up my way with thorns; otherwise, if I had been left to my own spirit, I should have put it quite out of my power to have been brought into such a sphere of usefulness, as he in his good time has been pleased to lead me to. And I can now see clearly, that at the time I would first have gone out, though my intention was, I hope, good in the main, yet I overrated myself, and had not that spiritual judgment and experience which are requisite for so great a service."

Thus much may suffice, but the same subject will be before you if I detail a little of my experience in dealing with aspirants for the ministry. I have constantly to fufil the duty which fell to the lot of Cromwell's Triers. I have to form an opinion as to the advisability of aiding certain men in their

attempts to become pastors. This is a most responsible duty, and one which requires no ordinary care. Of course, I do not set myself up to judge whether a man shall enter the ministry or not, but my examination merely aims at answering the question whether this institution shall help him, or leave him to his own resources. Certain of our charitable neighbors accuse us of having "a parson manufactory" here, but the charge is not true at all. We never tried to make a minister, and should fail if we did; we receive none into the College but those who profess to be ministers already. It would be nearer the truth if they called me a parson killer, for a goodly number of beginners have received their quietus from me; and I have the fullest ease of conscience in reflecting upon what I have so done.

It has always been a hard task for me to discourage a hopeful young brother who has applied for admission to the College. My heart has always leaned to the kindest side, but duty to the churches has compelled me to judge with severe discrimination. After hearing what the candidate has had to say, having read his testimonials and seen his replies to questions, when I have felt convinced that the Lord had not called him, I have been obliged to tell him so. Certain of the cases are types of all. Young brethren apply who earnestly desire to enter the ministry, but it is painfully apparent that their main motive is an ambitious desire to shine among men. These men are from a common point of view to be commended for aspiring, but then the pulpit is never to be the ladder by which ambition is to climb. Had such men entered the army they would never have been satisfied till they had reached the front rank, for they are determined to push their way up—all very laudable and very proper so far; but they have embraced the idea that if they entered the ministry they would be greatly distingnished; they have felt the buddings of genius, and have regarded themselves as greater than ordinary persons, and, therefore, they have looked upon the ministry as a platform upon which to display their supposed abilities. Whenever this has been visible I have felt bound to leave the man "to gang his ain gate," as the Scotch say; believing that such spirits

always come to nought if they enter the Lord's service. We find that we have nothing whereof to glory, and if we had, the very worst place in which to hang it out would be a pulpit; for there we are brought daily to feel our own insignificance and nothingness.

Men who since conversion have betrayed great feebleness of mind and are readily led to embrace strange doctrines, or to fall into evil company and gross sin, I never can find it in my heart to encourage to enter the ministry, let their professions be what they may. Let them, if truly penitent, keep in the rear ranks. Unstable as water they will not excel.

So, too, those who cannot endure hardness, but are of the kid-gloved order, I refer elsewhere. We want soldiers, not fops, earnest laborers, not genteel loiterers. Men who have done nothing up to their time of application to the college, are told to earn their spurs before they are publicly dubbed as knights. Fervent lovers of souls do not wait till they are trained, they serve their Lord at once.

Certain good men appeal to me who are distinguished by enormous vehemence and zeal, and a conspicuous absence of brains; brethren who would talk for ever and ever upon nothing–who would stamp and thump the Bible, and get nothing out of it all; earnest, awfully earnest, mountains in labor of the most painful kind; but nothing comes of it all, not even the *ridiculus mus*. There are zealots abroad who are not capable of conceiving or uttering five consecutive thoughts, whose capacity is most narrow and their conceit most broad, and these can hammer, and bawl, and rave, and tear, and rage, but the noise all arises from the hollowness of the drum. I conceive that these brethren will do quite as well without education as with it, and therefore I have usually declined their applications.

Another exceedingly large class of men seek the pulpit they know not why. They cannot teach and will not learn, and yet must fain be ministers. Like the man who slept on Parnassus, and ever after imagined himself a poet, they have had impudence enough once to thrust a sermon upon an audience, and now nothing will do but preaching. They are

so hasty to leave off sewing garments, that they will make a rent in the church of which they are members to accomplish their design. The counter is distasteful, and a pulpit cushion is coveted; the scales and weights they are weary of, and must needs try their hands at the balances of the sanctuary. Such men, like raging waves of the sea usually foam forth their own shame, and we are happy when we bid them adieu.

Physical infirmities raise a question about the call of some excellent men. I would not, like Eusthenes, judge men by their features, but their general physique is no small criterion. That narrow chest does not indicate a man formed for public speech. You may think it odd, but still I feel very well assured, that when a man has a contracted chest, with no distance between his shoulders, the all-wise Creator did not intend him habitually to preach. If he had meant him to speak he would have given him in some measure breadth of chest, sufficient to yield a reasonable amount of lung force. When the Lord means a creature to run, he gives it nimble legs, and if he means another creature to preach, he will give it suitable lungs. A brother who has to pause in the middle of a sentence and work his air-pump, should ask himself whether there is not some other occupation for which he is better adapted. A man who can scarcely get through a sentence without pain, can hardly be called to "Cry aloud and spare not." There may be exceptions, but is there not weight in the general rule? Brethren with defective mouths and imperfect articulation are not usually called to preach the gospel. The same applies to brethren with no palate, or an imperfect one.

Application was received some short time ago from a young man who had a sort of rotary action of his jaw of the most painful sort to the beholder. His pastor commended him as a very holy young man, who had been the means of bringing some to Christ, and he expressed the hope that I would receive him, but I could not see the propriety of it. I could not have looked at him while preaching without laughter if all the gold of Tarshish had been my reward, and in all probability nine out of ten of his hearers would have been more sensitive than myself. A man with a big tongue which filled up his mouth

and caused indistinctness, another without teeth, another who stammered, another who could not pronounce all the alphabet, I have had the pain of declining on the ground that God had not given them those physical appliances, which are as the prayer-book would put it, "generally necessary."

One brother I have encountered–one did I say? I have met ten, twenty, a hundred brethren, who have pleaded that they were sure, quite sure that they were called to the ministry–they were quite certain of it, because they had failed in everything else. This is a sort of model story: "Sir, I was put into a lawyer's office, but I never could bear the confinement, and I could not feel at home in studying law; Providence clearly stopped up my road, for I lost my situation." "And what did you do then?" "Why sir, I was induced to open a grocer's shop." "And did you prosper?" "Well, I do not think, Sir, I was ever meant for trade, and the Lord seemed quite to shut my way up there, for I failed and was in great difficulties. Since then I have done a little in life-assurance agency, and tried to get up a school, besides selling tea; but my path is hedged up, and something within me makes me feel that I ought to be a minister." My answer generally is, "Yes, I see; you have failed in everything else, and therefore you think the Lord has especially endowed you for his service; but I fear you have forgotten that the ministry needs the very best of men, and not those who cannot do anything else." A man who would succeed as a preacher would probably do right well either as a grocer, or a lawyer, or anything else. A really valuable minister would have excelled at anything. There is scarcely anything impossible to a man who can keep a congregation together for years, and be the means of edifying them for hundreds of consecutive Sabbaths; he must be possessed of some abilities, and be by no means a fool or ne'er-do-well. Jesus Christ deserves the best men to preach his cross, and not the empty-headed and the shiftless.

One young gentleman with whose presence I was once honored, has left on my mind the photograph of his exquisite self. That same face of his looked like the title-page to a whole volume of conceit and deceit. He sent word into my vestry one Sabbath morning that he must see me at once. His

audacity admitted him; and when he was before me he said, "Sir, I want to enter your College, and should like to enter it at once." "Well, Sir," said I, "I fear we have no room for you at present, but your case shall be considered." "But mine is a very remarkable case, Sir; you have probably never received such an application as mine before." "Very good, we'll see about it; the secretary will give you one of the application papers, and you can see me on Monday."

He came on the Monday bringing with him the questions, answered in a most extraordinary manner. As to books, he claimed to have read all ancient and modern literature, and after giving an immense list he added, "this is but a selection; I have read most extensively in all departments." As to his preaching, he could produce the highest testimonials, but hardly thought they would be needed, as a personal interview would convince me of his ability at once. His surprise was great when I said, "Sir, I am obliged to tell you that I cannot receive you." "Why not, Sir?" "I will tell you plainly. You are so dreadfully clever that I could not insult you by receiving you into our College, where we have none but rather ordinary men; the president, tutors, and students, are all men of moderate attainments, and you would have to condescend too much in coming among us." He looked at me very severely, and said with dignity, "Do you mean to say, that because I have an unusual genius, and have produced in myself a gigantic mind such as is rarely seen, I am refused admittance into your College?" "Yes," I replied, as calmly as I could, considering the overpowering awe which his genius inspired, "for that very reason." "Then, Sir, you ought to allow me a trial of my preaching abilities; select me any text you like, or suggest any subject you please, and here in this very room I will speak upon it, or preach upon it without deliberation, and you will be surprised." "No, thank you, I would rather not have the trouble of listening to you." "Trouble, Sir! I assure you it would be the greatest possible pleasure you could have." I said it might be, but I felt myself unworthy of the privilege, and so bade him a long farewell. The gentleman was unknown to me at the time, but he has since figured in the police court as too clever by half.

We have occasionally had applications at which, perhaps, you would be amazed, from men who are evidently fluent enough, and who answer all our questions very well, except those upon their doctrinal views, to which repeatedly we have had this answer: "Mr. So-and-so is prepared to receive the doctrines of the College whatever they may be!" In all such cases we never deliberate a moment, the instantaneous negative is given. I mention it, because it illustrates our conviction that men are not called to the ministry who have no knowledge and no definite belief. When young fellows say that they have not made up their minds upon theology, they ought to go back to the Sunday-school until they have. For a man to come shuffling into a College, pretending that he holds his mind open to any form of truth, and that he is eminently receptive, but has not settled in his mind such things as whether God has an election of grace, or whether he loves his people to the end, seems to me to be a perfect monstrosity. "Not a novice," says the apostle; yet a man who has not made up his mind on such points as these, is confessedly and egregiously "a novice," and ought to be relegated to the catechism class till he has learned the first truths of the gospel.

After all, gentlemen, we shall have to prove our call by the practical proof of our ministry in after life, and it will be a lamentable thing for us to start in our course without due examination; for if so, we may have to leave it in disgrace. On the whole, experience is our surest test, and if God upholds us from year to year, and gives us his blessing, we need make no other trial of our vocation. Our moral and spiritual fitnesses will be tried by the labor of our ministry, and this is the most trustworthy of all tests.

From some one or other I heard in conversation of a plan adopted by Matthew Wilks, for examining a young man who wanted to be a missionary; the drift, if not the detail of the test, commends itself to my judgment though not to my taste. The young man desired to go to India as a missionary in connection with the London Missionary Society. Mr. Wilks was appointed to consider his fitness for such a post. He wrote to the young man, and told him to call upon him at six o'clock

the next morning. The brother lived many miles off, but he was at the house at six o'clock punctually. Mr. Wilks did not, however, enter the room till hours after. The brother waited wonderingly, but patiently. At last, Mr. Wilks arrived, and addressed the candidate thus, in his usual nasal tones, " Well, young, man, so you want to be a missionary?" "Yes, Sir." "Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ?" "Yes, Sir, I hope I do." "And have you had any education?" "Yes, Sir, a little." "Well, now, we'll try you; can you spell 'cat'? "The young man looked confused, and hardly knew how to answer so preposterous a question. His mind evidently halted between indignation and submission, but in a moment he replied steadily, " C,a,t, cat." "Very good," said Mr. Wilks; "now, can you spell 'dog' "Our young martyr hesitated, but Mr. Wilks said in his coolest manner, "Oh, never mind; don't be bashful; you spelt the other word so well that I should think you will be able to spell this: high as the attainment is, it is not so elevated but what you might do it without blushing. "The youthful Job replied, "D,o,g, dog." "Well, that is right; I see you will do in your spelling, and now for your arithmetic; how many are twice two?" It is a wonder that Mr.Wilks did not receive "twice two" after the fashion of muscular Christianity, but the patient youth gave the right reply and was dismissed.

Matthew Wilks at the committee meeting said, "I cordially recommend that young man; his testimonials and character I have duly examined, and besides that, I have given him a rare personal trial such as few could bear. I tried his self-denial, he was up in the morning early; I tried his temper, and I tried his humility; he can spell 'cat' and 'dog,' and can tell that 'twice two make four,' and he will do for a missionary exceedingly well."

Now, what the old gentleman is thus said to have done with exceedingly bad taste, we may with much propriety do with ourselves. We must try whether we can endure brow-beating, weariness, slander, jeering, and hardship; and whether we can be made the off-scouring of all things, and be treated as nothing for Christ's sake. If we can endure all these, we have some of those points which indicate the possession of

the rare qualities which should meet in a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. I gravely question whether some of us will find our vessels, when far out at sea, to be quite so seaworthy as we think them. O my brethren, make sure work of it while you are yet in this retreat; and diligently labor to fit yourselves for your high calling. You will have trials enough, and woe to you if you do not go forth armed from head to foot with armor of proof. You will have to run with horsemen, let not the footmen weary you while in your preliminary studies. The devil is abroad, and with him are many. Prove your own selves, and may the Lord prepare you for the crucible and the furnace which assuredly await you.

Your tribulation may not in all respects be so severe as that of Paul and his companions, but you must be ready for a like ordeal. Let me read you his memorable words, and let me entreat you to pray, while you hear them, that the Holy Ghost may strengthen you for all that lies before you. "Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in affliction, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the arm our of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowfnl, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

3

THE PREACHER'S PRIVATE PRAYER

Of course the preacher is above all others distinguished as a man of prayer. He prays as an ordinary Christian, else he were a hypocrite. He prays more than ordinary Christians, else he were disqualified for the office which he has undertaken. "It would be wholly monstrous," says Bernard, "for a man to be highest in office and lowest in soul; first in station and last in life." Over all his other relationships the pre-eminence of the pastor's responsibility casts a halo, and if true to his Master, he becomes distinguished for his prayerfulness in them all. As a citizen, his country has the advantage of his intercession; as a neighbor those under his shadow are remembered in supplication. He prays as a husband and as a father; he strives to make his family devoutions a model for his flock; and if the fire on the altar of God should burn low anywhere else, it is well tended in the house of the Lord's chosen servant--for he takes care that the morning and evening sacrifice shall sanctify his dwelling. But there are some of his prayers which concern his office, and of those our plan in these lectures leads us to speak most. He offers peculiar supplications as a minister, and he draws near to God in this respect, over and above all approaches in his other relationships.

I take it that as a minister he is *always praying*. Whenever his mind turns to his work, whether he is in it or out of it, he ejaculates a petition, sending up his holy desires as well-directed arrows to the skies. He is not always in the act of prayer, but he lives in the spirit of it. If his heart be in his work, he cannot eat or drink, or take recreation, or go to his bed, or rise in the morning, without evermore feeling a fervency of desire, a weight of anxiety, and a simplicity of dependence upon God; thus, in one form or other he continues in prayer. If

there be any man under heaven, who is compelled to carry out the precept–"Pray without ceasing," surely it is the Christian minister. He has peculiar temptations, special trials, singular difficulties, and remarkable duties, he has to deal with God in awful relationships, and with men in mysterious interests; he therefore needs much more grace than common men, and as he knows this, he is led constantly to cry to the strong for strength, and say, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." Alleine once wrote to a dear friend:

> "Though I am apt to be unsettled and quickly set off the hinges, yet, methinks, I am like a bird out of the nest, I am never quiet till I am in my old way of communion with God; like the needle in the compass, that is restless till it be turned towards the pole. I can say, through grace, with the church, 'With my soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me have I sought thee early.' My heart is early and late with God; 'tis the business and delight of my life to seek him.' "

Such must be the even tenor of your way, O men of God. If you as ministers are not very prayerful, you are much to be pitied. If, in the future, you shall be called to sustain pastorates, large or small, if you become lax in secret devotion, not only will you need to be pitied, but your people also; and, in addition to that, you shall be blamed, and the day cometh in which you shall be ashamed and confounded.

It may scarcely be needful to commend to you the sweet uses of private devoution, and yet I cannot forbear. To you, as the ambassadors of God, the mercy-seat has a virtue beyond all estimate; the more familiar you are with the court of heaven the better shall you discharge your heavenly trust. Among all the formative influences which go to make up a man honored of God in the ministry, I know of none more mighty than his own familiarity with the mercy-seat. All that a college course can do for a student is coarse and external

compared with the spiritual and delicate refinement obtained by communion with God. While the unformed minister is revolving upon the wheel of preparation, prayer is the tool of the great potter by which he moulds the vessel. All our libraries and studies are mere emptiness compared with our closets. We grow, we wax mighty, we prevail in private prayer.

Your prayers will be your ablest assistants while your discourses are yet upon the anvil. While other men, like Esau, are hunting for their portion, you, by the aid of prayer, will find the savory meat near at home, and may say in truth what Jacob said so falsely, "The Lord brought it to me." If you can dip your pens into your hearts, appealing in earnestness to the Lord, you will write well; and if you can gather your matter on your knees at the gate of heaven, you will not fail to speak well. Prayer, as a mental exercise, will bring many subjects before the mind, and so help in the selection of a topic, while as a high spiritual engagement it will cleanse your inner eye that you may see truth in the light of God. Texts will often refuse to reveal their treasures till you open them with the key of prayer. How wonderfully were the books opened to Daniel when he was in supplication! How much Peter learned upon the housetop! The closet is the best study. The commentators are good instructors, but the Author himself is far better, and prayer makes a direct appeal to him and enlists him in our cause. It is a great thing to pray one's self into the spirit and marrow of a text; working into it by sacred feeding thereon, even as the worm bores its way into the kernel of the nut.

Prayer supplies a leverage for the uplifting of ponderos truths. One marvels how the stones of Stonehenge could have been set in their places; it is even more to be enquired after whence some men obtained such admirable knowledge of mysterious doctrines: was not prayer the potent machinery which wrought the wonder? Waiting upon God often turns darkness into light. Persevering enquiry at the sacred oracle uplifts the veil and gives grace to look into the deep things of God. A certain Puritan divine at a debate was observed frequently to write upon the paper before him; upon others curiously seeking to read his notes, they found nothing upon

the page but the words, "More light, Lord," "More light, Lord," repeated scores of times: a most suitable prayer for the student of the Word when preparing his discourse.

You will frequently find fresh streams of thought leaping up from the passage before you, as if the rock had been struck by Moses' rod; new veins of precious ore will be revealed to your astonished gaze as you quarry God's Word and use diligently the hammer of prayer. You will sometimes feel as if you were entirely shut up, and then suddenly a new road will open before you. He who hath the key of David openeth, and no man shutteth. If you have ever sailed down the Rhine, the water scenery of that majestic river will have struck you as being very like in effect to a series of lakes. Before and behind the vessel appears to be enclosed in massive walls of rock, or circles of vine-clad terraces, till on a sudden you turn a corner, and before you the rejoicing and abounding river flows onward in its strength. So the laborious student often finds it with a text; it appears to be fast closed against you, but prayer propels your vessel, and turns its prow into fresh waters, and you behold the broad and deep stream of sacred truth flowing in its fulness, and bearing you with it. Is not this a convincing reason for abiding in supplication? Use prayer as a boring rod, and wells of living water will leap up from the bowels of the Word. Who will be content to thirst when living waters are so readily to be obtained!

The best and holiest men have ever made prayer the most important part of pulpit preparation. It is said of McCheyne:

> "Anxious to give his people on the Sabbath what had cost him somewhat, he never, without an urgent reason, went before them without much previous meditation and prayer. His principle on this subject was embodied in a remark he made to some of us who were conversing on the matter. Being asked his view of diligent preparation for the pulpit, he reminded us of Exodus 27:20. 'Beaten oil–beaten oil for the lamps of the sanctuary.' And

> yet his prayerfulness was greater still. Indeed, he could not neglect fellowship with God before entering the congregation. He needed to be bathed in the love of God. His ministry was so much a bringing out of views that had first sanctified his own soul, that the healthiness of his soul was absolutely needful to the vigor and power of his ministrations. With him the commencement of all labor invariably consisted in the preparation of his own soul. The walls of his chamber were witnesses of his prayerfulness and of his tears, as well as of his cries."

Prayer will singularly assist you in the delivery of your sermon; in fact, nothing can so gloriously fit you to preach as descending fresh from the mount of communion with God to speak with men. None are so able to plead with men as those who have been wrestling with God on their behalf. It is said of Alleine:

> "He poured out his very heart in prayer and preaching. His supplications and his exhortations were so affectionate, so full of holy zeal, life and vigor, that they quite overcame his hearers; he melted over them, so that he thawed and mollified, and sometimes dissolved the hardest hearts."

There could have been none of this sacred dissolving of heart if his mind had not been previously exposed to the tropical rays of the Sun of Righteousness by private fellowship with the risen Lord. A truly pathetic delivery, in which there is no affectation, but much affection, can only be the offspring of prayer. There is no rhetoric like that of the heart, and no school for learning it but the foot of the cross. It were better that you never learned a rule of human oratory, but were full of the power of heaven born love, than that you should master Quintilian, Cicero, and Aristotle, and remain without the apostolic anointing.

Prayer may not make you eloquent after the human mode, but it will make you truly so, for you will speak out of the heart; and is not that the meaning of the word eloquence? It will bring fire from heaven upon your sacrifice, and thus prove it to be accepted of the Lord.

As fresh springs of thought will frequently break up during preparation in answer to prayer, so will it be in the delivery of the sermon. Most preachers who depend upon God's Spirit will tell you that their freshest and best thoughts are not those which were premeditated, but ideas which come to them, flying as on the wings of angels; unexpected treasures brought on a sudden by celestial hands, seeds of the flowers of paradise, wafted from the mountains of myrrh. Often and often when I have felt hampered, both in thought and expression, my secret groaning of heart has brought me relief, and I have enjoyed more than usual liberty. But how dare we pray in the battle if we have never cried to the Lord while buckling on the harness! The remembrance of his wrestlings at home comforts the fettered preacher when in the pulpit: God will not desert us unless we have deserted him. You, brethren, will find that prayer will ensure you strength equal to your day.

As the tongues of fire came upon the apostles, when they sat watching and praying, even so will they come upon you. You will find yourselves, when you might perhaps have flagged, suddenly upborne, as by a seraph's power. Wheels of fire will be fastened to your chariot, which had begun to drag right heavily, and steeds angelic will be in a moment harnessed to your fiery car, till you climb the heavens like Elijah, in a rapture of flaming inspiration.

After the sermon, how would a conscientious preacher give vent to his feelings and find solace for his soul if access to the mercy-seat were denied him? Elevated to the highest pitch of excitement, how can we relieve our souls but in importunate pleadings. Or depressed by a fear of failure, how shall we be comforted but in moaning out our complaint before our God. How often have some of us tossed to and fro upon our couch half the night because of conscious shortcomings in our testimony! How frequently have we longed to rush back to

the pulpit again to say over again more vehemently, what we have uttered in so cold a manner! Where could we find rest for our spirits but in confession of sin, and passionate entreaty that our infirmity or folly might in no way hinder the Spirit of God! It is not possible in a public assembly to pour out all our heart's love to our flock. Like Joseph, the affectionate minister will seek where to weep; his emotions, however freely he may express himself, will be pent up in the pulpit, and only in private prayer can he draw up the sluices and bid them flow forth.

If we cannot prevail with men for God, we will, at least, endeavor to prevail with God for men. We cannot save them, or even persuade them to be saved, but we can at least bewail their madness and entreat the interference of the Lord. Like Jeremiah, we can make it our resolve, "If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears." To such pathetic appeals the Lord's heart can never be indifferent; in due time the weeping intercessor will become the rejoicing winner of souls. There is a distinct connection between importunate agonizing and true success, even as between the travail and the birth, the sowing in tears and the reaping in joy. "How is it that your seed comes up so soon?" said one gardener to another. "Because I steep it," was the reply. We must steep all our teachings in tears, "when none but God is nigh," and their growth will surprise and delight us.

Could anyone wonder at Brainerd's success, when his diary contains such notes as this: "Lord's Day, April 25th– This morning spent about two hours in sacred duties, and was enabled, more than ordinarily, to agonize for immortal souls; though it was early in the morning, and the sun scarcely shone at all, yet my body was quite wet with sweat.

"The secret of Luther's power lay in the same direction. Theodorus said of him: "I overheard him in prayer, but, good God, with what life and spirit did he pray! It was with so much reverence, as if he were speaking to God, yet with so much confidence as if he were speaking to his friend."

My brethren, let me beseech you to be men of prayer.

Great talents you may never have, but you will do well enough without them if you abound in intercession. If you do not pray over what you have sown, God's sovereignty may possibly determine to give a blessing, but you have no right to expect it, and if it comes it will bring no comfort to your own heart.

I was reading yesterday a book by Father Faber, late of the Oratory, at Brompton, a marvellous compound of truth and error. In it he relates a legend to this effect. A certain preacher, whose sermons converted men by scores, received a revelation from heaven that not one of the conversions was owing to his talents or eloquence, but all to the prayers of an illiterate lay-brother, who sat on the pulpit steps, pleading all the time for the success of the sermon. It may in the all-revealing day be so with us. We may discover, after having labored long and wearily in preaching, that all the honor belongs to another builder, whose prayers were gold, silver, and precious stones, while our sermonizings being apart from prayer, were but hay and stubble.

When we have done with preaching, we shall not, if we are true ministers of God, have done with praying, because the whole church, with many tongues, will be crying, in the language of the Macedonian, "Come over and help us" in prayer. If you are enabled to prevail in prayer you will have many requests to offer for others who will flock to you, and beg a share in your intercessions, and so you will find yourselves commissioned with errands to the mercy-seat for friends and hearers. Such is always my lot, and I feel it a pleasure to have such requests to present before my Lord.

Never can you be short of themes for prayer, even if no one should suggest them to you. Look at your congregation. There are always sick folk among them, and many more who are soul-sick. Some are unsaved, others are seeking and cannot find. Many are desponding, and not a few believers are backsliding or mourning. There are widows' tears and orphans' sighs to be put into our bottle, and poured out before the Lord. If you are a genuine minister of God you will stand as a priest before the Lord, spiritually wearing the ephod and the breastplate whereon you bear the names of the children

of Israel, pleading for them within the veil. I have known brethren who have kept a list of persons for whom they felt bound especially to pray, and I doubt not such a record often reminded them of what might otherwise have slipped their memory.

Nor will your people wholly engross you; the nation and the world will claim their share. The man who is mighty in prayer may be a wall of fire around his country, her guardian angel and her shield. We have all heard how the enemies of the Protestant cause dreaded the prayers of Knox more than they feared armies of ten thousand men. The famous Welch was also a great intercessor for his country; he used to say, "he wondered how a Christian could lie in his bed all night and not rise to pray." When his wife, fearing that he would take cold, followed him into the room to which he had withdrawn, she heard him pleading in broken sentences, "Lord, wilt thou not grant me Scotland?" O that we were thus wrestling at midnight, crying, "Lord, wilt thou not grant us our hearers' souls?"

The minister who does not earnestly pray over his work must surely be a vain and conceited man. He acts as if he thought himself sufficient of himself, and therefore needed not to appeal to God. Yet what a baseless pride to conceive that our preaching can ever be in itself so powerful that it can turn men from their sins, and bring them to God without the working of the Holy Ghost. If we are truly humble-minded we shall not venture down to the fight until the Lord of Hosts has clothed us with all power, and said to us, "Go in this thy might." The preacher who neglects to pray much must be very careless about his ministry. He cannot have comprehended his calling. He cannot have computed the value of a soul, or estimated the meaning of eternity. He must be a mere official, tempted into a pulpit because the piece of bread which belongs to the priest's office is very necessary to him, or a detestable hypocrite who loves the praise of men, and cares not for the praise of God. He will surely become a mere superficial talker, best approved where grace is least valued and a vain show most admired. He cannot be one of those who plough deep and

reap abundant harvests. He is a mere loiterer, not a laborer. As a preacher he has a name to live and is dead. He limps in his life like the lame man in the Proverbs, whose legs were not equal, for his praying is shorter than his preaching.

I am afraid that, more or less, most of us need self-examination as to this matter. If any man here should venture to say that he prays as much as he ought, as a student, I should gravely question his statement; and if there be a minister, deacon, or elder present who can say that he believes he is occupied with God in prayer to the full extent to which he might be, I should be pleased to know him. I can only say, that if he can claim this excellence, he leaves me far behind, for I can make no such claim: I wish I could; and I make the confession with no small degree of shame-facedness and confusion, but I am obliged to make it. If we are not more negligent than others, this is no consolation to us; the shortcomings of others are no excuses for us.

How few of us could compare ourselves with Mr. Joseph Alleine, whose character I have mentioned before? "At the time of his health," writes his wife, "he did rise constantly at or before four of the clock, and would be much troubled if he heard smiths or other craftsmen at their trades before he was at communion with God; saying to me often, 'How this noise shames me. Does not my Master deserve more than theirs?' From four till eight he spent in prayer, holy contemplation, and singing of psalms, in which he much delighted and did daily practice alone, as well as in the family. Sometimes he would suspend the routine of parochial engagements, and devoute whole days to these secret exercises, in order to which, he would contrive to be alone in some void house, or else in some sequestered spot in the open valley. Here there would be much prayer and meditation on God and heaven."

Could we read Jonathan Edwards, description of David Brainerd and not blush? "His life," says Edwards, "shows the right way to success in the works of the ministry. He sought it as a resolute soldier seeks victory in a siege or battle; or as a man that runs a race for a great prize. Animated with love to Christ and souls, how did he labor always fervently, not only

in word and doctrine, in public and private, but in prayers day and night, 'wrestling with God' in secret, and 'travailing in birth,' with unutterable groans and agonies! 'until Christ were formed' in the hearts of the people to whom he was sent! How did he thirst for a blessing upon his ministry, 'and watch for souls as one that must give account!' How did he 'go forth in the strength of the Lord God, seeking and depending on the special influence of the Spirit to assist and succeed him! And what was the happy fruit at last, after long waiting and many dark and discouraging appearances: like a true son of Jacob, he persevered in wrestling through all the darkness of the night, until the breaking of the day."

Might not Henry Martyn's journal shame us, where we find such entries as these; "Sept. 24th–The determination with which I went to bed last night, of devouting this day to prayer and fasting, I was enabled to put into execution. In my first prayer for deliverance from worldly thoughts, depending on the power and promises of God, for fixing my soul while I prayed, I was helped to enjoy much abstinence from the world for nearly an hour. Then read the history of Abraham, to see how familiarly God had revealed himself to mortal men of old. Afterwards, in prayer for my own sanctification, my soul breathed freely and ardently after the holiness of God, and this was the best season of the day." We might perhaps more truly join with him in his lament after the first year of his ministry that "he judged he had dedicated too much time to public ministrations, and too little to private communion with God."

How much of blessing we may have missed through remissness in supplication we can scarcely guess, and none of us can know how poor we are in comparison with what we might have been if we had lived habitually nearer to God in prayer. Vain regrets and surmises are useless, but an earnest determination to amend will be far more useful. We not only ought to pray more, but we must. The fact is, the secret of all ministerial success lies in prevalence at the mercy-seat.

One bright benediction which private prayer brings down upon the ministry is an indescribable and inimitable something, better understood than named; it is a dew from

the Lord, a divine presence which you will recognize at once when I say it is "an unction from the holy One." What is it? I wonder how long we might beat our brains before we could plainly put into words what is meant by preaching with unction; yet he who preaches knows its presence, and he who hears soon detects its absence; Samaria, in famine, typifies a discourse without it; Jerusalem, with her feasts of fat things full of marrow, may represent a sermon enriched with it. Every one knows what the freshness of the morning is when orient pearls abound on every blade of grass, but who can describe it, much, less produce it of itself! Such is the mystery of spiritual anointing; we know, but we cannot tell to others what it is.

It is as easy as it is foolish to counterfeit it, as some do who use expressions which are meant to betoken fervent love, but oftener indicate sickly sentimentalism or mere cant. "Dear Lord!" "Sweet Jesus!" "Precious Christ!" are by them poured out wholesale, till one is nauseated. These familiarities may have been not only tolerable, but even beautiful when they first fell from a saint of God, speaking, as it were, out of the excellent glory, but when repeated flippantly they are not only intolerable, but indecent, if not profane. Some have tried to imitate unction by unnatural tones and whines; by turning up the whites of their eyes, and lifting their hands in a most ridiculous manner. M'Cheyne's tone and rhythm one hears from Scotchmen continually: we much prefer his spirit to his mannerism; and all mere mannerism without power is as foul carrion of all life bereft, obnoxious, mischievous.

Certain brethren aim at inspiration through exertion and loud shouting; but it does not come: some we have known to stop the discourse, and exclaim, "God bless you," and others gesticulate wildly, and drive their finger nails into the palms of their hands as if they were in convulsions of celestial ardor. Bah! The whole thing smells of the green-room and the stage.

The getting up of fervor in hearers by the simulation of it in the preacher is a loathsome deceit to be scorned by honest men. "To affect feeling," says Richard Cecil, "is nauseous and soon detected, but to feel is the readiest way to the hearts of

others." Unction is a thing which you cannot manufacture, and its counterfeits are worse than worthless; yet it is in itself priceless, and beyond measure needful if you would edify believers and bring sinners to Jesus. To the secret pleader with God this secret is committed; upon him rests the dew of the Lord, about him is the perfume which makes glad the heart. If the anointing which we bear come not from the Lord of hosts we are deceivers, and since only in prayer can we obtain it, let us continue instant, constant, fervent in supplication. Let your fleece lie on the threshing-floor of supplication till it is wet with the dew of heaven. Go not to minister in the temple till you have washed in the laver. Think not to be a messenger of grace to others till you have seen the God of grace for yourselves, and had the word from his mouth.

Time spent in quiet prostration of soul before the Lord is most invigorating. David "sat before the Lord;" it is a great thing to hold these sacred sittings; the mind being receptive, like an open flower drinking in the sunbeams, or the sensitive photographic plate accepting the image before it. Quietude, which some men cannot abide, because it reveals their inward poverty, is as a palace of cedar to the wise, for along its hallowed courts the King in his beauty deigns to walk.

> Sacred silence! thou that art
> Floodgate of the deeper heart,
> Offspring of a heavenly kind;
> Frost o' the mouth, and thaw o' the mind.
> Flecknoe.

Priceless as the gift of utterance may be, the practice of silence in some aspects far excels it. Do you think me a Quaker? Well, be it so. Herein I follow George Fox most lovingly; for I am persuaded that we most of us think too much of speech, which after all is but the shell of thought. Quiet contemplation, still worship, unuttered rapture, these are mine when my best jewels are before me. Brethren, rob not your heart of the deep sea joys; miss not the far-down life, by forever babbling among the broken shells and foaming surges of the shore.

I would seriously recommend to you, when settled in the ministry, the celebration of extraordinary seasons of devotion. If your ordinary prayers do not keep up the freshness and vigor of your souls, and you feel that you are flagging, get alone for a week, or even a month if possible. We have occasional holidays, why not frequent holy days? We hear of our richer brethren finding time for a journey to Jerusalem; could we not spare time for the less difficult and far more profitable journey to the heavenly city? Isaac Ambrose, once pastor at Preston, who wrote that famous book, *Looking unto Jesus*, always set apart one month in the year for seclusion, in a hut in a wood at Garstang. No wonder that he was so mighty a divine, when he could regularly spend so long a time in the mount with God.

I notice that the Romanists are accustomed to secure what they call "Retreats," where a number of priests will retire for a time into perfect quietude, to spend the whole of the time in fasting and prayer, so as to inflame their souls with ardor. We may learn from our adversaries. It would be a great thing every now and then for a band of truly spiritual brethren to spend a day or two with each other in real burning agony of prayer. Pastors alone could use much more freedom than in a mixed company.

Times of humiliation and supplication for the whole church will also benefit us if we enter into them heartily. Our seasons of fasting and prayer at the Tabernacle have been high days indeed; never has heaven-gate stood wider; never have our hearts been nearer the central glory. I look forward to our month of special devotion, as mariners reckon upon reaching land. Even if our public work were laid aside to give us space for special prayer, it might be a great gain to our churches. A voyage to the golden rivers of fellowship and meditation would be well repaid by a freight of sanctified feeling and elevated thought. Our silence might be better than our voices if our solitude were spent with God.

That was a grand action of old Jerome, when he laid all his pressing engagements aside to achieve a purpose to which he felt a call from heaven. He had a large congregation, as large

a one as any of us need want; but he said to his people, "Now it is of necessity that the New Testament should be translated, you must find another preacher: the translation must be made; I am bound for the wilderness, and shall not return till my task is finished." Away he went with his manuscripts, and prayed and labored, and produced a work–the Latin Vulgate– which will last as long as the world stands; on the whole a most wonderful translation of Holy Scripture.

As learning and prayerful retirement together could thus produce an immortal work, if we were sometimes to say to our people when we felt moved to do so, "Dear friends, we really must be gone for a little while to refresh our souls in solitude," our profiting would soon be apparent, and if we did not write Latin Vulgates, yet we should do immortal work, such as would abide the fire.

4

OUR PUBLIC PRAYER

It has sometimes been the boast of Episcopalians that Churchmen go to their churches to pray and worship God, but that Dissenters merely assemble to hear sermons. Our reply to this is, that albeit there may be some professors who are guilty of this evil, it is not true of the people of God among us, and these are the only persons who ever will in any church really enjoy devoution. Our congregations gather together to worship God, and we assert, and feel no hesitation in so asserting, that there is as much true and acceptable prayer offered in our ordinary Nonconformist services as in the best and most pompous performances of the Church of England.

Moreover, if the observation be meant to imply that the hearing of sermons is not worshipping God, it is founded on a gross mistake, for rightly to listen to the gospel is one of the noblest parts of the adoration of the Most High. It is a mental exercise, when rightly performed, in which all the faculties of the spiritual man are called into devoutional action. Reverently hearing the word exercises our humility, instructs our faith, irradiates us with joy, inflames us with love, inspires us with zeal, and lifts us up towards heaven. Many a time a sermon has been a kind of Jacob's ladder upon which we have seen the angels of God ascending and descending, and the covenant God himself at the top thereof. We have often felt when God has spoken through his servants into our souls, "This is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven." We have magnified the name of the Lord and praised him with all our heart while he has spoken to us by his Spirit which he has given unto men. Hence there is not the wide distinction to be drawn between preaching

and prayer that some would have us admit; for the one part of the service softly blends into the other, and the sermon frequently inspires the prayer and the hymn. True preaching is an acceptable adoration of God by the manifestation of his gracious attributes: the testimony of his gospel, which pre-eminently glorifies him, and the obedient hearing of revealed truth, are an acceptable form of worship to the Most High, and perhaps one of the most spiritual in which the human mind can be engaged.

Nevertheless, as the old Roman poet tells us, it is right to learn from our enemies, and therefore it may be possible that our liturgical opponents have pointed out to us what is in some instances a weak place in our public services. It is to be feared that our exercises are not in every case moulded into the best form, or presented in the most commendable fashion. There are meetinghouses in which the supplications are neither so devout nor so earnest as we desire; in other places the earnestness is so allied with ignorance, and the devotion so marred with rant, that no intelligent believer can enter into the service with pleasure. Praying in the Holy Ghost is not universal among us, neither do all pray with the understanding as well as with the heart. There is room for improvement, and in some quarters there is an imperative demand for it. Let me, therefore, very earnestly caution you, beloved brethren, against spoiling your services by your prayers: make it your solemn resolve that all the engagements of the sanctuary shall be of the best kind.

Be assured that free prayer is the most scriptural, and should be the most excellent form of public supplication. If you lose faith in what you are doing you will never do it well; settle it in your minds therefore, that before the Lord you are worshipping in a manner which is warranted by the word of God, and accepted of the Lord. The expression, 'reading prayers,' to which we are now so accustomed, is not to be found in Holy Scripture, rich as it is in words for conveying religious thought; and the phrase is not there because the thing itself had no existence. Where in the writings of the apostles meet we with the bare idea of a liturgy? Prayer in the assemblies

of the early Christians was unrestricted to any form of words. Tertullian writes, 'we pray *without a prompter* because from the heart.' Justin Martyr describes the presiding minister as praying "according to his ability." It would be difficult to discover when and where liturgies began; their introduction was gradual, and as we believe, co-extensive with the decline of purity in the church; the introduction of them among Nonconformists would mark the era of our decline and fall. The subject tempts me to linger, but it is not the point in hand, and therefore I pass on, only remarking that you will find the matter of liturgies ably handled by Dr. John Owen, whom you will do well to consult.

Be it ours to prove the superiority of extempore prayer by making it more spiritual and earnest than liturgical devoution. It is a great pity when the observation is forced from the hearer, our minister preaches far better than he prays: this is not after the model of our Lord; he spake as never man spake--and as for his prayers, they so impressed his disciples that they said, "Lord, teach us to pray." All our faculties should concentrate their energy, and the whole man should be elevated to his highest point of vigor while in public prayer, the Holy Ghost meanwhile baptizing soul and spirit with his sacred influence; but slovenly, careless, lifeless talk in the guise of prayer, made to fill up a certain space in the service, is a weariness to man, and an abomination to God. Had free prayer been universally of a higher order a liturgy would never have been thought of, and today forms of prayer have no better apology than the feebleness of extemporaneous devoutions. The secret is that we are not so really devout at heart as we should be. Habitual communion with God must be maintained, or our public prayers will be vapid or formal. If there be no melting of the glacier high up in the ravines of the mountain, there will be no descending rivulets to cheer the plain. Private prayer is the drill ground for our more public exercises, neither can we long neglect it without being out of order when before the people.

Our prayers must never grovel, they must soar and mount. We need a heavenly frame of mind. Our addresses to

the throne of grace must be solemn and humble, not flippant and loud, or formal and careless. The colloquial form of speech is out of place before the Lord; we must bow reverently and with deepest awe. We may speak boldly with God, but still he is in heaven and we are upon earth, and we are to avoid presumption. In supplication we are peculiarly before the throne of the Infinite, and as the courtier in the king's palace puts on another mien and another manner than that which he exhibits to his fellow courtiers, so should it be with us.

We have noticed in the churches of Holland, that as soon as the minister begins to preach every man puts his hat on, but the instant he turns to pray everybody takes his hat off: this was the custom in the older Puritanic congregations of England, and it lingered long among the Baptists; they wore their caps during those parts of the service which they conceived were not direct worship, but put them off as soon as there was a direct approach to God, either in song or in prayer. I think the practice unseemly, and the reason for it erroneous. I have urged that the distinction between prayer and hearing is not great, and I feel sure no one would propose to return to the old custom or the opinion of which it was the index; but still there is a difference, and inasmuch as in prayer we are more directly talking with God rather than seeking the edification of our fellow men, we must put our shoes from off our feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground.

Let the Lord alone be the object of your prayers. Beware of having an eye to the auditors; beware of becoming rhetorical, to please the listeners. Prayer must not he transformed into "an oblique sermon." It is little short of blasphemy to make devoution an occasion for display. Fine prayers are generally very wicked prayers. In the presence of the Lord of hosts it ill becomes a sinner to parade the feathers and finery of tawdry speech with the view of winning applause from his fellow mortals. Hypocrites who dare to do this have their reward, but it is one to be dreaded. A heavy sentence of condemnation was passed upon a minister when it was flatteringly said that his prayer was the most eloquent ever offered to a Boston congregation. We may aim at exciting the yearnings and

aspirations of those who hear us in prayer; but every word and thought must be Godward, and only so far touching upon the people as may be needful to bring them and their wants before the Lord. Remember the people in your prayers, but do not mould your supplications to win their esteem: look up, look up with both eyes.

Avoid all vulgarities in prayer. I must acknowledge to having heard some, but it would be unprofitable to recount them; the more especially as they become less frequent every day. We seldom now meet with the vulgarities of prayer which were once so common in Methodist prayer-meetings, much commoner probably, by report than in reality. Uneducated people must, when in earnest, pray in their own way, and their language will frequently shock the fastidious if not the devout; but for this allowance must be made, and if the spirit is evidently sincere we may forgive uncomely expressions. I once, at a prayer-meeting, heard a poor man pray thus: "Lord, watch over these young people during the feast time, for thou knowest, Lord, how their enemies watch for them as a cat watches for mice." Some ridiculed the expression, but it appeared to me to be natural and expressive, considering the person using it. A little gentle instruction and a hint or two will usually prevent a repetition of anything objectionable in such cases, but we, who occupy the pulpit, must be careful to be quite clear ourselves.

The biographer of that remarkable American Methodist preacher, Jacob Gruber, mentions as an instance of his ready wit, that after having heard a young Calvinistic minister violently attack his creed, he was asked to conclude with prayer, and among other petitions, prayed that the Lord would bless the young man who had been preaching, and grant him much grace, "that his heart might become as soft as his head." To say nothing of the bad taste of such public criticism upon a fellow minister, every right-minded man will see that the throne of the Most High is not the place for uttering such vulgar witticisms. Most probably the young orator deserved a castigation for his offence against charity, but the older one sinned ten times more in his want of reverence.

Choice words are for the King of kings, not such as ribald tongues have defiled.

Another fault equally to be avoided in prayer is an unhallowed and sickening superabundance of endearing words. When "Dear Lord" and "Blessed Lord" and "Sweet Lord" come over and over again as vain repetitions, they are among the worst of blots. I must confess I should feel no revulsion in my mind to the words, "Dear Jesus," if they fell from the lips of a Rutherford, or a Hawker, or a Herbert; but when I hear fond and familiar expressions hackneyed by persons not at all remarkable for spirituality, I am inclined to wish that they could, in some way or other, come to a better understanding of the true relation existing between man and God. The word "dear" has come from daily use to be so common, and so small, and in some cases so silly and affected a monosyllable, that interlarding one's prayers with it is not to edification.

The strongest objection exists to the constant repetition of the word "Lord," which occurs in the early prayers of young converts, and even among students. The words, "O Lord! O Lord! O Lord!" grieve us when we hear them so perpetually repeated. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," is a great commandment, and although the law may be broken unwittingly, yet its breach is still a sin and a very solemn one. God's name is not to be a stop-gap to make up for our want of words. Take care to use most reverently the name of the infinite Jehovah. The Jews in their sacred writings either leave a space for the word "Jehovah," or else write the word, "Adonai," because they conceive that holy name to be too sacred for common use: we need not be so superstitious, but it were well to be scrupulously reverent. A profusion of "ohs!" and other interjections may be well dispensed with; young speakers are often at fault here.

Avoid that kind of prayer which may be called–though the subject is one on which language has not given us many terms–*a sort of peremptory demanding of God*. It is delightful to hear a man wrestle with God, and say, "I will not let thee

go except thou bless me," but that must be said softly, and not in a hectoring spirit, as though we could command and exact blessings from the Lord of all. Remember, it is still a man wrestling, even though permitted to wrestle with the eternal I AM. Jacob halted on his thigh after that night's holy conflict, to let him see that God is terrible, and that his prevailing power did not lie in himself. We are taught to say, "Our Father," but still it is, "Our Father who art in heaven." Familiarity there may be, but holy familiarity; boldness, but the boldness which springs from grace and is the work of the Spirit; not the boldness of the rebel who carries a brazen front in the presence of his offended king, but the boldness of the child who fears because he loves, and loves because he fears. Never fall into a vainglorious style of impertinent address to God; he is not to be assailed as an antagonist, but entreated with as our Lord and God. Humble and lowly let us be in spirit, and so let us pray.

Pray when you profess to pray, and don't talk about it. Businessmen say, "A place for everything and everything in its place;" preach in the sermon and pray in the prayer. Disquisitions upon our need of help in prayer are not prayer. Why do not men go at once to prayer–why stand beating about the bush; instead of saying what they ought to do and want to do, why not set to work in God's name and do it? In downright earnestness, address yourself to intercession, and set your face towards the Lord. Plead for the supply of the great and constant needs of the church, and do not fail to urge, with devout fervor, the special requirements of the present time and audience. Let the sick, the poor, the dying, the heathen, the Jew, and all forgotten classes of people, be mentioned as they press upon your heart. Pray for your people as saints and sinners–not as if they were all saints. Mention the young and the aged; the impressed and the careless; the devout and the backsliding. Never turn to the right hand or to the left, but plough on in the furrow of real prayer. Let your confessions of sin and your thanksgivings be truthful and to the point; and let your petitions be presented as if you believed in God and

had no doubt as to the efficacy of prayer: I say this, because so many pray in such a formal manner as to lead observers to conclude that they thought it a very decent thing to pray, but, after all, a very poor and doubtful business as to any practical result. Pray as one who has tried and proved his God, and therefore comes with undoubting confidence to renew his pleadings: and do remember to pray to God right through the prayer, and never fall to talking or preaching--much less, as some do, to scolding and grumbling.

As a rule, if called upon to preach, conduct the prayer yourself; and if you should be highly esteemed in the ministry, as I trust you may be, make a point, with great courtesy, but equal firmness, to resist the practice of choosing men to pray with the idea of honoring them by giving them something to do. Our public devotions ought never to be degraded into opportunities for compliment. I have heard prayer and singing, now and then called "the preliminary services," as if they were but a preface to the sermon; this is rare I hope among us–if it were common it would be to our deep disgrace. I endeavor invariably to take all the service myself for my own sake, and I think also for the people's. I do not believe that "anybody will do for the praying." No, sirs, it is my solemn conviction that the prayer is one of the most weighty, useful, and honorable parts of the service, and that it ought to be even more considered than the sermon. There must be no putting up of anybodies and nobodies to pray, and then the selection of the abler man to preach. It may happen through weakness, or upon a special occasion, that it may be a relief to the minister to have some one to offer prayer for him; but if the Lord has made you love your work you will not often or readily fulfill this part of it by proxy. If you delegate the service at all, let it be to one in whose spirituality and present preparedness you have the fullest confidence; but to pitch on a giftless brother unawares, and put him forward to get through the devoutions is shameful.

> Shall we serve heaven with less respect
> Than we do minister to our gross selves?

Appoint the ablest man to pray, and let the sermon be slurred sooner than the approach to heaven. Let the Infinite Jehovah be served with our best; let prayer addressed to the Divine Majesty be carefully weighed, and presented with all the powers of an awakened heart and a spiritual understanding. He who has been by communion with God prepared to minister to the people, is usually of all men present the most fit to engage in prayer; to lay out a programme which puts up another brother in his place, is to mar the harmony of the service, to rob the preacher of an exercise which would brace him for his sermon, and in many instances to suggest comparisons between one part of the service and the other which ought never to be tolerated. If unprepared brethren are to be sent into the pulpit to do my praying for me when I am engaged to preach, I do not see why I might not be allowed to pray, and then retire to let these brethren do the sermonizing. I am not able to see any reason for depriving me of the holiest, sweetest and most profitable exercise which my Lord has allotted me; if I may have my choice, I will sooner yield up the sermon than the prayer. Thus much I have said in order to impress upon you that you must highly esteem public prayer, and seek of the Lord for the gifts and graces necessary to its right discharge.

Those who despise all extempore prayer will probably catch at these remarks and use them against it, but I can assure them that the faults adverted to are not common among us, and are indeed almost extinct; while the scandal caused by them never was, at the worst, so great as that caused by the way in which the liturgical service is often performed. Far too often is the church service hurried through in a manner as indevout as if it were a ballad-singer's ditty. The words are parroted without the slightest appreciation of their meaning; not sometimes, but very frequently, in the places set apart for Episcopal worship, you may see the eyes of the people, and the eyes of the choristers, and the eyes of the parson himself, wandering about in all directions, while evidently from the very tone of the reading there is no feeling of sympathy with what is being read.[4]

I have been at funerals when the burial service of the church of England has been galloped through so indecorously that it has taken all the grace I had to prevent my throwing a hassock at the creature's head. I have felt so indignant that I have not known what to do, to hear, in the presence of mourners whose hearts were bleeding, a man rattling through the service as if he were paid by the piece, and had more work to follow, and therefore desired to get it through as quickly as possible. What effect he could think he was producing, or what good result could come from words jerked forth and hurled out with vengeance and vehemence, I cannot imagine. It is really shocking to think of how that very wonderful burial service is murdered, and made into an abomination by the mode in which it is frequently read. I merely mention this because, if they criticize our prayers too severely, we can bring a formidable countercharge to silence them. Better far, however, for us to amend our own blunders than find fault with others.

In order to make our public prayer what it should be, the first necessary is, that it must be a matter of the heart. A man must be really in earnest in supplication. It must be true prayer, and if it be such, it will, like love; cover a multitude of sins. You can pardon a man's familiarities and his vulgarities too, when you clearly see that his inmost heart is speaking to his Maker, and that it is only the man's defects of education which create his faults, and not any moral or spiritual vices of his heart. The pleader in public must be in earnest; for a sleepy prayer–what can be a worse preparation for a sermon? A sleepy prayer–what can make people more dislike going up to the house of God at all? Cast your whole soul into the exercise. If ever your whole manhood was engaged in anything, let it be in drawing near unto God in public. So pray, that by a divine attraction, you draw the whole congregation with you up to the throne of God. So pray, that by the power of the Holy Spirit resting on you, you express the desires and thoughts of everyone present, and stand as the one voice for the hundreds of beating hearts which are glowing with fervor before the throne of God.

Next to this, our prayers must be appropriate. I do not

say go into every minute detail of the circumstances of the congregation. As I have said before, there is no need to make the public prayer a gazette of the week's events, or a register of the births, deaths, and marriages of your people, but the general movements that have taken place in the congregation should be noted by the minister's careful heart. He should bring the joys and sorrows of his people alike before the throne of grace, and ask that the divine benediction may rest upon his flock in all their movements, their exercises, engagements, and holy enterprises, and that the forgiveness of God may be extended to their shortcomings and innumerable sins.

Then, by way of negative canon, I should say, do not let your prayer be long. I think it was John Macdonald who used to say, "If you are in the spirit of prayer, do not be long, because other people will not be able to keep pace with you in such unusual spirituality; and if you are not in the spirit of prayer, do not be long, because you will then be sure to weary the listeners." Livingstone says of Robert Bruce, of Edinburgh, the famous contemporary of Andrew Melville,

> 'No man in his time spoke with such evidence and power of the Spirit. No man had so many seals of conversion; yea, many of his hearers thought no man, since the apostles, spake with such power. He was very short in prayer when others were present, but every sentence was like a strong bolt shot up to heaven. I have heard him say that he wearied when others were long in prayer; but, being alone, he spent much time in wrestling and prayer.'

A man may, on special occasions, if he be unusually moved and carried out of himself, pray for twenty minutes in the long morning prayer, but this should not often happen. My friend, Dr. Charles Brown, of Edinburgh, lays it down, as a result of his deliberate judgment, that ten minutes is the limit to which public prayer ought to be prolonged. Our Puritanic forefathers used to pray for three-quarters of an hour, or more, but then you must recollect that they did not know that they would ever

have the opportunity of praying again before an assembly, and therefore, took their fill of it; and besides, people were not inclined in those days to quarrel with the length of prayers or of sermons so much as they do nowadays.

You cannot pray too long in private. We do not limit you to ten minutes there, or ten hours, or ten weeks if you like. The more you are on your knees alone the better. We are now speaking of those public prayers which come before or after the sermon, and for these ten minutes is a better limit than fifteen. Only one in a thousand would complain of you for being too short, while scores will murmur at your being wearisome in length. "He prayed me into a good frame of mind," George Whitfield once said of a certain preacher, "and if he had stopped there, it would have been very well; but he prayed me out of it again by keeping on." The abundant long suffering of God has been exemplified in his sparing some preachers, who have been great sinners in this direction; they have done much injury to the piety of God's people by their long-winded orations, and yet God, in his mercy, has permitted them still to officiate in the sanctuary. Alas! for those who have to listen to pastors who pray in public for five-and-twenty minutes, and then ask God to forgive their "shortcomings"!

Do not be too long, for several reasons. First, because you weary yourselves and the people; and secondly, because being too long in prayer, puts your people out of heart for hearing the sermon. All those dry, dull, tedious talkifications in prayer, do but blunt the attention, and the ear gets, as it were, choked up. Nobody would think of blocking up Ear-gate with mud or stones when he meant to storm the gate. No, let the portal be cleared that the battering-ram of the gospel may tell upon it when the time comes to use it. Long prayers either consist of repetitions, or else of unnecessary explanations which God does not require; or else they degenerate into downright preachings, so that there is no difference between the praying and the preaching, except that in the one the minister has his eyes shut, and in the other he keeps them open. It is not necessary in prayer to rehearse the Westminster Assembly's Catechism. It is not necessary in prayer to relate

the experience of all the people who are present, or even your own. It is not necessary in prayer to string a selection of texts of Scripture together, and quote David, and Daniel, and Job, and Paul, and Peter, and every other body, under the title of "thy servant of old." It is necessary in prayer to draw near unto God, but it is not required of you to prolong your speech till everyone is longing to hear the word *'Amen.'*

One little hint I cannot withhold–never appear to be closing, and then start off again for another five minutes. When friends make up their minds that you are about to conclude, they cannot with a jerk proceed again in a devout spirit. I have known men tantalize us with the hope that they were drawing to a close, and then take a fresh lease two or three times; this is most unwise and unpleasant.

Another canon is–*do not use cant phrases.* My brethren, have done with those vile things altogether; they have had their day, and let them die. These pieces of spiritual fustian cannot be too much reprobated. Some of them are pure inventions; others are passages taken from the Apocrypha; others are texts fathered upon Scripture, but which have been fearfully mangled since they came from the Author of the Bible.

In the Baptist Magazine for 1861 I made the following remarks upon the common vulgarities of prayer-meetings. "Cant phrases are a great evil. Who can justify such expressions as the following? 'We would not rush into thy presence as the unthinking (!!) horse into the battle.' As if horses ever did think, and as if it were not better to exhibit the spirit and energy of the horse than the sluggishness and stupidity of the ass! As the verse from which we imagine this fine sentence to be derived has more to do with sinning than with praying, we are glad that the phrase is on its last legs.

Go from heart to heart, as oil from vessel to vessel, is probably a quotation from the nursery romance of 'Ali Baba, and the Forty Thieves,' but as destitute of sense, Scripture, and poetry, as ever sentence could be conceived to be. We are not aware that oil runs from one vessel to another in any very mysterious or wonderful manner; it is true it is rather slow in

coming out, and is therefore an apt symbol of some people's earnestness; but surely it would be better to have the grace direct from heaven than to have it out of another vessel—a Popish idea which the metaphor seems to insinuate, if indeed it has any meaning at all.

Thy poor unworthy dust, an epithet generally applied to themselves by the proudest men in the congregation, and not seldom by the most moneyed and grovelling, in which case the last two words are not so very inappropriate. We have heard of a good man who, in pleading for his children and grandchildren, was so completely beclouded in the blinding influence of this expression, that he exclaimed, 'O Lord, save thy dust, and thy dust's dust, and thy dust's dust's dust.' When Abraham said, 'I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes,' the utterance was forcible and expressive; but in its misquoted, perverted, and abused form, the sooner it is consigned to its own element the better. A miserable conglomeration of perversions of Scripture, uncouth similes, and ridiculous metaphors, constitute a sort of spiritual slang, the offspring of unholy ignorance, unmanly imitation, or graceless hypocrisy; they are at once a dishonor to those who constantly repeat them, and an intolerable nuisance to those whose ears are jaded with them."

Dr. Charles Brown, of Edinburgh, in an admirable address at a meeting of the New College Missionary Association, gives instances of current misquotations indigenous to Scotland, which sometimes, however, find their way across the Tweed. By his permission, I shall quote at length.

> There is what might be called an unhappy, sometimes, quite grotesque, mingling of Scripture texts. Who is not familiar with the following words addressed to God in prayer, 'Thou art the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, *and the praises thereof'!* which is but a jumble of two glorious texts, each glorious taken by itself--both marred, and one altogether lost indeed, when thus combined and mingled. The one is Isaiah 57:15, 'Thus saith the high and lofty One, *that*

inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy.' The other is, Psalm 22:3, 'Thou art holy, O thou that *inhabitest the praises of Israel.'* The inhabiting of the praises of *eternity*, to say the least, is meager; there were no praises in the past eternity to inhabit. But what a glory is there in God's condescending to inhabit, take up his very abode, in the praises of Israel, of the ransomed church.

Then there is an example nothing less than grotesque under this head, and yet one in such frequent use that I suspect it is very generally regarded as having the sanction or Scripture. Here it is, 'We would put our hand on our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, and cry out, Unclean, unclean; God be merciful to us sinners.' This is no fewer than four texts joined, each beautiful by itself. First, Job 11:4, 'Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.' Second, Lamentations 3:29, 'He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.' Third, Leviticus 13:45, where the leper is directed to put a covering upon his upper lip, and to cry, Unclean, unclean. And fourth, the publican's prayer. But how incongruous a man's first putting his hand on his mouth, then putting his mouth in the dust, and, last of all, crying out, etc.!

The only other example I give is an expression nearly universal among us, and, I suspect, almost universally thought to be in Scripture, 'In thy favor is life, and thy lovingkindness is better than life.' The fact is, that this also is just an unhappy combination of two passages, in which, the term life is used in altogether different, and even incompatible senses, namely, Psalm 63:3, 'Thy lovingkindness is better than life,' where, evidently, life means the present temporal life.

A second class may be described as unhappy alterations of Scripture language. Need I say that the 130th Psalm, 'Out of the depths,' etc., is one of the most precious in the whole book of the Psalms? Why must we have the words of David and of the Holy Ghost

thus given in public prayer, and so constantly that our pious people come all to adopt it into their social and family prayers, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared, and plenteous redemption that thou mayest be sought after,' or 'unto'? How precious the simple words as they stand in the Psalm (verse 4), 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared' (verses 7, 8); 'With the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption; and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities!' Again, in this blessed Psalm, the words of the third verse, 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' too seldom are left us in their naked simplicity, but must undergo the following change, 'If thou wert strict to mark iniquity,' etc. I remember in my old college days, We used to have it in a much more offensive shape, 'If thou wert strict to mark and *rigorous to punish!*'

Another favorite change is the following, 'Thou art in heaven, and we upon earth; therefore let our words be few *and well ordered*.' Solomon's simple and sublime utterance (full of instruction, surely, on the whole theme I am dealing with) is, 'God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.' Eccles. 5:2. For another example under this class see how Habakkuk's sublime words are tortured, 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on sin *without abhorrence*.' The words of the Holy Ghost are (Hab. 1:13), 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.' Need I say that the power of the figure, 'canst not look on iniquity' is nearly lost when you add that God can look on it, only not without abhorrence?

A third class is made up of meaningless pleonasms, vulgar, common-place redundancies of expression, in quoting from the Scriptures. One of these has become so universal, that I venture to say you seldom miss it, when the passage referred to comes up at all. 'Be

in the midst of us' (or, as some prefer to express it, somewhat unfortunately, as I think, 'in our midst'), 'to bless us, *and to do us good*.' What additional idea is there in the last expression, 'and to do us good'? The passage referred to is Exodus 20:24, 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto you, and I will bless you.' Such is the simplicity of Scripture. Our addition is, 'Bless us, and do us good.' In Daniel 4:35, we read the noble words, 'None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?' The favorite change is, 'None can stay thy hand *from working*.' 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him!' This is changed, 'Neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things.'

Constantly we hear God addressed as 'the hearer and answerer of prayer,' a mere vulgar and useless pleonasm, for the Scripture idea of God's hearing prayer is just his answering it—'O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come;' "Hear my prayer O Lord;' I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.'

Whence, again, that common-place of public prayer, 'Thy consolations are neither few nor small'? The reference, I suppose, is to those words of Job, 'Are the consolations of God small with thee?' So one scarce ever hears that prayer of the seventy-fourth Psalm, 'Have respect to the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty,' without the addition, '*horrid* cruelty;' nor the call to prayer in Isaiah, 'Keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth,' without the addition, 'the *whole earth;'* nor that appeal of the Psalmist, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee,' without the addition, 'none in *all* the earth.'

These last may seem small matters, indeed. And so they are, nor were worth finding fault with, did they

> occur but occasionally. But viewed as stereotyped common-places, weak enough in themselves, and occurring so often as to give an impression of their having Scripture authority. I humbly think they ought to be discountenanced and discarded--banished wholly from our Presbyterian worship. It will, perhaps surprise you to learn that the only Scripture authority for that favorite, and somewhat peculiar expression, about the 'wicked rolling sin as a sweet morsel under their tongue,' is the following words in the book of Job (20:12), 'Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue.'

But enough of this. I am only sorry to have felt bound in conscience to be so long upon so unhappy a subject. I cannot, however, leave the point without urging upon you literal accuracy in all quotations from the word of God.

It ought to be a point of honor among ministers always to quote Scripture correctly. It is difficult to be always correct, and because it is difficult, it should be all the more the object of our care. In the halls of Oxford or Cambridge it would be considered almost treason or felony for a fellow to misquote Tacitus, or Virgil, or Homer; but for a preacher to misquote Paul, or Moses, or David, is a far more serious matter, and quite as worthy of the severest censure. Mark, I said a "fellow," not a freshman, and from a pastor we expect, at least, equal accuracy in his own department as from the holder of a fellowship. You who so unwaveringly believe in the verbal inspiration theory (to my intense satisfaction), ought never to quote at all until you can give the precise words, because, according to your own showing, by the alteration of a single word you may miss altogether God's sense of the passage. If you cannot make extracts from Scripture correctly, why quote it at all in your petitions? Make use of an expression fresh from your own mind, and it will be quite as acceptable to God as a scriptural phrase defaced or clipped. Vehemently strive against garblings and perversions of Scripture, and renounce for ever all cant phrases, for they are the disfigurement of free

prayer.

I have noticed a habit among some–I hope you have not fallen into it–of praying with their eyes open. It is unnatural, unbecoming, and disgusting. Occasionally the opened eye uplifted to heaven may be suitable and impressive, but to be gazing about while professing to address the unseen God is detestable. In the earliest ages of the church the fathers denounced this unseemly practice. Action in prayer should be very little used, if at all. It is scarcely comely to lift and move the arm, as if in preaching; the outstretched arms however, or the clasped hands, are natural and suggestive when under strong holy excitement. The voice should accord with the matter, and should never be boisterous, or self-asserting: humble and reverent let those tones be in which man talketh with his God. Doth not even nature itself teach you this? If grace does not I despair.

With special regard to your prayers in the Sabbath services, a few sentences may be useful. In order to prevent custom and routine from being enthroned among us, it will be well to vary the order of service as much as possible. Whatever the free Spirit moves us to do, that let us do at once. I was not till lately aware of the extent to which the control of deacons has been allowed to intrude itself upon ministers in certain benighted churches. I have always been accustomed to conduct religious services in the way I have thought most suitable and edifying, and I never have heard so much as a word of objection, although I trust I can say I live on the dearest intimacy with my officers; but a brother minister told me this morning, that on one occasion, he prayed in the morning service at the commencement instead of giving out a hymn, and when he retired into the vestry, after service, the deacons informed him that they would have no innovations.

We hitherto understood that Baptist churches are not under bondage to traditions and fixed rules as to modes of worship, and yet these poor creatures, these would-be lords, who cry out loudly enough against a liturgy, would bind their minister with rubrics made by custom. It is time that such nonsense were forever silenced. We claim to conduct service

as the Holy Spirit moves us, and as we judge best. We will not be bound to sing here and pray there, but will vary the order of service to prevent monotony. Mr. Hinton, I have heard, once preached the sermon at the commencement of the service, so that those who came late might at any rate have an opportunity to pray. And why not? Irregularities would do good, monotony works weariness. It will frequently be a most profitable thing to let the people sit quite still in profound silence for two or five minutes. Solemn silence makes noble worship.

> True prayer is not the noisy sound
> That clamorous lips repeat,
> But the deep silence of a soul
> That clasps Jehovah's feet.

Vary the order of your prayers, then, for the sake of maintaining attention, and preventing people going through the whole thing as a clock runs on till the weights are down.

Vary the length, of your public prayers. Do you not think it would be much better if sometimes instead of giving three minutes to the first prayer and fifteen minutes to the second, you gave nine minutes to each? Would it not be better sometimes to be longer in the first, and not so long in the second prayer? Would not two prayers of tolerable length he better than one extremely long and one extremely short? Would it not be as well to have a hymn after reading the chapter, or a verse or two before the prayer? Why not sing four times, occasionally? Why not be content with two hymns, or only one, occasionally? Why sing after sermon? Why, on the other hand, do some never sing at the close of the service? Is a prayer after sermon always, or even often, advisable? Is it not sometimes most impressive? Would not the Holy Spirit's guidance secure us a variety at present unknown? Let us have anything so that our people do not come to regard any form of service as being appointed, and so relapse into the superstition from which they have escaped.

Vary the current of your prayers in intercession. There are many topics which require your attention; the church in

its weakness, its backslidings, its sorrows, and its comforts; the outside world, the neighborhood, unconverted hearers, the young people, the nation. Do not pray for all these every time, or otherwise your prayers will be long and probably uninteresting. Whatever topic shall come uppermost to your heart, let that be uppermost in your supplications, There is a way of taking a line of prayer, if the Ho]y Spirit shall guide you therein, which will make the service all of a piece, and harmonize with the hymns and discourse. It is very useful to maintain unity in the service where you can; not slavishly, but wisely, so that the effect is one. Certain brethren do not even manage to keep unity in the sermon, but wander from Britain to Japan, and bring in all imaginable subjects; but you who have attained to the preservation of unity in the sermon might go a little farther, and exhibit a degree of unity in the service, being careful in both the hymn, and the prayer, and the chapter, to keep the same subject prominent. Hardly commendable is the practice, common with some preachers, of rehearsing the sermon in the last prayer. It may be instructive to the audience, but that is an object altogether foreign to prayer. It is stilted, scholastic, and unsuitable; do not imitate the practice.

As you would avoid a viper, *keep from all attempts to work up spurious fervor in public devoution*. Do not labor to seem earnest. Pray as your heart dictates, under the leading of the Spirit of God, and if you are dull and heavy tell the Lord so. It will be no ill thing to confess your deadness, and bewail it, and cry for quickening; it will be real and acceptable prayer; but simulated ardor is a shameful form of lying. Never imitate those who are earnest. You know a good man who groans, and another whose voice grows shrill when he is
carried away with zeal, but do not therefore moan or squeak in order to appear as zealous as they are. Just be natural the whole way through, and ask of God to be guided in it all.

Lastly–this is a word I utter in confidence to yourselves –*prepare your prayer*. You say with astonishment, "Whatever can you mean by that?" Well, I mean what some do not mean. The question was once discussed in a society of ministers, "Was it right for the minister to prepare his prayer beforehand?

It was earnestly asserted by Borne that it was wrong; and very properly so. It was with equal earnestness maintained by others that it was right; and they were not to be gainsayed. I believe both parties to have been right. The first brethren understood by preparing the prayer, the studying of expressions, and the putting together of a train of thought, which they all said was altogether opposed to spiritual worship, in which we ought to leave ourselves in the hand of God's Spirit to be taught of him both as to matter and words. In these remarks we altogether agree; for if a man writes his prayers and studies his petitions, let him use a liturgy at once. But the brethren in opposition, meant by preparation quite another thing, not the preparation of the head, but of the heart, which consists in the solemn consideration beforehand of the importance of prayer, meditation upon the needs of men's souls, and a remembrance of the promises which we are to plead; and thus coming before the Lord with a petition written upon the fleshy tables of the heart. This is surely better than coming to God at random, rushing before the throne at haphazard, without a definite errand or desire. "I never am tired of praying," said one man, "because I always have a definite errand when I pray."

Brethren, are your prayers of this sort? Do you strive to be in a fit frame to lead the supplications of your people? Do you order your cause in coming before the Lord? I feel, my brethren, that we ought to prepare ourselves by private prayer for public praying. By living near to God we ought to maintain prayerfulness of spirit, and then we shall not fail in our vocal pleadings.

If anything beyond this is to be tolerated, it would be the commitment to memory of the Psalms and parts of Scripture containing promises, supplications, praises, and confessions, such as may be helpful in the act of prayer. It is said of Chrysostom, that he had learned his Bible by heart, so as to be able to repeat it at his pleasure: no wonder that he was called golden-mouthed. Now, in our converse with God, no speech can be more appropriate than the words of the Holy Ghost—"Do as thou hast said," will always prevail with the Most High. We counsel, therefore, the committing to memory

of the inspired devoutional exercises of the word of truth, and then your continued reading of the Scriptures will keep you always furnished with fresh supplications, which will be as ointment poured forth, filling the whole house of God with its fragrance, when you present your petitions in public before the Lord. Seeds of prayer thus sown in the memory will yield a constant golden harvest, as the Spirit shall warm your soul with hallowed fire in the hour of congregational prayer. As David used the sword of Goliath for after victories, so may we at times employ a petition already answered, and find ourselves able to say with the son of Jesse, "There is none like unto it," as God shall yet again fulfill it in our experience.

Let your prayers be earnest, full of fire, vehemence, prevalence. I pray the Holy Ghost to instruct every student of this College so to offer public prayer, that God shall always be served of his best. Let your petitions be plain and heart-felt; and while your people may sometimes feel that the sermon was below the mark, may they also feel that the prayer compensated for all. Much more might be said, perhaps should be said, but time and strength both fail us, and so we draw to a close.

5

SERMONS – THEIR MATTER

Sermons should have real teaching in them, and their doctrine should be solid, substantial, and abundant. We do not enter the pulpit to talk for talk's sake; we have instructions to convey important to the last degree, and we cannot afford to utter pretty nothings. Our range of subjects is all but boundless, and we cannot, therefore, be excused if our discourses are threadbare and devoid of substance. If we speak as ambassadors for God, we need never complain of want of matter, for our message is full to overflowing. The entire gospel must be presented from the pulpit; the whole faith once delivered to the saints must be proclaimed by us. The truth as it is in Jesus must be instructively declared, so that the people may not merely hear, but know, the joyful sound. We serve not at the altar of "the unknown God," but we speak to the worshippers of him of whom it is written, "they that know thy name will put their trust in thee."

To divide a sermon well may be a very useful art, but how if there is nothing to divide? A mere division maker is like an excellent carver with an empty dish before him. To be able to deliver an exordium which shall be appropriate and attractive, to be at ease in speaking with propriety during the time allotted for the discourse, and to wind up with a respectable peroration, may appear to mere religious performers to be all that is requisite; but the true minister of Christ knows that the true value of a sermon must lie, not in its fashion and manner, but in the truth which it contains. Nothing can compensate for the absence of teaching; all the rhetoric in the world is but as chaff to the wheat in contrast to the gospel of our salvation. However beautiful the sower's basket it is a miserable mockery if it be without seed. The

grandest discourse ever delivered is an ostentatious failure if the doctrine of the grace of God be absent from it; it sweeps over men's heads like a cloud, but it distributes no rain upon the thirsty earth; and therefore the remembrance of it to souls taught wisdom by an experience of pressing need is one of disappointment, or worse. A man's style may be as fascinating as that of the authoress of whom one said, "that she should write with a crystal pen dipped in dew upon silver paper, and use for pounce the dust of a butterfly's wing"; but to an audience whose souls are in instant jeopardy, what will mere elegance be but "altogether lighter than vanity"?

Horses are not to be judged by their bells or their trappings, but by limb and bone and blood; and sermons, when criticized by judicious hearers, are largely measured by the amount of gospel truth and force of gospel spirit which they contain. Brethren, weigh your sermons. Do not retail them by the yard, but deal them out by the pound. Set no store by the quantity of words which you utter, but strive to be esteemed for the quality of your matter. It is foolish to be lavish in words and meager in truth. He must be very destitute of wit who would be pleased to hear himself described after the manner of the world's great poet, who says, "Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice: his reasons are as two grains of wheat hidden in two bushels of chaff; you shall seek all day ere you find them; and when you have them they are not worth the search."

Rousing appeals to the affections are excellent, but if they are not backed up by instruction they are a mere flash in the pan, powder consumed and no shot sent home. Rest assured that the most fervid revivalism will wear itself out in mere smoke, if it be not maintained by the fuel of teaching. The divine method is to put the law in the mind, and then write it on the heart; the judgment is enlightened, and then the passions subdued. Read Hebrews 8:10, and follow the model of the covenant of grace. Gouge's note on that place may with fitness be quoted here:

"Ministers are herein to imitate God, and, to their

> best endeavor, to instruct people in the mysteries of godliness, and to teach them what to believe and practice, and then to stir them up in act and deed, to do what they are instructed to do. Their labor otherwise is like to be in vain. Neglect of this course is a main cause that men fall into many errors as they do in these days."

I may add that this last remark has gained more force in our times; it is among uninstructed flocks that the wolves of popery make havoc; sound teaching is the best protection from the heresies which ravage right and left among us.

Sound information upon scriptural subjects your hearers crave for, and must have. Accurate explanations of Holy Scripture they are entitled to, and if you are "an interpreter, one of a thousand," a real messenger of heaven, you will yield them plenteously. Whatever else may be present, the absence of edifying, instructive truth, like the absence of flour from bread, will be fatal. Estimated by their solid contents rather than their superficial area, many sermons are very poor specimens of godly discourse. I believe the remark is too well grounded that if you attend to a lecturer on astronomy or geology, during a short course you will obtain a tolerably clear view of his system; but if you listen, not only for twelve months, but for twelve years, to the common run of preachers, you will not arrive at anything like an idea of their system of theology. If it be so, it is a grievous fault, which cannot be too much deplored.

Alas! the indistinct utterances of many concerning the grandest of eternal realities, and the dimness of thought in others with regard to fundamental truths, have given too much occasion for the criticism! Brethren, if you are not theologians you are in your pastorates just nothing at all. You may be fine rhetoricians, and be rich in polished sentences; but without knowledge of the gospel, and aptness to teach it, you are but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Verbiage is too often the fig-leaf which does duty as a covering for theological ignorance. Sounding periods are offered instead of

sound doctrine, and rhetorical flourishes in the place of robust thought. Such things ought not to be. The abounding of empty declamation, and the absence of food for the soul, will turn a pulpit into a box of bombast, and inspire contempt instead of reverence. Unless we are instructive preachers, and really feed the people, we may be great quoters of elegant poetry, and mighty retailers of second-hand windbags, but we shall be like Nero of old, fiddling while Rome was burning, and sending vessels to Alexandria to fetch sand for the arena while the populace starved for want of corn.

We insist upon it, that there must be abundance of matter in sermons, and next, that this matter must be congruous to the text. The discourse should spring out of the text as a rule, and the more evidently it does so the better; but at all times, to say the least, it should have a very close relationship thereto. In the matter of spiritualising and accommodation very large latitude is to be allowed; but liberty must not degenerate into license, and there must always be a connection, and something more than a remote connection–a real relationship between the sermon and its text.

I heard the other day of a remarkable text, which was appropriate or inappropriate, as you may think. A squire of a parish had given away a number of flaming scarlet cloaks to the oldest matrons of the parish. These resplendent beings were required to attend the parish church on the following Sunday, and to sit in front of the pulpit, from which one of the avowed successors of the apostles edified the saints from the words, "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." It is reported that on a subsequent occasion, when the same benefactor of the parish had given a bushel of potatoes to every man who had a family, the topic on the following Sunday was, "And they said, It is manna." I cannot tell whether the matter in that case was congruous to the selection of the text; I suppose it may have been, for the probabilities are that the whole performance was foolish throughout.

Some brethren have done with their text as soon as they have read it. Having paid all due honor to that particular passage by announcing it, they feel no necessity further to refer

to it. They touch their hats, as it were, to that part of Scripture, and pass on to fresh fields and pastures new. Why do such men take a text at all? Why limit their own glorious liberty? Why make Scripture a horsing-block by which to mount upon their unbridled Pegasus? Surely the words of inspiration were never meant to be boothooks to help a Talkative to draw on his seven-leagued boots in which to leap from pole to pole.

The surest way to maintain variety is to keep to the mind of the Holy Spirit in the particular passage under consideration. No two texts are exactly similar; something in the connection or drift of the passage gives to each apparently identical text a shade of difference. Keep to the Spirit's track and you will never repeat yourself or be short of matter: his paths drop fatness. A sermon, moreover, comes with far greater power to the consciences of the hearers when it is plainly the very word of God–not a lecture about the Scripture, but Scripture itself opened up and enforced. It is due to the majesty of inspiration that when you profess to be preaching from a verse you do not thrust it out of sight to make room for your own thinkings.

Brethren, if you are in the habit of keeping to the precise sense of the Scripture before you, I will further recommend you to hold to the *ipsissima verba*, the very words of the Holy Ghost; for, although in many cases topical sermons are not only allowable, but very proper, those sermons which expound the exact words of the Holy Spirit are the most useful and the most agreeable to the major part of our congregations. They love to have the words themselves explained and expounded. The many are not always sufficiently capable of grasping the sense apart from the language–of gazing, so to speak, upon the truth disembodied; but when they hear the precise words reiterated again and again, and each expression dwelt upon after the manner of such preachers as Mr. Jay, of Bath, they are more edified, and the truth fixes itself more firmly upon their memories. Let your matter, then, be copious, and let it grow out of the inspired word, as violets and primroses spring up naturally from the sod, or as the virgin honey drops from the comb.

Take care that your deliverances are always weighty, and full of really important teaching. Build not with wood, hay, and stubble, but with gold, silver, and precious stones. It is scarcely needful to warn you against the grosser degradations of pulpit eloquence, or the example of the notorious orator Henley might be instanced. That loquacious adventurer, whom Pope has immortalized in his "Dunciad," was wont to make the passing events of the week the themes of his buffoonery on week days, and theological topics suffered the same fate on Sundays. His forte lay in his low wit and in tuning his voice and balancing his hands. The satirist says of him, "How fluent nonsense trickles from his tongue." Gentlemen, it were better never to have been born, than to have the like truthfully said of us; we are on peril of our souls bound to deal with the solemnities of eternity and with no earth-born topics.

There are, however, other and more inviting methods of wood and hay-building, and it behoves you not to be duped by them. This remark is necessary, especially to those gentlemen who mistake high flying sentences for eloquence, and latinized utterances for great depth of thought. Certain homiletical instructors, by their example, if not by their precepts, encourage pretentious blustering speech and great swelling words, and, therefore, are most perilous to young preachers.

Think of a discourse commencing with such an amazing and stupendous assertion as the following, which by its native grandeur will strike you at once with a sense of the sublime and beautiful: "MAN IS MORAL." This genius might have added, "A cat has four feet." There would have been as much novelty in the one information as the other. I remember a sermon by a would-be profound writer which quite stunned the reader with grenadier words of six-feet length, but which, when properly boiled down, came to as much essence of meat as this–Man has a soul, his soul will live in another world, and therefore he should take care that it occupies a happy place. No one can object to the teaching, but it is not so novel as to need a blast of trumpets and a procession of gaudy phrases to introduce it to public attention. The art of saying commonplace

things elegantly, pompously, grandiloquently, bombastically, is not lost among us, although its utter extinction were "a consummation devoutly to be wished."

Sermons of this sort have been held up as models, and yet they are mere bits of bladder which would lie on your finger-nail, blown out until they remind you of those colored balloons which itinerant dealers carry about the streets to sell at a halfpenny a-piece for the delectation of the extremely juvenile; the parallel, I am sorry to say, holding good a little further, for in some cases these discourses contain just a tinge of poison by way of coloring, which some of the weaker sort have found out to their cost.

It is infamous to ascend your pulpit and pour over your people rivers of language, cataracts of words, in which mere platitudes are held in solution like infinitesimal grains of homoeopathic medicine in an Atlantic of utterance. Better far give the people masses of unprepared truth in the rongh, like pieces of meat from a butcher's block, chopped of anyhow, bone and all, and even dropped down in the sawdust, than ostentatiously and delicately hand them out upon a china dish a delicious slice of nothing at all, decorated with the parsley of poetry, and flavored with the sauce of affectation.

It will be a happy circumstance if you are so guided by the Holy Spirit as to give a clear testimony to all the doctrines which constitute or lie around the gospel. No truth is to be kept back. The doctrine of reserve, so detestable in the mouths of Jesuits, is not one whit the less villainous when accepted by Protestants. It is not true that some doctrines are only for the initiated; there is nothing in the Bible which is ashamed of the light. The sublimest views of divine sovereignty have a practical bearing, and are not, as some think, mere metaphysical subtleties; the distinctive utterances of Calvinism have their bearing upon every-day life and ordinary experience, and if you hold such views, or the opposite, you have no dispensation permitting you to conceal your beliefs. Cautious reticence is, in nine cases out of ten, cowardly betrayal. The best policy is never to be politic, but to proclaim every atom of the truth so far as God has taught it to you.

Harmony requires that the voice of one doctrine shall not drown the rest, and it also demands that the gentler notes shall not be omitted because of the greater volume of other sounds. Every note appointed by the great minstrel must be sounded; each note having its own proportionate power and emphasis, the passage marked with *forte* must not be softened, and those with *piano* must not be rolled out like thunder, but each must have its due hearing. All revealed truth in harmonious proportion must be your theme.

Brethren, if you resolve in your pulpit utterances to deal with important verities, *you must not forever hover around the mere angles of truth*. Those doctrines which are not vital to the soul's salvation, nor even essential to practical Christianity, are not to be considered upon every occasion of worship. Bring in all the features of truth in due proportion, for every part of Scripture is profitable, and you are not only to preach the truth, but the whole truth. Do not insist perpetually upon one truth alone. A nose is an important feature in the human countenance, but to paint a man's nose alone is not a satisfactory method of taking his likeness: a doctrine may be very important, but an exaggerated estimate of it may be fatal to a harmonious and complete ministry.

Do not make minor doctrines main points. Do not paint the details of the background of the gospel picture with the same heavy brush as the great objects in the foreground of it. For instance, the great problems of sublapsarianism and supralapsarianism, the trenchant debates concerning eternal filiation, the earnest dispute concerning the double procession, and the pre or post millenarian schemes, however important some may deem them, are practically of very little concern to that godly widow woman, with seven children to support by her needle, who wants far more to hear of the loving-kindness of the God of providence than of these mysteries profound; if you preach to her on the faithfulness of God to his people, she will be cheered and helped in the battle of life; but difficult questions will perplex her or send her to sleep. She is, however, the type of hundreds of those who most require your care. Our great master theme is the good news from heaven;

the tidings of mercy through the atoning death of Jesus, mercy to the chief of sinners upon their believing in Jesus.

We must throw all our strength of judgment, memory, imagination, and eloquence into the delivery of the gospel; and not give to the preaching of the cross our random thoughts while wayside topics engross our deeper meditations. Depend upon it, if we brought the intellect of a Locke or a Newton, and the eloquence of a Cicero, to bear upon the simple doctrine of "believe and live," we should find no surplus strength. Brethren, first and above all things, keep to plain evangelical doctrines; whatever else you do or do not preach, be sure incessantly to bring forth the soul-saving truth of Christ and him crucified.

I know a minister whose shoe-latchet I am unworthy to unloose, whose preaching is often little better than sacred miniature painting–I might almost say holy trifling. He is great upon the ten toes of the beast, the four faces of the cherubim, the mystical meaning of badgers' skins, and the typical bearings of the staves of the ark, and the windows of Solomon's temple: but the sins of business men, the temptations of the times, and the needs of the age, he scarcely ever touches upon. Such preaching reminds me of a lion engaged in mouse-hunting, or a man-of-war cruising after a lost water-butt. Topics scarcely in importance equal to what Peter calls "old wives' fables," are made great matters of by those microscopic divines to whom the nicety of a point is more attractive than the saving of souls.

You will have read in Todd's "Student,'s Manual" that Harcatius, king of Persia, was a notable mole-catcher; and Briantes, king of Lydia, was equally familiar at filing needles; but these trivialities by no means prove them to have been great kings: it is much the same in the ministry, there is such a thing as meanness of mental occupation unbecoming the rank of an ambassador of heaven.

Among a certain order of minds at this time the Athenian desire of telling or hearing some new thing appears to be predominant. They boast of new light, and claim a species of inspiration which warrants them in condemning all who

are out of their brotherhood, and yet their grand revelation relates to a mere circumstantial of worship, or to an obscure interpretation of prophecy; so that, at sight of their great fuss and loud cry concerning so little, we are reminded of

> Ocean into tempest toss'd
> To waft a feather or to drown a fly.

Worse still are those who waste time in insinuating doubts concerning the authenticity of texts, or the correctness of Biblical statements concerning natural phenomena. Painfully do I call to mind hearing one Sabbath evening a deliverance called a sermon, of which the theme was a clever enquiry as to whether an angel did actually descend, and stir the pool at Bethesda, or whether it was an intermitting spring, concerning which Jewish superstition had invented a legend. Dying men and women were assembled to hear the way of salvation, and they were put off with such vanity as this! They came for bread, and received a stone; the sheep looked up to the shepherd, and were not fed. Seldom do I hear a sermon, and when I do I am grievously unfortunate, for one of the last I was entertained with was intended to be a justification of Joshua for destroying the Canaanites, and another went to prove that it was not good for man to be alone. How many souls were converted in answer to the prayers before these sermons I have never been able to ascertain, but I shrewdly suspect that no unusual rejoicing disturbed the serenity of the golden streets.

Believing my next remark to be almost universally unneeded, I bring it forward with diffidence–*do not overload a sermon with too much matter.* All truth is not to be comprised in one discourse. Sermons are not to be bodies of divinity. There is such a thing as having too much to say, and saying it till hearers are sent home loathing rather than longing. An old minister walking with a young preacher, pointed to a cornfield, and observed, "Your last sermon had too much in it, and it was not clear enough, or sufficiently well-arranged; it was like that field of wheat, it contained much crude food, but none fit for

use. You should make your sermons like a loaf of bread, fit for eating, and in convenient form."

It is to be feared that human heads (speaking phrenologically) are not so capacious for theology as they once were, for our forefathers rejoiced in sixteen ounces of divinity, undiluted and unadorned, and could continue receiving it for three or four hours at a stretch, but our more degenerate, or perhaps more busy, generation requires about an ounce of doctrine at a time, and that must be the concentrated extract or essential oil, rather than the entire substance of divinity. We must in these times say a great deal in a few words, but not too much, nor with too much amplification. One thought fixed on the mind will be better than fifty thoughts made to flit across the ear. One tenpenny nail driven home and clenched will be more useful than a score of tin-tacks loosely fixed, to be pulled out again in an hour.

Our matter should be well arranged according to the true rules of mental architecture. Not practical inferences at the basis and doctrines as the topstones; not metaphors in the foundations, and propositions at the summit; not the more important truths first and the minor teachings last, after the manner of an anticlimax; but the thought must climb and ascend; one stair of teaching leading to another; one door of reasoning conducting to another, and the whole elevating the hearer to a chamber from whose windows truth is seen gleaming in the light of God. In preaching, have a place for everything, and everything in its place. Never suffer truths to fall from you pell-mell. Do not let your thoughts rush as a mob, but make them march as a troop of soldiery. Order, which is heaven's first law, must not be neglected by heaven's ambassadors.

Your doctrinal teaching should be clear and unmistakable. To be so it must first of all be clear to yourself. Some men think in smoke and preach in a cloud. Your people do not want a luminous haze, but the solid *terra firma* of truth. Philosophical speculations put certain minds into a semi-intoxicated condition, in which they either see everything double, or see nothing at all. The head of a certain college in

Oxford was years ago asked by a stranger what was the motto of the arms of that university. He told him that it was *"Dominus illuminatio mea."* But he also candidly informed the stranger that, in his private opinion, a motto more appropriate might be, *Aristoteles meae tenegrae*.

Sensational writers have half crazed many honest men who have conscientiously read their literary efforts out of a notion that they ought to be abreast of the age, as if such a necessity might not also require us to attend the theatres in order to be able to judge the new plays, or frequent the turf that we might not be too bigoted in our opinions upon racing and gambling. For my part, I believe that the chief readers of heterodox books are ministers, and that if they would not notice them they would fall still-born from the press. Let a minister keep clear of mystifying himself, and then he is on the road to becoming intelligible to his people. No man can hope to be felt who cannot make himself understood. If we give our people refined truth, pure Scriptural doctrine, and all so worded as to have no needless obscurity about it, we shall be true shepherds of the sheep, and the profiting of our people will soon be apparent.

Endeavor to keep the matter of your sermonizing as fresh as you can. Do not rehearse five or six doctrines with unvarying monotony of repetition. Buy a theological barrel-organ, brethren with five tunes accurately adjusted, and you will be qualified to practice as an ultra Calvinistic preacher at Zoar and Jireh if you also purchase at some vinegar factory a good supply of bitter, acrid abuse of Arminians, and duty-faith men. Brains and grace are optional, but the organ and the wormwood are indispensable. It is ours to perceive and rejoice in a wider range of truth. All that these good men hold of grace and sovereignty we maintain as firmly and boldly as they; but we dare not shut our eyes to other teachings of the word, and we feel bound to make full proof of our ministry, by declaring the whole counsel of God. With abundant themes diligently illustrated by fresh metaphors and experiences, we shall not weary, but, under God's hand, shall win our hearers' ears and hearts.

Let your teachings grow and advance; let them deepen with your experience, and rise with your soul-progress. I do not mean preach new truths; for, on the contrary, I hold that man happy who is so well taught from the first that, after fifty years of ministry, he has never had to recant a doctrine or to mourn an important omission; but I mean, let our depth and insight continually increase, and where there is spiritual advance it will be so. Timothy could not preach like Paul. Our earlier productions must be surpassed by those of our riper years; we must never make these our models; they will be best burned, or only preserved to be mourned over because of their superficial character. It were ill, indeed, if we knew no more after being many years in Christ's school; our progress may be slow, but progress there must be, or there will be cause to suspect that the inner life is lacking or sadly unhealthy. Set it before you as most certain that you have not yet attained, and may grace be given you to press forward towards that which is yet beyond. May you all become able ministers of the New Testament, and not a whit behind the very chief of preachers, though in yourselves you will still be nothing.

The word "sermon" is said to signify a thrust, and, therefore, in sermonizing it must be our aim to *use the subject in hand with energy and effect, and the subject must be capable of such employment.* To choose mere moral themes will be to use a wooden dagger; but the great truths of revelation are as sharp swords. Keep to doctrines which stir the conscience and the heart. Remain unwaveringly the champions of a soul-winning gospel. God's truth is adapted to man, and God's grace adapts man to it. There is a key which, under God, can wind up the musical box of man's nature; get it, and use it daily. Hence I urge you to keep to the old-fashioned gospel, and to that only, for assuredly it is the power of God unto salvation.

Of all I would wish to say this is the sum; my brethren, preach CHRIST, always and evermore. He is the whole gospel. His person, offices, and work must be our one great, all-comprehending theme. The world needs still to be told of its Savior, and of the way to reach him. Justification by

faith should be far more than it is the daily testimony of Protestant pulpits; and if with this master-truth there should be more generally associated the other great doctrines of grace, the better for our churches and our age. If with the zeal of Methodists we can preach the doctrine of Puritans a great future is before us. The fire of Wesley, and the fuel of Whitfield, will cause a burning which shall set the forests of error on fire, and warm the very soul of this cold earth. We are not called to proclaim philosophy and metaphysics, but the simple gospel. Man's fall, his need of a new birth, forgiveness through an atonement, and salvation as the result of faith, these are our battle-axe and weapons of war. We have enough to do to learn and teach these great truths, and accursed be that learning which shall divert us from our mission, or that wilful ignorance which shall cripple us in its pursuit.

More and more am I jealous lest any views upon prophecy, church government, politics, or even systematic theology, should withdraw one of us from glorying in the cross of Christ. Salvation is a theme for which I would fain enlist every holy tongue. I am greedy after witnesses for the glorious gospel of the blessed God. O that Christ crucified were the universal burden of men of God. Your guess at the number of the beast, your Napoleonic speculations, your conjectures concerning a personal Antichrist –forgive me, I count them but mere bones for dogs; while men are dying, and hell is filling, it seems to me the veriest drivel to be muttering about an Armageddon at Sebastopol or Sadowa or Sedan, and peeping between the folded leaves of destiny to discover the fate of Germany. Blessed are they who read and hear the words of the prophecy of the Revelation, but the like blessing has evidently not fallen on those who pretend to expound it, for generation after generation of them have been proved to be in error by the mere lapse of time, and the present race will follow to the same inglorious sepulchre.

I would sooner pluck one single brand from the burning than explain all mysteries. To win a soul from going down into the pit is a more glorious achievement than to be crowned in the arena of theological controversy as *Doctor Sufficientissimus;*

to have faithfully unveiled the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ will be in the final judgment accounted worthier service than to have solved the problems of the religious Sphinx, or to have cut the Gordian knot of apocalyptic difficulty. Blessed is that ministry of which CHRIST IS ALL.

6

ON SPIRITUALIZING

Many writers upon Homiletics condemn in unmeasured terms even the occasional spiritualizing of a text. "Select texts," say they, "which give a plain, literal sense; never travel beyond the obvious meaning of the passage; never allow yourself to accommodate or adapt; it is an artifice of men of artificial culture, a trick of mountebanks, a miserable display of bad taste and impudence." Honor to whom honor is due, but I humbly beg leave to dissent from this learned opinion, believing it to be more fastidious than correct, more plausible than true. A great deal of real good may be done by occasionally taking forgotten, quaint remarkable, out-of-the-way texts; and I feel persuaded that if we appeal to a jury of practical, successful preachers, who are not theorizers, but men actually in the field, we shall have a majority in our favor. It may be that the learned rabbis of this generation are too sublime and celestial to condescend to men of low estate; but we who have no high culture, or profound learning, or enchanting eloquence to boast of, have deemed it wise to use the very method which the grandees have proscribed; for we find it one of the best ways of keeping out of the rut of dull formality, and it yields us a sort of salt with which to give flavor to unpalatable truth. Many great soul-winners have felt it meet to give a fillip to their ministry, and to arrest their people's attention by now and then striking out a path which had not been trodden heretofore. Experience has not taught them that they were in error, but the reverse.

Within limit, my brethren, be not afraid to spiritualize, or to take singular texts. Continue to look out passages

of Scripture, and not only give their plain meaning, as you are bound to do, but also draw from them meanings which may not lie upon their surface. Take the advice for what it is worth, but I seriously recommend you to show the superfine critics that everybody does not worship the golden image which they have set up. I counsel you to employ spiritualizing within certain limits and boundaries, but I pray you do not, under cover of this advice, rush headlong into incessant and injudicious "imaginings," as George Fox would call them. Do not drown yourselves because you are recommended to bathe, or hang yourselves on an oak because tannin is described as a valuable astringent. An allowable thing carried to excess is a vice, even as fire is a good servant in the grate, but a bad master when raging in a burning house. Too much even of a good thing surfeits and disgusts, and in no case is this fact more sure than in the one before us.

The first canon to be observed is this —*do not violently strain a text* by illegitimate spiritualizing. This is a sin against common sense. How dreadfully the word of God has been mauled and mangled by a certain band of preachers who have laid texts on the rack to make them reveal what they never would have otherwise spoken. Mr. Slopdash, of whom Rowland Hill tells us in his Village Dialogues, is but a type of a numerous generation. That worthy is described as delivering himself of a discourse upon, "I had three white baskets on my head," from the dream of Pharaoh's baker. Upon this the "thrice-anointed ninny-hammer," as a friend of mine would call him, discoursed upon the doctrine of the Trinity!

A dear minister of Christ, a venerable and excellent brother, one of the most instructive ministers in his country, told me that he missed one day a laboring man and his wife from his chapel. He missed them again and again, Sunday after Sunday, and one Monday, meeting the husband in the street, he said to him, "Well John, I have not seen you lately."

"No sir," was the reply, "We did not seem to profit under your ministry as we used to do."

" Indeed, John, I am very sorry to her it."

"Well, me and my missis likes the doctrines of grace,

and therefore we've gone to hear Mr. Bawler lately."

"Oh! You mean the good man at the High Calvanist Meeting?"

"Yes, sir, and we are so happy; we get right good food there, sixteen ounces to the pound. We were getting half starved under your ministry–though I always respect you as a man, sir."

"All right, my friend; of course you ought to go where you get good food for your soul, I only hope it is good; but what did you get last Sunday?"

"Oh! We had a most refreshing time, sir. In the morning we had–I don't seem to like to tell you–however, we had really a most precious time."

"Yes, but what was it, John?"

"Well, sir, Mr. Bawley led us blessedly into that passage, 'Art thou a man given to appetite? Put a knife to thy throat when thou sittest before a ruler.'"

"Whatever did he make out of that?"

"Well, sir, I can tell you what he made out of it, but I should like to know first what you would have said upon it."

"I don't know, John; I dont think I should have taken it at all, but if I must have spoken about it, I should have said that a person given to eating and drinking should take care what he was about when he was in the presence of great men, or he would ruin himself. Gluttony even in this life is ruinous."

"Ah!" said the man, "that is your dead-letter way of rendering it. As I told my missis the other day, ever since we have been to hear Mr. Bawler, the Bible has been opened up to us so that we can see a great deal more in it than we used to do."

"Yes, but what did Mr. Bawler tell you about his text?"

"Well, he said a man given to appetite was a young convert, who is sure to have a tremendous appetite for preaching, and always wants food; but he ain't always nice about what sort of food it is."

"What next John?"

"He said that if the young convert went to sit before

a ruler –that is to say, a legal preacher, or a duty-faith man, it would be the worse for him."

"But how about the knife, John?"

"Well, sir, Mr. Bawler said it was a very dangerous thing to hear legal preachers, it would be sure to ruin the man; and he might just as well cut his throat at once, sir!"

The subject was, I suppose, the mischievous effects of young Christians listening to any preachers but those of the hyper school; and the moral drawn from it was, that sooner than this brother should go to hear his former minister, he had better cut his throat! That was accommodating considerably! Ye critics, we give over such dead horses as these to your doggish teeth. Rend and devour as ye will, we will not upbraid.

We have heard of another performer who delivered his mind upon Proverbs 21:17. "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich." The Proverbs are a favorite field for spiritualizers to disport themselves withal. Our worthy disposed of the proverb in this fashion: "'He that loveth pleasure,' that is, the Christian who enjoys the means of grace, 'shall be a poor man,' that is, he shall be poor in spirit; 'and he that loveth wine and oil;' that is to say, rejoices in covenant provisions, and end enjoys the oil and wine of the gospel, 'shall not be rich,' that is, he shall not be rich in his own esteem;' showing the excellence of those who are poor in spirit, and how they shall enjoy the gospel–a very proper sentiment, but my carnal eyes fail to see it in the text.

You have all heard of William Huntingdon's famous rendering of the passage in Isaiah 11:8; "The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den." "The sucking child,' that is, the babe in grace, 'shall play on the hole of the asp,' the asp, that is, the Arminian: 'the hole of the asp,' that is, the Arminian's mouth." Then follows an account of the games in which simple minds are more than a match for Arminian wisdom. Professors of the other school of divinity have usually had the good sense not to return the compliment, or

the Antinomians might have found themselves ranked with cockatrices, and their opponents boastfully defying them at the mouths of their dens, Such abuse only injures those who use it. Theological differences are better expounded and enforced than by such buffoonery.

Ludicrous results sometimes arise from sheer stupidity inflated with conceit. One instance may suffice. A worthy minister told me the other day that he had been preaching lately to his people upon the nine and twenty knives of Ezra. I am sure he would handle these edged tools discreetly, but I could not refrain from saying that I hoped he had not imitated the very sage interpreter who saw in that odd number of knives a reference to the four-and-twenty elders of the Apocalypse.

A passage in the Proverbs reads as follows: "For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear: for a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat: for an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress." A raving spiritualizer declares that this is a sweet picture of the work of grace in the soul, and shows what it is that disquiets Arminians, and sets them by the ears." 'A servant when he reigneth,' that is, poor servants like ourselves, when we are made to reign with Christ; 'a fool when he is filled with meat,' that is, poor foolish men like us, when we are fed with the finest of the wheat of gospel truth; 'an odious woman when she is married,' that is, a sinner when he is united to Christ; 'A handmaid that is heir to her mistress,' that is, when we poor handmaids that were under the law, bondslaves, come into the privileges of Sarah, and become heirs to our own mistress.'"

These are a few specimens of ecclesiastical curiosities which are as numerous and valuable as the relics which are every day gathered so plentifully on the battle-field of Waterloo, and accepted by the more verdant as priceless treasures. But we have surfeited you, and have no wish to waste more of your time. From all such rank absurdity need you be admonished to turn away! Such maunderings dishonor the Bible, are an insult to the common-sense of the hearers,

and a deplorable lowering of the minister. This, however, is no more the spiritualizing which we recommend to you than the thistle in Lebanon is the cedar of Lebanon. Avoid that childish trifling and outrageous twisting of texts which will make you a wise man among fools, but a fool among wise men.

Our second is, *never spiritualize upon indelicate subjects.* It is needful to say this, for the Slopdash family are never more at home than when they speak in a way to crimson the cheek of modesty. There is a kind of beetle which breeds in filth, and this creature has its prototype among men. Do I not at this moment call to mind a savory divine who enlarged with wonderful gusto and sensuous unction upon the concubine cut into ten pieces: Greenacre himself could not have done it better. What abominable things have been said upon some of the sterner and more horrifying similes of Jeremiah and Ezekiel! Where the Holy Spirit is veiled and chaste, these men have torn away the veil, and spoken as none but naughty tongues would venture to do. I am not, squeamish, indeed, far from it, but explanations of the new birth by analogies suggested by a monthly nurse, expositions of the rite of circumcision, and minute descriptions of married life, would arouse my temper and make me feel inclined to command with Jehu that the shameless one should be thrown down from the exalted position disgraced by such brazen-faced impudence. I know it is said, "*Honi soit qui mal y pense,"* but I aver that no pure mind ought to be subjected to the slightest breath of indelicacy from the pulpit. Caesar's wife must be without suspicion, and Christ's ministers must be without speck in their lives or stain in their speech. Gentlemen, the kissing and hugging which some preachers delight in is disgusting: Solomon's Song had better be let alone than dragged in the mire as it often is. Young men especially must be scrupulously, jealously modest and pure in word: an old man is pardoned, I scarce know why, but a young man is utterly without excuse should he overstep the strict line of delicacy.

Next, and thirdly, *never spiritualize for the sake of showing what an uncommonly clever fellow you are.* Such an intention will be wicked, and the method used will be

foolish. Only an egregious simpleton will seek to be noted for doing what nine out of ten could do quite as well. A certain probationer once preached a sermon upon the word "but," thus hoping to ingratiate himself with the congregation, who would, he thought, be enraptured with the powers of a brother who could enlarge so marvellously upon a mere conjunction. His subject appears to have been, the fact that whatever there may be of good in a man's character, or admirable in a man's position, there is sure to be some difficulty, some trial in connection with us all: "Naaman was a great man with his master, but–?' When the orator descended from the pulpit the deacons said, "Well, sir, you have given us a singular sermon, but–you are not the man for the place; that we can see very clearly." Alas! for wit when it becomes so common, and withal puts a weapon into the hand of its own adversaries!

Remember that spiritualizing is not such a wonderful display of ingenuity, even if you are able to do it well, and that without discretion it is the most ready method of revealing your egregious folly. Gentlemen, if you aspire to emulate Origen in wild, daring, interpretations, it may be as well to read his life and note attentively the follies into which even his marvellous mind was drawn by allowing a wild fancy to usurp absolute authority over his judgment; and if you set yourselves to rival the vulgar declaimers of a past generation, let me remind you that the cap and bells do not now command the same patronage as fell to their share a few years ago.

Our fourth caution is, *never pervert Scripture* to give it a novel and so-called spiritual meaning, lest you be found guilty of that solemn curse with which the roll of inspiration is guarded and closed. Mr. Cook, of Maidenhead, felt himself obliged to separate from William Huntingdon because of his making the seventh commandment to mean the Lord speaking to his Son and saying, "Thou shalt not covet the devil's wife, i.e., the non-elect." One can only say, horrible! Perhaps it would be an insult to your reason and your religion to say, loathe the thought of such profanity. You instinctively shrink from it.

Once more, in no case allow your audience to forget

that the narratives which you spiritualize are facts, and not mere myths or parables. The first sense of the passage must never be drowned in the outflow of your imagination; it must be distinctly declared and allowed to hold the first rank; your accommodation of it must never thrust out the original and native meaning, or even push it into the background. The Bible is not a compilation of clever allegories or instructive poetical traditions; it teaches literal facts and reveals tremendous realities: let your full persuasion of this truth be manifest to all who attend your ministry. It will be an ill day for the church if the pulpit should even appear to endorse the sceptical hypothesis that Holy Scripture is but the record of a refined mythology, in which globules of truth are dissolved in seas of poetic and imaginary detail.

However, there is a legitimate range for spiritualizing, or rather for the particular gift which leads men to spiritualize. For instance, you have frequently been shown that the types yield ample scope for the exercise of a sanctified ingenuity. Why need you go about to find "odious women" to preach upon, when you have before you the tabernacle in the wilderness, with all its sacred furniture, the burnt-offering, the peace-offering, and all the various sacrifices which were offered before God? Why struggle for novelties when the temple and all its glories are before you? The largest capacity for typical interpretation will find abundant employment in the undoubted symbols of the Word of God, and it will be safe to enter upon such an exercise, because the symbols are of divine appointment.

When you have exhausted all the Old Testament types, you have left to you an heirloom of a thousand metaphors. Benjamin Keach, in his laborious treatise, proves most practically what mines of truth lie concealed in the metaphors of Scripture. His work, by the way, is open to much criticism on the score of making metaphors run not only on all-fours, but on as many legs as a centipede; but it does not deserve the condemnation of Dr. Adam Clarke, when he says it has done more to debase the taste both of preachers and people than any

other work of the kind. A discreet explanation of the poetical allusions of Holy Scripture will be most acceptable to your people, and, with God's blessing, not a little profitable.

But supposing you have expounded all the usually accepted types, and have cast light upon the emblems and figurative expressions, must your fancy and delight in similitudes go to sleep? By no means. When the apostle Paul finds a mystery in Melchisedek, and speaking of Hagar and Sarah, says, "Which things are an allegory," he gives us a precedent for discovering scriptural allegories in other places besides the two mentioned. Indeed, the historical books not only yield us here and there an allegory, but seem as a whole to be arranged with a view to symbolical teaching. A passage from Mr. Andrew Jukes' preface to his work on the types of Genesis, will show how, without violence, a most elaborate theory may be constructed by a devout mind:

> "As a base or ground for what is to follow, we first are shown what springs from man, and all the different forms of life, which either by nature or grace can grow out of the root of old Adam. This is the book of Genesis. Then we see, that be it bad or good which has come out of Adam, there must be redemption; so an elect people by the blood of the Lamb are saved from Egypt. This is Exodus. After redemption is known, we come to the experience of the elect as needing access, and learning the way of it, to God the Redeemer in the sanctuary. This we get in Leviticus. Then in the wilderness of this world, as pilgrims from Egypt, the house of bondage, to the promised land beyond Jordan, the trials of the journey are learnt, from that land of wonders and man's wisdom to the land flowing with milk and honey. This is the book of Numbers. Then comes the desire to exchange the wilderness for the better land, from entering which for a season after redemption is known the elect yet shrink;

> answering to the desire of the elect at a certain stage to know the power of the resurrection, to live even now as in heavenly places. The rules and precepts which must be obeyed, if this is to be done, come next. Deuteronomy, a second giving of the law, a second cleansing, tells the way of progress. After which Canaan is indeed reached. We go over Jordan: we know practically the death of the flesh, and what it is to be circumcised, and to roll away the reproach of Egypt. We know now what it is to be risen with Christ, and to wrestle, not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers in heavenly places. This is Joshua. Then comes the failure of the elect in heavenly places, failure arising from making leagues with Canaanites instead of overcoming them. This is Judges. After which the different forms of rule, which the church may know, pass in review in the books of Kings, from the first setting up of rule in Israel down to its extinction, when for their sin the rule of Babylon supersedes that of the elect. When this is known with all its shame, we see the remnants of the elect, each according to its measure, doing what may be done, if possible, to restore Israel; some, like Ezra, returning to build the temple, that is, to restore the forms of true worship; and some coming up, like Nehemiah, to build the wall, that is, to reestablish, by Gentile permission, a feeble imitation of the ancient polity; while a third remnant in Esther is seen in bonds, but faithful, providentially saved, though God's name (and this is characteristic of their state) never appears throughout the whole record."

I should be far from recommending you to become as fanciful as the ingenious author I have just quoted sometimes becomes, through the large indulgence of his tendency to mysticism, but nevertheless, you will read the Word with greatly increased

interest if you are a sufficiently careful reader to have noticed the general run of the books of the Bible, and their consecutiveness as a system of types.

Then, too, the faculty which turns to spiritualizing will be well employed in *generalizing the great universal principles evolved by minute and separate facts.* This is an ingenious, instructive, and legitimate pursuit. Perhaps you might not elect to preach upon, "Take it by the tail," but the remark arising from it is natural enough –"there is a way of taking everything." Moses took the serpent by the tail, so there is a mode of grasping our afflictions and finding them stiffen in our hands into a wonder-working rod; there is a way of holding the doctrines of grace, a way of encountering ungodly men, and so on. In hundreds of scriptural incidents you may find great general principles which may nowhere be expressed in so many words. Take the following instances from Mr. Jay.

From Psalm 74:14, "Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness," he teaches the doctrine that the greatest foes of God's pilgrim people shall be slain, and the remembrance of the mercy shall refresh the saints.

From Genesis 35:8, "But Deborah, Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el, under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth," he discourses upon good servants, and the certainty of death.

Upon 2 Samuel 15:15, "And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall apoint," he shows that such language may with propriety be adopted by Christians, and addressed to Christ.

Should anyone take exception to the form of spiritualizing which Mr. Jay so efficiently and judiciously indulged in, he must be a person whose opinion need not sway you in the least. After my own ability I have taken the liberty to do the same, and the outlines of many sermons of the kind may be found in my little work entitled *Evening by Evening,* and a less liberal sprinkling in its companion, *Morning by Morning.*

A notable instance of a good sermon fixed upon a strained and unjustifiable basis, is that of Everard, in his Gospel Treasury. In the discourse upon Joshua 15:16,17, where the words are, "And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife;" here the run of the preacher's utterance is based upon the translation of the Hebrew proper names, so that he makes it read, "A good heart said. Whosoever smiteth and taketh the city of the letter, to him will I give the rending of the veil; and Othniel took it as being God's fit time or opportunity, and he married Achsah, that is, enjoyed the rending of the veil, and thereby had the blessing both of the upper and nether springs." Was there no other method of showing that we are to search after the inner sense of Scripture, and not rest in the mere words or letter of the Book?

The parables of our Lord in their expounding and enforcement afford the amplest scope for a matured and disciplined fancy, and if these have all passed before you, the miracles still remain, rich in symbolical teaching. There can be no doubt that the miracles are the acted sermons of our Lord Jesus Christ. You have his "word sermons" in his matchless teaching, and his "deed sermons" in his peerless acts. Despite many doctrinal failures, you will find Trench, on the miracles, most helpful in this direction. All our Lord's mighty works are full of teaching. Take the story of the healing of the deaf and dumb man. The poor creature's maladies are eminently suggestive of man's lost estate, and our Lord's mode of procedure most instructively illustrates the plan of salvation. "Jesus took him aside from the multitude"--the soul must be made to feel its own personality and individuality, and must be led into loneliness. He "put his fingers into his ears," the source of the mischief indicated; sinners are convinced of their state. "And spat"–the gospel is a simple and a despised means, and the sinner, in order to salvation, must humble himself to receive it. He "touched his tongue," further pointing out where the mischief lay–our sense of

need grows on us. He "looked up to heaven"–Jesus reminded his patient that all strength must come from above–a lesson which every seeker must learn. "He sighed," showing that the sorrows of the Healer are the means of our healing. And then he said, "Ephphatha, Be opened"–here was the effectual word of grace which wrought an immediate, perfect, and lasting cure. From this one exposition learn all, and ever believe that the miracles of Christ are a great picture gallery, illustrating His work among the sons of men.

Let it be an instruction, however, to all who handle either the parables or the metaphors, to be discreet. Dr. Gill is one whose name must ever be mentioned with honor and respect in this house in which his pulpit still stands, but his exposition of the parable of the Prodigal Son strikes me as being sadly absurd in some points. The learned commentator tells us, "the fatted calf" was the Lord Jesus Christ! Really, one shudders to see spiritualizing come to this. Then also there is his exposition of the Good Samaritan. The beast on which the wounded man was placed is again our Lord Jesus, and the two pence which the Good Samaritan gave to the host, are the Old and New Testament, or the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Despite this caution, you may allow much latitude in spiritualizing to men of rare poetical temperament, such as John Bunyan. Gentlemen, did you ever read John Bunyan's spiritualizing of Solomon's Temple?

> The *leaves* of this gate or door, as I told you before, were *folding*, and so, as was hinted, have something of signification in them. For by this means a man, especially a *young disciple*, may easily be mistaken; thinking that the whole passage, when yet but a part, was open, whereas three parts might be yet kept undiscovered to him. For these doors, as I said before, were never yet set wide open, I mean in the *antitype*; never man yet saw all the riches and fulness which is in Christ. So that I say, *a new comer*, if he judged by present

sight, especially if he saw but little, might easily be mistaken, wherefore such for the most part are most horribly afraid that they shall never get in thereat. How sayest thou, young comer, is not this the case with thy soul? So it seems to thee that thou art too big, being so great, so *tun-bellied* a sinner! But, O thou sinner, fear not, the doors are *folding-doors*, and may be opened wider, and wider again after that; wherefore when thou comest to this gate, and imaginest that there is not space enough for thee to enter, knock, *and it shall be wider opened unto thee,* and thou shalt be received. Luke 11:9; John 6:37. So then, whoever thou art, thou art come to the door of which the temple was a type, trust not to thy first conceptions of things, but believe there is grace abundant. Thou knowest not yet what Christ can do, the *doors are folding-doors*. *He can 'do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.'* Eph.3:20. The hinges on which these doors do hang, were, as I told you, gold; to signify that they both turned upon motives and motions of love, and also that the openings thereof were *rich*. Golden hinges the gate to God doth turn upon. The posts on which these doors did hang *were of the olive tree,* that *fat* and *oily* tree, to show that they do never open with lothness, or sluggishness as doors do whose hinges want oil. They are always oily, and so open easily and quickly to those who knock at them. Hence you read that he that dwells in this house gives freely, loves freely, and doth us good with all his heart. 'Yea,' saith he, 'I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.' Jer.3:12, 14, 22:32. 41; Rev. 21:6; 22:17. Wherefore, the oil of grace, signified by this oily tree, or these *olive-posts*, on which these doors do hang, do cause that they open glibly or frankly to the soul."

When Bunyan opens up the meaning of the doors being made of fir wood, who but he would have said, "The *fir tree* is also the house of the *stork*, that unclean bird, even as Christ is a harbor and shelter for sinners. As for the stork, saith the text, the fir tree is her house; and Christ saith to the sinners that see their want of shelter, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.' He is a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in time of trouble. Deut. 14:18; Lev. 11:19; Ps.104:17; 74: 2, 3; Matt.11:2, 28; Heb. 6:17-20."

In his "House of the Forest of Lebanon" he is still more puzzled, but works his way out as no other man could have done. He finds the three rows of pillars of fifteen each to be an enigma rather too deep for him, and gives it up, but not until he has made some brave attempts upon it. Mr. Bunyan is the chief, and head, and lord of all allegorists, and is not to be followed by us into the deep places of typical and symbolical utterance. He was a swimmer, we are but mere waders, and must not go beyond our depth.

I am tempted before I close this address to give a sketch or two of spiritualizings which were familiar to me in my earliest days. I shall never forget a sermon preached by an uneducated but remarkable man, who was my near neighbor in the country. I had the notes of the discourse from his own lips, and I trust they will remain as notes, and never be preached from again in this world. The text was, "The night-hawk, the owl, and the cuckoo." That might not strike you as being exceedingly rich in matter; it did not so strike me, and therefore I innocently enquired, "And what were the heads?" He replied most archly, "Heads? why, wring the bird's necks, and there are three directly, 'the night-hawk, the owl, and the cuckoo.'" He showed that these birds were all unclean under the law, and were plain types of unclean sinners. Night-hawks were persons who pilfered on the sly, also people who adulterated their goods, and cheated their neighbors in an underhand way without being suspected to be rogues. As for the owls, they typified drunkards, who are always liveliest at night, while by day they will almost knock their heads against

a post because they are so sleepy. There were owls also among professors. The owl is a very small bird when he is plucked; he only looks big because he wears so many feathers; so, many professors are all feathers, and if you could take away their boastful professions there would be very little left of them. Then the cuckoos were the church clergy, who always utter the same note whenever they open their mouths in the church, and live on other birds' eggs with their church-rates and tithes. The cuckoos were also, I think, the free-willers, who were always saying, "Do-do-do-do." Was not this rather too much of a good thing? Yet from the man who delivered it the sermon would not seem at all remarkable or odd.

The same venerable brother delivered a sermon equally singular but far more original and useful; those who heard it will remember it to their dying day. It was from this text: "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." The good old man leaned upon the top of the pulpit, and said, "Then, my brethren, he was a lazy fellow!" That was the exordium; and then he went on to say, "He went out a hunting, and after much trouble he caught his hare, and then was too idle to roast it. He was a lazy fellow indeed!" The good man made us all feel how ridiculous such idleness was, and then he said, "But then you are very likely quite as much to blame as this man, for you do just the same. You hear of a popular minister coming down from London, and you put the horse in the cart, and drive ten or twenty miles to hear him; and then when you have heard the sermon you forget to profit by it. You catch the hare and do not roast it; you go hunting after the truth, and then you do not receive it." Then he went on to show, that just as meat needs cooking to prepare it for assimilation in the bodily system–I do not think he used that word though–so the truth needs to go through a process before it can be received into the mind so that we may feed thereon and grow. He said he should show how to cook a sermon, and he did so most instructively. He began as the cookery books do— "First catch your hare." "So," he said, "first get a gospel sermon." Then he declared that a great many sermons were not worth hunting for, and that good sermons were mournfully scarce, and it was

worth while to go any distance to hear a solid, old-fashioned, Calvinistic discourse. Then after the sermon had been caught, there was much about it which might be necessary because of the preacher's infirmity, which was not profitable, and must be put away. Here he enlarged upon discerning and judging what we heard, and not believing every word of any man. Then followed directions as to roasting a sermon; run the spit of memory through it from end to end, turn it round upon the roasting-jack of meditation, before the fire of a really warm and earnest heart, and in that way the sermon would be cooked and ready to yield real spiritual nourishment. I do but give you the outline, and though it may look somewhat laughable, it was not so esteemed by the hearers. It was full of allegory, and kept up the attention of the people from the beginning to the end.

"Well, my dear sir, how are you?" was my salutation to him one morning, "I'm pleased to see you so well at your age."

"Yes, I am in fine order for an old man, and hardly feel myself failing at all."

"I hope your good health will continue for years to come, and that like Moses you will go down to your grave with your eye undimmed and your natural force unabated."

"All very fine," said the old gentleman, "but in the first place, Moses never went down to his grave at all, he went up to it; and in the next place, what is the meaning of all you have been talking about? Why did not the eye of Moses wax dim?"

"I suppose, sir," said I, very meekly, "that his natural mode of life and quiet spirit had helped to preserve his faculties and make him a vigorous old man."

"Very likely," said he, "but that's not what I am driving at: what's the meaning, the spiritual teaching of the whole matter? Is it not just this: Moses is the law, and what a glorious end of the law the Lord gave it on the mount of His finished work; how sweetly its terrors are all laid to sleep with a kiss from God's mouth! and, mark you, the reason why the law no more condemns us is not because its eye is dim, so that it

cannot see our sins, or because its force is abated with which to curse and punish; but Christ has taken it up to the mount, and gloriously made an end of it."

Such was his usual talk and such was his ministry. Peace to his ashes. He fed sheep the first years of his life, and was a shepherd of men the next, and, as he used to tell me, "found men by far the more sheepish of the two." The converts who found the road to heaven under him were so many that, when we remember them, we are like those who saw the lame man leaping through the word of Peter and John; they were disposed to criticize, but "beholding the man that was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against it."

With this I close, re-asserting the opinion, that guided by discretion and judgment, we may occasionally employ spiritualizing with good effect to our people; certainly we shall interest them and keep them awake.

7

ATTENTION!

Our subject is one which I find scarcely ever noticed in any books upon homiletics - a very curious fact, for it is a most important matter, and worthy of more than one chapter. I suppose the homiletical savans consider that their entire volumes are seasoned with this subject, and that they need not give it to us in lumps, because, like sugar in tea, it flavors the whole. That overlooked topic is, How TO OBTAIN AND RETAIN THE ATTENTION OF OUR HEARERS. Their attention must be gained, or nothing can be done with them: and it must be retained, or we may go on word-spinning, but no good will come of it.

Over the head of military announcements our English officers always place the word "ATTENTION!" in large capitals, and we need some such word over all our sermons. We need the earnest, candid, wakeful, continued attention of all those who are in the congregation. If men's minds are wandering far away they cannot receive the truth, and it is much the same if they are inactive. Sin cannot be taken out of men, as Eve was taken out of the side of Adam, while they are fast asleep. They must be awake, understanding what we are saying, and feeling its force, or else we may as well go to sleep too. There are preachers who care very little whether they are attended to or not; so long as they can hold on through the allotted time it is of very small importance to them whether their people hear for eternity, or hear in vain: the sooner such ministers sleep in the churchyard and preach by the verse on their gravestones the better.

Some brethren speak up the ventilator, as if they sought the attention of the angels; and others look down upon their book as if they were absorbed in thought, or had themselves

for an audience, and felt much honored thereby. Why do not such brethren preach on the prairie and edify the stars? If their preaching has no reference to their hearers they might do so with evident propriety; if a sermon be a soliloquy, the more lonely the performer the better. To a rational preacher (and all are not rational) it must seem essential to interest all his audience, from the eldest to the youngest. We ought not to make even children inattentive. "Make them inattentive," say you, "who does that?" I say that most preachers do; and when children are not quiet in a meeting it is often as much our fault as theirs. Can you not put in a little story or parable on purpose for the little ones? Can you not catch the eye of the boy in the gallery, and the little girl downstairs, who have begun to fidget, and smile them into order? I often talk with my eyes to the orphan boys at the foot of my pulpit. We want all eyes fixed upon us and all ears open to us. To me it is an annoyance if even a blind man does not look at me with his face. If I see anybody turning round, whispering, nodding, or looking at his watch, I judge that I am not up to the mark, and must by some means win these minds. Very seldom have I to complain, and when I do, my general plan is to complain of myself, and own that I have no right to attention unless I know how to command it.

Now, there are some congregations whose attention you do not readily gain; they do not care to be interested. It is useless to scold them; that will be like throwing a bush at a bird to catch it. The fact is, that in most cases there is another person whom you should scold, and that is yourself. It may be their duty to attend, but it is far more your duty to make them do so. You must attract the fish to your hook, and if they do not come you should blame the fisherman and not the fish. Compel them to stand still a while and hear what God the Lord would speak to their souls. The minister who recommended the old lady to take snuff in order to keep from dozing was very properly rebuked by her reply,–that if he would put more snuff into the sermon she would be awake enough. We must plentifully cast snuff into the sermon, or something yet more awakening. Recollect that to some of our people it is

not so easy to be attentive; many of them are not interested in the matter, and they have not felt enough of any gracious operation on their hearts to make them confess that the gospel is of any special value to them. Concerning the Savior whom you preach you may say to them,

> Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by,
> Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?

Many of them have through the week been borne down by the press of business cares. They ought to roll their burden on the Lord; but do you always do so? Do you always find it easy to escape from anxieties? Are you able to forget the sick wife and the ailing children at home? There is no doubt whatever that many come into the house of God loaded heavily with the thoughts of their daily avocations. The farmer recollects the fields that are to be ploughed or to be sown; it is a wet Sunday, and he is reflecting upon the yellow look of the young wheats. The merchant sees that dishonored bill fluttering before his eyes, and the tradesman counts over his bad debts. I should not wonder if the colors of the ladies' ribbons and the creak of the gentlemen's boots disturb many. There are troublesome flies about, you know: Beelzebub, the god of flies, takes care that wherever there is a gospel feast the guests should be worried with petty annoyances. Often mental mosquitoes sting the man while you are preaching to him, and he is thinking more of trifling distractions than of your discourse; is it so very wonderful that he does? You must drive the mosquitoes away, and secure your people's undistracted thoughts, turning them out of the channel in which they have been running six days into one suitable for the Sabbath. You must have sufficient leverage in your discourse and its subject to lift them right up from the earth to which they cleave, and to elevate them a little nearer heaven.

Frequently it is very difficult for congregations to attend, because of the place and the atmosphere. For instance, if the place is like this room at present, sealed against the pure air, with every window closed, they have enough to do to

breathe, and cannot think of anything else: when people have inhaled over and over again the air which has been in other people's lungs, the whole machinery of life gets out of gear, and they are more likely to feel an aching head than a broken heart. The next best thing to the grace of God for a preacher is oxygen. Pray that the windows of heaven may be opened, but begin by opening the windows of your meeting-house. Look at many of our country places, and I am afraid our city chapels too, and you will find that the windows are not made to open. The modern barbarous style of building gives us no more ceiling than a barn, and no more openings for ventilation than would be found in an oriental dungeon, where the tyrant expected his prisoner to die by inches. What would we think of a house where the windows could not be opened? Would any of you hire such a dwelling? Yet Gothic architecture and silly pride make many persons renounce the wholesome sash window for little holes in the ceiling, or bird traps in the windows, and so places are made far less comfortable than Nebuchadnezzar's furnace was to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Provided all such chapels were properly insured, I could not pray for their preservation from fire. Even where the windows will open they are often kept closed by the month together, and from Sunday to Sunday the impure atmosphere is unchanged. This ought not to be endured. I know some people do not notice such things, and I have heard it remarked that foxes are not killed by the stench of their own holes; but I am not a fox, and bad air makes me dull, and my hearers dull too. A gust of fresh air through the building might be to the people the next best thing to the gospel itself; at least it would put them into a fit frame of mind to receive the truth. Take trouble on week days to remove the hindrance arising from foul air.

In my former chapel in Park Street I mentioned to my deacons several times my opinion that the upper panes of the iron-framed windows had better be taken out, as the windows were not made to open. I mentioned this several times, and nothing came of it; but it providentially happened one

Monday that somebody removed most of those panes in a masterly manner, almost as well as if they had been taken out by a glazier. There was considerable consternation, and much conjecture as to who had committed the crime, and I proposed that a reward of five pounds should be offered for the discovery of the offender, who when found should receive the amount as a present. The reward was not forthcoming, and therefore I have not felt it to be my duty to inform against the individual. I trust none of you will suspect me, for if you do I shall have to confess that I have walked with the stick which let the oxygen into that stifling structure.

Sometimes the manners of our people are inimical to attention; they are not in the habit of attending; they attend the chapel but do not attend to the preacher. They are accustomed to look round at every one who enters the place, and they come in at all times, sometimes with much stamping, squeaking of boots, and banging of doors. I was preaching once to a people who continually looked round, and I adopted the expedient of saying, "Now, friends, as it is so very interesting to you to know who comes in, and it disturbs me so very much for you to look round, I will, if you like, describe each one as he comes in, so that you may sit and look at me, and keep up at least a show of decency." I described one gentleman who came in, who happened to be a friend whom I could depict without offence, as "a very respectable gentleman who had just taken his hat off," and so on; and after that one attempt I found it was not necessary to describe any more, because they felt shocked at what I was doing, and I assured them that I was much more shocked that they should render it necessary for me to reduce their conduct to such an absurdity. It cured them for the time being, and I hope for ever, much to their pastor's joy.

We will now suppose that this is set right. You have let the foul air out of the place, and reformed the manners of the people. What next? *In order to get attention, the first golden rule is, always say something worth hearing.* Most persons possess an instinct which leads them to desire to hear a good thing. They have a similar instinct, also, which you had better

take note of, namely, that which prevents their seeing the good of attentively listening to mere words. It is not a severe criticism to say that there are ministers whose words stand in a very large proportion to their thoughts. In fact, their words hide their thoughts, if they have any. They pour out heaps of chaff, and, perhaps, there may be somewhere or other an oat or two, but it would be hard to say where. Congregations will not long attend to words, words, words, words, and nothing else.

Amongst the commandments I am not aware of one which runs thus: "Thou shalt not be verbose," but it may be comprehended under the command, "Thou shalt not steal;" for it is a fraud upon your hearers to give them words instead of spiritual food. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin," even in the best preacher. Give your hearers something which they can treasure up and remember; something likely to be useful to them, the best matter from the best of places, solid doctrine from the divine Word. Give them manna fresh from the skies; not the same thing over and over again, in the same form *ad nauseam*, like workhouse bread cut into the same shape all the year round. Give them something striking, something that a man might get up in the middle of the night to hear, and which is worth his walking fifty miles to listen to. You are quite capable of doing that. Do it, brethren. Do it continually, and you will have all the attention you can desire.

Let the good matter which you give them be very clearly arranged. There is a great deal in that. It is possible to heap up a vast mass of good things all in a muddle. Ever since the day I was sent to shop with a basket, and purchased a pound of tea, a quarter-of-a-pound of mustard, and three pounds of rice, and on my way home saw a pack of hounds and felt it necessary to follow them over hedge and ditch (as I always did when I was a boy), and found when I reached home that all the goods were amalgamated--tea, mustard, and rice--into one awful mess, I have understood the necessity of packing up my subjects in good stout parcels, bound round with the thread of my discourse; and this makes me keep

to firstly, secondly, and thirdly, however unfashionable that method may now be. People will not drink your mustardy tea, nor will they enjoy muddled-up sermons, in which you cannot tell head from tail, because they have neither, but are like Mr. Bright's Skye terrier, whose head and tail were both alike. Put the truth before men in a logical, orderly manner, so that they can easily remember it, and they will the more readily receive it.

Be sure, moreover, to speak plainly; because, however excellent your matter, if a man does not comprehend it, it can be of no use to him; you might as well have spoken to him in the language of Kamskatka as in your own tongue, if you use phrases that are quite out of his line, and modes of expression which are not suitable to his mind. Go up to his level if he is a poor man; go down to his understanding if he is an educated person. You smile at my contorting the terms in that manner, but I think there is more going up in being plain to the illiterate, than there is in being refined for the polite; at any rate, it is the more difficult of the two, and most like the Savior's mode of speech. It is wise to walk in a path where your auditors can accompany you, and not to mount the high horse and ride over their heads. Our Lord and Master was the King of preachers, and yet He never was above anybody's comprehension, except so far as the grandeur and glory of His matter were concerned; His words and utterances were such that He spake like "the holy child Jesus." Let your hearts indite a good matter, clearly arranged and plainly put, and you are pretty sure to gain the ear, and so the heart.

Attend also to your manner of address; aim in that at the promotion of attention. And here I should say, as a rule do not read your sermons. There have been a few readers who have exercised great power, as, for instance, Dr. Chalmers, who could not have had a more attentive audience had he been extemporising; but then I do not suppose that we are equal to Dr. Chalmers: men of such eminence may read if they prefer it, but for us there is "a more excellent way." The best reading I have ever heard has tasted of paper, and has stuck

in my throat. I have not relished it, for my digestion is not good enough to dissolve foolscap. It is better to do without the manuscript, even if you are driven to recite. It is best of all if you need neither to recite nor to read. If you must read, mind that you do it to perfection. Be the very best of readers, and you had need to be if you would secure attention.

Here let me say, *if you would be listened to, do not extemporise in the emphatic sense*, for that is as bad as reading, or perhaps worse, unless the manuscript was written extemporaneously; I mean without previous study. Do not go into the pulpit and say the first thing that comes to hand, for the uppermost thing with most men is mere froth. Your people need discourses which have been prayed over and laboriously prepared. People do not want raw food; it must be cooked and made ready for them. We must give out of our very souls, in the words which naturally suggest themselves, the matter which has been as thoroughly prepared by us as it possibly could have been by a sermon-writer; indeed, it should be even better prepared, if we would speak well. The best method is, in my judgment, that in which the man does not extemporise the matter, but extemporises the words; the language comes to him at the moment, but the theme has been well thought out, and like a master in Israel he speaks of that which he knows, and testifies of what he has seen.

In order to get attention, make your manner as pleasing as it can possibly be. Do not, for instance, indulge in monotones. Vary your voice continually. Vary your speed as well–dash as rapidly as a lightning flash, and anon, travel forward in quiet majesty. Shift your accent, move your emphasis, and avoid sing-song. Vary the tone; use the bass sometimes, and let the thunders roll within; at other times speak as you ought to do generally–from the lips, and let your speech be conversational. Anything for a change. Human nature craves for variety, and God grants it in nature, providence and grace; let us have it in sermons also.

I shall not, however, dwell much upon this, because preachers have been known to arouse and sustain attention by their matter alone, when their mode of speech has been

very imperfect. If Richard Sibbes, the Puritan, were here this afternoon, I would guarantee him fixed attention to anything that he used to say, and yet he stammered dreadfully. One of his contemporaries says he Sib-ilated, he lisped and hissed so much. We need not look far for instances in modern pulpits, for there are too many of them; but we may remember that Moses was slow of speech, and yet every ear was attent to his words; probably Paul also labored under a similar infirmity, for his speech was said to be contemptible; of this, however, we are not sure, for it was only the criticism of his enemies. Paul's power in the churches was very great, and yet he was not always able to maintain attention when his sermon was long, for at least one hearer went to sleep under him with serious result. Manner is not everything. Still, if you have gathered good matter, it is a pity to convey it meanly; a king should not ride in a dust-cart; the glorious doctrines of grace should not be slovenly delivered. Right royal truths should ride in a chariot of gold. Bring forth the noblest of your milk-white steeds, and let the music sound forth melodiously from the silver trumpets, as truth rides through the streets. If people do not attend, do not let them find excuses in our faulty utterance. If, however, we cannot mend in this respect let us be the more diligent to make up for it by the richness of our matter, and on all occasions let us do our very best.

As a rule, do not make the introduction too long. It is always a pity to build a great porch to a little house. An excellent Christian woman once heard John Howe, and, as he took up an hour in his preface, her observation was, that the dear good man was so long a time in laying the cloth, that she lost her appetite: she did not think there would be any dinner after all. Spread your table quickly, and have done with the clatter of the knives and the plates. You may have seen a certain edition of Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, with an introductory essay by John Foster. The essay is both bigger and better than the book and deprives Doddridge of the chance of being read. Is not this preposterous? Avoid this error in your own productions. I prefer to make the introduction of my sermon very like that of the town-crier, who rings his bell

and cries, "Oh, yes! Oh, yes! This is to give notice," merely to let people know that he has news for them, and wants them to listen. To do that, the introduction should have something striking in it. It is well to fire a startling shot as the signal gun to clear the decks for action. Do not start at the full pitch and tension of your mind, but yet in such way that all will be led to expect a good time. Do not make your exordium a pompous introduction into nothing, but a step to something better still. Be alive at the very commencement.

In preaching, do not repeat yourselves. I used to hear a divine who had a habit, after he had uttered about a dozen sentences, of saying, "As I have already observed," or, "I repeat what I before remarked." Well, good soul, as there was nothing particular in what he had said, the repetition only revealed the more clearly the nakedness of the land. If it was very good, and you said it forcibly, why go over it again? And if it was a feeble affair, why exhibit it a second time? Occasionally, of course, the repetition of a few sentences may be very telling; anything may be good occasionally, and yet be very vicious as a habit. Who wonders that people do not listen the first time when they know it is all to come over again?

Yet further, do not repeat the same idea over and over again in other words. Let there be something fresh in each sentence. Be not for ever hammering away at the same nail: yours is a large Bible; permit the people to enjoy its length and breadth. And, brethren, do not think it necessary or important every time you preach to give a complete summary of theology, or a formal digest of doctrines, after the manner of Dr. Gill–not that I would discredit or speak a word against Dr. Gill–his method is admirable for a body of divinity, or a commentary, but not suitable for preaching. I know a divine whose sermons whenever they are printed read like theological summaries, more fitted for a classroom than for a pulpit--they fall flat on the public ear. Our hearers do not want the bare bones of technical definition, but meat and flavor. Definitions and differences are all very well; but when they are the staple of a sermon they remind us of the young man whose discourse was made

up of various important distinctions. Upon this performance an old deacon observed that there was one distinction which he had omitted, namely, the distinction between meat and bones. If preachers do not make that distinction, all their other distinctions will not bring them much distinction.

In order to maintain attention, avoid being too long. An old preacher used to say to a young man who preached an hour, "My dear friend, I do not care what else you preach about, but I wish you would always preach about forty minutes." We ought seldom to go much beyond that–forty minutes, or, say, three-quarters of an hour. If a fellow cannot say all he has to say in that time, when will he say it? But somebody said he liked "to do justice to his subject." Well, but ought he not to do justice to his people, or, at least, have a little mercy upon them, and not keep them too long? The subject will not complain of you, but the people will. In some country places, in the afternoon especially, the farmers have to milk their cows, and one farmer bitterly complained to me about a young man–I think from this College—"Sir, he ought to have given over at four o'clock, but he kept on till half-past, and there were all my cows waiting to be milked! How would he have liked it if he had been a cow?" There was a great deal of sense in that question. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ought to have prosecuted that young sinner. How can farmers hear to profit when they have cows-on-the-brain? The mother feels morally certain during that extra ten minutes of your sermon that the baby is crying, or the fire is out, and she cannot and will not give her heart to your ministrations. You are keeping her ten minutes longer than she bargained for, and she looks upon it as a piece of injustice on your part. There is a kind of moral compact between you and your congregation that you will not weary them more than an hour-and-a-half, and if you keep them longer, it amounts to an infraction of a treaty and a piece of practical dishonesty of which you ought not to be guilty.

Brevity is a virtue within the reach of all of us; do not let us lose the opportunity of gaining the credit which it

brings. If you ask me how you may shorten your sermons, I should say, study them better. Spend more time in the study that you may need less in the pulpit. We are generally longest when we have least to say. A man with a great deal of well-prepared matter will probably not exceed forty minutes; when he has less to say he will go on for fifty minutes, and when he has absolutely nothing he will need an hour to say it in. Attend to these minor things and they will help to retain attention.

If you want to have the attention of your people—to have it thoroughly and always, it can only be accomplished by their being led by the Spirit of God into an elevated and devout state of mind. If your people are teachable, prayerful, active, earnest, devout, they will come up to the house of God on purpose to get a blessing. They will take their seats prayerfully, asking God to speak to them through you; they will remain on the watch for every word, and will not weary. They will have an appetite for the gospel, for they know the sweetness of the heavenly manna, and they will be eager to gather their appointed portions. No man will ever have a congregation to preach to which surpasses my own in this respect. Indeed, those with whom the preacher is most at home are usually the best hearers for him. It is comparatively easy to me to preach at the Tabernacle; my people come on purpose to hear something, and their expectation helps to fulfill itself. If they would hear another preacher with the same expectancy, I believe they would generally be satisfied; though there are exceptions.

When the preacher first settles, he cannot expect that his congregation will give him that solemn earnest attention which those obtain who stand up like fathers among their own children, endeared to their people by a thousand memories, and esteemed for age and experience. Our whole life must be such as to add weight to our words, so that in after years we shall be able to wield the invincible eloquence of a long-sustained character, and obtain, not merely the attention, but the affectionate veneration of our flock. If by our prayers and tears and labors our people become spiritually healthy, we need not fear that we shall lose their attention. A people

hungering after righteousness, and a minister anxious to feed their souls, will act in sweetest harmony with each other when their common theme is the Word of the Lord.

If you need another direction for winning attention, I should say, be interested yourself, and you will interest others. There is more in those words than there seems to be, and so I will follow a custom which I just now condemned, and repeat the sentence–be interested yourself, and you will interest other people. Your subject must weigh so much upon your own mind that you dedicate all your faculties at their best to the deliverance of your soul concerning it; and then when your hearers see that the topic has engrossed you, it will by degrees engross them.

Do you wonder that people do not attend to a man who does not feel that he has anything important to say? Do you wonder that they do not listen with all their ears when a man does not speak with all his heart? Do you marvel that their thoughts ramble to subjects which are real to them when they find that the preacher is wasting time over matters which he treats as if they were fiction? Romaine used to say it was well to understand the art of preaching, but infinitely better to know the heart of preaching; and in that saying there is no little weight. The heart of preaching, the throwing of the soul into it, the earnestness which pleads as for life itself, is half the battle as to gaining attention. At the same time, you cannot hold men's minds in rapt attention by mere earnestness if you have nothing to say. People will not stand at their doors for ever to hear a fellow beat a drum; they will come out to see what he is at, but when they find that it is much ado about nothing, they will slam the door and go in again, as much as to say, "You have taken us in and we do not like it." Have something to say, and say it earnestly, and the congregation will be at your feet.

It may be superfluous to remark that for the mass of our people it is well that there should be a goodly number of illustrations in our discourses. We have the example of our Lord for that: and most of the greatest preachers have abounded in similes, metaphors, allegories, and anecdotes. But beware

of overdoing this business. I read the other day the diary of a German lady who has been converted from Lutheranism to our faith, and she speaks of a certain village where she lives: "There is a mission-station here, and young men come down to preach to us. I do not wish to find fault with these young gentlemen, but they tell us a great many very pretty little stories, and I do not think there is much else in what they say. Also I have heard some of their little stories before, therefore they do not so much interest me, as they would do if they would tell us some good doctrine out of the Scriptures." The same thing has no doubt crossed many other minds. "Pretty stories" are all very well, but it will never do to rely upon them as the great attraction of a sermon. Moreover, take warning concerning certain of these "pretty little stories," for their day is over and gone; the poor things are worn threadbare and ought to go into the rag-bag. I have heard some of them so many times, that I could tell them myself, but there is no need. From stock anecdotes may both ourselves and our hearers be mercifully delivered. Ancient jests sicken us when witlings retail them as their own ideas, and anecdotes to which our great-grandfathers listened have much the same effect upon the mind.

Beware of those extremely popular compilations of illustrations which are in every Sunday school teacher's hand, for nobody will thank you for repeating what everybody already knows by heart: if you tell anecdotes let them have some degree of freshness and originality; keep your eyes open, and gather flowers from the garden and the field with your hands; they will be far more acceptable than withered specimens borrowed from other men's bouquets, however beautiful those may once have been. Illustrate richly and aptly, but not so much with parables imported from foreign sources as with apt similes growing out of the subject itself. Do not, however, think the illustration everything; it is the window, but of what use is the light which it admits if you have nothing for the light to reveal? Garnish your dishes, but remember that the joint is the main point to consider, not the garnishing. Real instruction must be given and solid doctrine taught, or you

will find your imagery pall upon your hearers, and they will pine for spiritual meat.

In your sermons cultivate what Father Taylor calls "the surprise power." There is a great deal of force in that for winning attention. Do not say what everybody expected you would say. Keep your sentences out of ruts. If you have already said, "Salvation is all of grace" do not always add, "and not by human merit," but vary it and say, "Salvation is all of grace; self-righteousness has not a corner to hide its head in." I fear I cannot recall one of Mr. Taylor's sentences so as to do it justice, but it was something like this: "Some of you make no advance in the divine life, because you go forward a little way and then you float back again: just like a vessel on a tidal river which goes down with the stream just far enough to be carried back again on the return tide. So you make good progress for a while, and then all of a sudden–what did he say?—"you hitch up in some muddy creek." Did he not also repeat us a speech to this effect,—"He felt sure that if they were converted they would walk uprightly and keep their bullocks out of their neighbor's corn."? Occasional resorts to this system of surprise will keep an audience in a state of proper expectancy.

I sat last year about this time on the beach at Mentone by the Mediterranean Sea. The waves were very gently rising and falling, for there is little or no tide, and the wind was still. The waves crept up languidly one after another, and I took little heed of them, though they were just at my feet. Suddenly, as if seized with a new passion, the sea sent up one far-reaching billow, which drenched me thoroughly. Quiet as I had been before, you can readily conceive how quickly I was on my feet, and how speedily my day-dreaming ended. I observed to a ministering brother at my side, "This shows us how to preach, to wake people up we must astonish them with something they were not looking for." Brethren, take them at unawares. Let your thunderbolt drop out of a clear sky. When all is calm and bright let the tempest rush up, and by contrast make its terrors all the greater. Remember, however, that nothing will avail if you go to sleep yourself

while you are preaching. Is that possible? Oh, possible! It is done every Sunday. Many ministers are more than half-asleep all through the sermon; indeed, they never were awake at any time, and probably never will be unless a cannon should be fired off near their ear: tame phrases, hackneyed expressions, and dreary monotones make the staple of their discourses, and they wonder that the people are so drowsy: I confess I do not.

A very useful help in securing attention is a pause. Pull up short every now and then, and the passengers on your coach will wake up. The miller goes to sleep while the mill wheels revolve; but if by some means or other the grinding ceases, the good man starts and cries, "What now?" On a sultry summer's day, if nothing will keep off the drowsy feeling, be very short, sing more than usual, or call on a brother or two to pray. A minister who saw that the people would sleep, sat down and observed, "I saw you were all resting, and I thought I would rest too." Andrew Fuller had barely commenced a sermon when he saw the people going to sleep. He said, "Friends, friends, friends, this won't do. I have thought sometimes when you were asleep that it was my fault, but now you are asleep before I begin, and it must be your fault. Pray wake up and give me an opportunity of doing you some good." Just so. Know how to pause. Make a point of interjecting arousing parentheses of quietude. Speech is silver, but silence is golden when hearers are inattentive. Keep on, on, on, on, on, with commonplace matter and monotonous tone, and you are rocking the cradle, and deeper slumbers will result; give the cradle a jerk, and sleep will flee.

I suggest again that in order to secure attention all through a discourse we must make the people feel that they have an interest in what we are saying to them. This is, in fact, a most essential point, because nobody sleeps while he expects to hear something to his advantage. I have heard of some very strange things, but I never did hear of a person going to sleep while a will was being read in which he expected a legacy, neither have I heard of a prisoner going to sleep while the judge was summing up, and his life was hanging in jeopardy. Self-interest quickens attention. Preach upon practical themes,

pressing, present, personal matters, and you will secure an earnest hearing.

It will be well to prevent attendants traversing the aisles to meddle with gas or candles, or to distribute plates for collections, or to open windows. Deacons and sextons trotting over the place are a torture never to be patiently endured, and should be kindly, but decidedly, requested to suspend their perambulations.

Late attendance, also, needs remedying, and our gentlest reasonings and expostulations must be brought to bear upon it. I feel sure that the devil has a hand in many disturbances in the congregation, which jar upon our nerves, and distract our thoughts: the banging of a pew door, the sharp fall of a stick on the floor, or the cry of a child, are all convenient means in the hands of the evil one for hindering us in our work; we may, therefore, very justifiably beg our people to preserve our usefulness from this class of assaults.

I gave you a golden rule for securing attention at the commencement, namely, always say something worth hearing; I will now give you a diamond rule, and conclude. Be yourself clothed with the Spirit of God, and then no question about attention or non-attention will arise. Come fresh from the closet and from communion with God, to speak to men for God with all your heart and soul, and you must have power over them. You have golden chains in your mouth which will hold them fast. When God speaks men must listen; and though He may speak through a poor feeble man like themselves, the majesty of the truth will compel them to regard His voice. Supernatural power must be your reliance. We say to you, perfect yourselves in oratory, cultivate all the fields of knowledge, make your sermon mentally and rhetorically all it ought to be (you ought to do no less in such a service), but at the same time remember, "it is not by might, nor by power," that men are regenerated or sanctified, but "by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Are you not conscious sometimes of being clad with zeal as with a cloak, and filled to the full with the Spirit of God? At such times you have had a hearing people, and, ere long, a believing people; but if you are not thus endowed with

power from on high, you are to them no more than a musician who plays upon a goodly instrument, or sings a sweet song with a clear voice, reaching the ear but not the heart. If you do not touch the heart you will soon weary the ear. Clothe yourself, then, with the power of the Spirit of God, and preach to men as those who must soon give an account, and who desire that their account may not be painful to their people and grievous to themselves, but that it may be to the glory of God.

Brethren, may the Lord be with you, while you go forth in His name and cry, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

8

THE MINISTER'S FAINTING FITS

As it is recorded that David, in the heat of battle, waxed faint, so may it be written of all the servants of the Lord. Fits of depression come over the most of us. Usually cheerful as we may be, we must at intervals be cast down. The strong are not always vigorous, the wise not always ready, the brave not always courageous, and the joyous not always happy. There may be here and there men of iron, to whom wear and tear work no perceptible detriment, but surely the rust frets even these; and as for ordinary men, the Lord knows, and makes them to know, that they are but dust. Knowing by most painful experience what deep depression of spirit means, being visited therewith at seasons by no means few or far between, I thought it might be consolatory to some of my brethren if I gave my thoughts thereon, that younger men might not fancy that some strange thing had happened to them when they became for a season possessed by melancholy; and that sadder men might know that one upon whom the sun has shone right joyously did not always walk in the light.

It is not necessary by quotations from the biographies of eminent ministers to prove that seasons of fearful prostration have fallen to the lot of most, if not all of them. The life of Luther might suffice to give a thousand instances, and he was by no means of the weaker sort. His great spirit was often in the seventh heaven of exultation, and as frequently on the borders of despair. His very death-bed was not free from tempests, and he sobbed himself into his last sleep like a great wearied child. Instead of multiplying cases, let us dwell upon the reasons why these things are permitted; why it is that the children of light sometimes walk in the thick darkness; why

the heralds of the daybreak find themselves at times in tenfold night.

Is it not first that they are men? Being men, they are compassed with infirmity, and heirs of sorrow. Well said the wise man in the Apocrypha, Ecclus 1:1, 2, 3, 4, 5-8,

> "Great travail is created for all men, and a heavy yoke on the sons of Adam, from the day that they go out of their mother's womb unto that day that they return to the mother of all things--namely, their thoughts and fear of their hearts, and their imagination of things that they wail for, and the day of death. From him that sitteth in the glorious throne, to him that sitteth beneath in the earth and ashes; from him that is clothed in blue silk, and weareth a crown, to him that is clothed in simple linen- -wrath, envy, trouble, and unquietness, and fear of death and rigour, and such things come to both man and beast, but sevenfold to the ungodly."

Grace guards us from much of this, but because we have not more of grace we still suffer even from ills preventible. Even under the economy of redemption it is most clear that we are to endure infirmities, otherwise there were no need of the promised Spirit to help us in them. It is of need be that we are sometimes in heaviness. Good men are promised tribulation in this world, and ministers may expect a larger share than others, that they may learn sympathy with the Lord's suffering people, and so may be fitting shepherds of an ailing flock. Disembodied spirits might have been sent to proclaim the word, but they could not have entered into the feelings of those who, being in this body, do groan, being burdened; angels might have been ordained evangelists, but their celestial attributes would have disqualified them from having compassion on the ignorant; men of marble might have been fashioned, but their impassive natures would have been a sarcasm upon our feebleness, and a mockery of our wants. Men, and men subject to human passions, the all-wise God has chosen to be his

vessels of grace; hence these tears, hence these perplexities and castings down.

Moreover, most of us are in some way or other unsound physically. Here and there we meet with an old man who could not remember that ever he was laid aside for a day; but the great mass of us labor under some form or other of infirmity, either in body or mind. Certain bodily maladies, especially those connected with the digestive organs, the liver, and the spleen, are the fruitful fountains of despondency; and, let a man strive as he may against their influence, there will be hours and circumstances in which they will for awhile overcome him. As to mental maladies, is any man altogether sane? Are we not all a little off the balance? Some minds appear to have a gloomy tinge essential to their very individuality; of them it may be said, "Melancholy marked them for her own;" fine minds withal, and ruled by noblest principles, but yet most prone to forget the silver lining, and to remember only the cloud. Such men may sing with the old poet:

> *Our hearts are broke, our harps unstringèd be,*
> *Our only music's sighs and groans,*
> *Our songs are to the tune of lachrymae,*
> *We're fretted all to skin and bones.*
>
> Thomas Washbourne

These infirmities may be no detriment to a man's career of special usefulness; they may even have been imposed upon him by divine wisdom as necessary qualifications for his peculiar course of service. Some plants owe their medicinal qualities to the marsh in which they grow; others to the shades in which alone they flourish. There are precious fruits put forth by the moon as well as by the sun. Boats need ballast as well as sail; a drag on the carriage-wheel is no hindrance when the road runs downhill. Pain has probably in some cases developed genius; hunting out the soul which otherwise might have slept like a lion in its den. Had it not been for the broken wing, some might have lost themselves in the clouds, some even of those choice doves who now bear the olive-branch in

their mouths and show the way to the ark. But where in body and mind there are predisposing causes to lowness of spirit, it is no marvel if in dark moments the heart succumbs to them; the wonder in many cases is–and if inner lives could be written, men would see it so–how some ministers keep at their work at all, and still wear a smile upon their countenances. Grace has its triumphs still, and patience has its martyrs; martyrs none the less to be honored because the flames kindle about their spirits rather than their bodies, and their burning is unseen of human eyes. The ministries of Jeremiahs are as acceptable as those of Isaiahs, and even the sullen Jonah is a true prophet of the Lord, as Nineveh felt full well.

Despise not the lame, or it is written that they take the prey; but honor those who, being faint, are yet pursuing. The tender-eyed Leah was more fruitful than the beautiful Rachel, and the griefs of Hannah were more divine than the boastings of Peninnah. "Blessed are they that mourn," said the Man of Sorrows, and let none account them otherwise when their tears are salted with grace. We have the treasure of the gospel in earthen vessels, and if there be a flaw in the vessel here and there, let none wonder.

Our work, when earnestly undertaken, lays us open to attacks in the direction of depression. Who can bear the weight of souls without sometimes sinking to the dust? Passionate longings after men's conversion, if not fully satisfied (and when are they?), consume the soul with anxiety and disappointment. To see the hopeful turn aside, the godly grow cold, professors abusing their privileges, and sinners waxing more bold in sin--are not these sights enough to crush us to the earth? The kingdom comes not as we would, the reverend name is not hallowed as we desire, and for this we must weep. How can we be otherwise than sorrowful, while men believe not our report, and the divine arm is not revealed? All mental work tends to weary and to depress, for much study is a weariness of the flesh; but ours is more than mental work–it is heart work, the labor of our inmost soul. How often, on Lord's-day evenings, do we feel as if life were completely washed out of us! After pouring out our souls over

our congregations, we feel like empty earthen pitchers which a child might break. Probably, if we were more like Paul, and watched for souls at a nobler rate, we should know more of what it is to be eaten up by the zeal of the Lord's house. It is our duty and our privilege to exhaust our lives for Jesus. We are not to be living specimens of men in fine preservation, but living sacrifices, whose lot is to be consumed; we are to spend and to be spent, not to lay ourselves up in lavender, and nurse our flesh. Such soul-travail as that of a faithful minister will bring on occasional seasons of exhaustion, when heart and flesh will fail. Moses' hands grew heavy in intercession, and Paul cried out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Even John the Baptist is thought to have had his fainting fits, and the apostles were once amazed, and were sore afraid.

Our position in the church will also conduce to this. A minister fully equipped for his work will usually be a spirit by himself, above, beyond, and apart from others. The most loving of his people cannot enter into his peculiar thoughts, cares, and temptations. In the ranks, men walk shoulder to shoulder, with many comrades, but as the officer rises in rank, men of his standing are fewer in number. There are many soldiers, few captains, fewer colonels, but only one commander-in-chief. So, in our churches, the man whom the Lord raises as a leader becomes, in the same degree in which he is a superior man, a solitary man. The mountain-tops stand solemnly apart, and talk only with God as He visits their terrible solitudes. Men of God who rise above their fellows into nearer communion with heavenly things, in their weaker moments feel the lack of human sympathy. Like their Lord in Gethsemane, they look in vain for comfort to the disciples sleeping around them; they are shocked at the apathy of their little band of brethren, and return to their secret agony with all the heavier burden pressing upon them, because they have found their dearest companions slumbering. No one knows, but he who has endured it, the solitude of a soul which has outstripped its fellows in zeal for the Lord of hosts: it dares not reveal itself, lest men count it mad; it cannot conceal itself, for a fire burns within its bones: only before the Lord does it

find rest. Our Lord's sending out his disciples by two and two manifested that he knew what was in men; but for such a man as Paul, it seems to me that no helpmeet was found; Barnabas, or Silas, or Luke, were hills too low to hold high converse with such a Himalayan summit as the apostle of the Gentiles. This loneliness, which if I mistake not is felt by many of my brethren, is a fertile source of depression; and our ministers' fraternal meetings, and the cultivation of holy intercourse with kindred minds will, with God's blessing, help us greatly to escape the snare.

There can be little doubt that sedentary habits have a tendency to create despondency in some constitutions. Burton, in his Anatomy of Melancholy, has a chapter upon this cause of sadness; and, quoting from one of the myriad authors whom he lays under contribution, he says-

> 'Students are negligent of their bodies. Other men look to their tools; a painter will wash his pencils; a smith will look to his hammer, anvil, forge; a husbandman will mend his plough-irons, and grind his hatchet if it be dull; a falconer or huntsman will have an especial care of his hawks, hounds, horses, dogs, etc.; a musician will string and unstring his lute; only scholars neglect that instrument (their brain and spirits I mean) which they daily use. Well saith Lucan, 'See thou twist not the rope so hard that it break.'

To sit long in one posture, poring over a book, or driving a quill, is in itself a taxing of nature; but add to this a badly ventilated chamber, a body which has long been without muscular exercise, and a heart burdened with many cares, and we have all the elements for preparing a seething cauldron of despair, especially in the dim months of fog:

> When a blanket wraps the day,
> When the rotten woodland drips,
> And the leaf is stamped in clay.

Let a man be naturally as blithe as a bird, he will hardly be able to bear up year after year against such a suicidal, process; he will make his study a prison and his books the warders of a gaol, while nature lies outside his window calling him to health and beckoning him to joy. He who forgets the humming of the bees among the heather, the cooing of the wood-pigeons in the forest, the song of birds in the woods, the rippling of rills among the rushes, and the sighing of the wind among the pines, needs not wonder if his heart forgets to sing and his soul grows heavy. A day's breathing of fresh air upon the hills, or a few hours' ramble in the beech woods' shadycalm, would sweep the cobwebs out of the brain of scores of our toiling ministers who are now but half alive. A mouthful of sea air, or a stiff walk in the wind's face, would not give grace to the soul, but it would yield oxygen to the body, which is next best.

> Heaviest the heart is in a heavy air,
> Ev'ry wind that rises blows away despair.

The ferns and the rabbits, the streams and the trouts, the fir trees and the squirrels, the primroses and the violets, the farm-yard, the new-mown hay, and the fragrant hops–these are the best medicine for hypochondriacs, the surest tonics for the declining, the best refreshments for the weary. For lack of opportunity, or inclination, these great remedies are neglected, and the student becomes a self-immolated victim.

The times most favorable to fits of depression, so far as I have experienced, may be summed up in a brief catalogue. First among them I must mention the hour of great success. When at last a long-cherished desire is fulfillled, when God has been glorified greatly by our means, and a great triumph achieved, then we are apt to faint. It might be imagined that amid special favors our soul would soar to heights of ecstacy, and rejoice with joy unspeakable, but it is generally the reverse. The Lord seldom exposes His warriors to the perils of exultation over victory; he knows that few of them can endure such a test, and therefore dashes their cup with bitterness. See Elias after the fire has fallen from heaven, after Baal's priests

have been slaughtered and the rain has deluged the barren land! For him no notes of self-complacent music, no strutting like a conqueror in robes of triumph; he flees from Jezebel, and feeling the revulsion of his intense excitement, he prays that he may die. He who must never see death, yearns after the rest of the grave, even as Caesar, the world's monarch, in his moments of pain cried like a sick girl.

Poor human nature cannot bear such strains as heavenly triumphs bring to it; there must come a reaction. Excess of joy or excitement must be paid for by subsequent depressions. While the trial lasts, the strength is equal to the emergency; but when it is over, natural weakness claims the right to show itself. Secretly sustained, Jacob can wrestle all night, but he must limp in the morning when the contest is over, lest he boast himself beyond measure. Paul may be caught up to the third heaven, and hear unspeakable things, but a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, must be the inevitable sequel. Men cannot bear unalloyed happiness; even good men are not yet fit to have "their brows with laurel and with myrtle bound," without enduring secret humiliation to keep them in their proper place. Whirled from off our feet by a revival, carried aloft by popularity, exalted by success in soul-winning, we should be as the chaff which the wind driveth away, were it not that the gracious discipline of mercy breaks the ships of our vain glory with a strong east wind, and casts us shipwrecked, naked and forlorn, upon the Rock of Ages.

Before any great achievement, some measure of the same depression is very usual. Surveying the difficulties before us, our hearts sink within us. The sons of Anak stalk before us, and we are as grasshoppers in our own sight in their presence. The cities of Canaan are walled up to heaven, and who are we that we should hope to capture them? We are ready to cast down our weapons and take to our heels. Nineveh is a great city, and we would flee unto Tarshish sooner than encounter its noisy crowds. Already we look for a ship which may bear us quietly away from the terrible scene, and only a dread of tempest restrains our recreant footsteps. Such was my experience when I first became a pastor in London. My

success appalled me; and the thought of the career which it seemed to open up, so far from elating me, cast me into the lowest depth, out of which I uttered my *miserere* and found no room for a *gloria in excelsis*. Who was I that I should continue to lead so great a multitude? I would betake me to my village obscurity, or emigrate to America, and find a solitary nest in the backwoods, where I might be sufficient for the things which would be demanded of me. It was just then that the curtain was rising upon my life-work, and I dreaded what it might reveal. I hope I was not faithless, but I was timorous and filled with a sense of my own unfitness. I dreaded the work which a gracious providence had prepared for me. I felt myself a mere child, and trembled as I heard the voice which said, "Arise, and thresh the mountains, and make them as chaff." This depression comes over me whenever the Lord is preparing a larger blessing for my ministry; the cloud is black before it breaks, and overshadows before it yields its deluge of mercy. Depression has now become to me as a prophet in rough clothing, a John the Baptist, heralding the nearer coming of my Lord's richer benediction. So have far better men found it. The scouring of the vessel has fitted it for the Master's use. Immersion in suffering has preceded the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Fasting gives an appetite for the banquet. The Lord is revealed in the backside of the desert, while His servant keepeth the sheep and waits in solitary awe. The wilderness is the way to Canaan. The low valley leads to the towering mountain. Defeat prepares for victory. The raven is sent forth before the dove. The darkest hour of the night precedes the day-dawn. The mariners go down to the depths, but the next wave makes them mount to the heaven; their soul is melted because of trouble before he bringeth them to their desired haven.

In the midst of a long stretch of unbroken labor, the same affliction may be looked for. The bow cannot be always bent without fear of breaking. Repose is as needful to the mind as sleep to the body. Our Sabbaths are our days of toil, and if we do not rest upon some other day we shall break down. Even the earth must lie fallow and have her Sabbaths,

and so must we. Hence the wisdom and compassion of our Lord, when He said to His disciples, "Let us go into the desert and rest awhile." What! when the people are fainting? When the multitudes are like sheep upon the mountains without a shepherd? Does Jesus talk of rest? When Scribes and Pharisees, like grievous wolves, are rending the flock, does He take His followers on an excursion into a quiet resting place? Does some red-hot zealot denounce such atrocious forgetfulness of present and pressing demands? Let him rave in his folly. The Master knows better than to exhaust His servants and quench the light of Israel. Rest time is not waste time. It is economy to gather fresh strength. Look at the mower in the summer's day, with so much to cut down ere the sun sets. He pauses in his labor–is he a sluggard? He looks for his stone, and begins to draw it up and down his scythe, with "rink-a-tink—rink-a-tink—rink-a-tink." Is that idle music—is he wasting precious moments? How much he might have mown while he has been ringing out those notes on his scythe! But he is sharpening his tool, and he will do far more when once again he gives his strength to those long sweeps which lay the grass prostrate in rows before him. Even thus a little pause prepares the mind for greater service in the good cause. Fishermen must mend their nets, and we must every now and then repair our mental waste and set our machinery in order for future service. To tug the oar from day to day, like a galley slave who knows no holidays, suits not mortal men. Mill-streams go on and on for ever, but we must have our pauses and our intervals. Who can help being out of breath when the race is continued without intermission? Even beasts of burden must be turned out to grass occasionally; the very sea pauses at ebb and flood; earth keeps the Sabbath of the wintry months; and man, even when exalted to be God's ambassador, must rest or faint; must trim his lamp or let it burn low; must recruit his vigor or grow prematurely old. It is wisdom to take occasional furlough. In the long run, we shall do more by sometimes doing less. On, on, on for ever, without recreation, may suit spirits emancipated from this "heavy clay," but while we are in this tabernacle, we must every now and then cry halt, and serve the

Lord by holy inaction and consecrated leisure. Let no tender conscience doubt the lawfulness of going out of harness for a while, but learn from the experience of others the necessity and duty of taking timely rest.

One crushing stroke has sometimes laid the minister very low. The brother most relied upon becomes a traitor. Judas lifts up his heel against the man who trusted him, and the preacher's heart for the moment fails him. We are all too apt to look to an arm of flesh, and from that propensity many of our sorrows arise. Equally overwhelming is the blow when an honored and beloved member yields to temptation, and disgraces the holy name with which he was named. Anything is better than this. This makes the preacher long for a lodge in some vast wilderness, where he may hide his head forever, and hear no more the blasphemous jeers of the ungodly. Ten years of toil do not take so much life out of us as we lose in a few hours by Ahithophel the traitor, or Demas the apostate. Strife, also, and division, and slander, and foolish censures, have often laid holy men prostrate, and made them go "as with a sword in their bones." Hard words wound some delicate minds very keenly. Many of the best of ministers, from the very spirituality of their character, are exceedingly sensitive—too sensitive for such a world as this. "A kick that scarce would move a horse would kill a sound divine." By experience the soul is hardened to the rough blows which are inevitable in our warfare; but at first these things utterly stagger us, and send us to our homes wrapped in a horror of great darkness. The trials of a true minister are not few, and such as are caused by ungrateful professors are harder to bear than the coarsest attacks of avowed enemies. Let no man who looks for ease of mind and seeks the quietude of life enter the ministry; if he does so he will flee from it in disgust.

To the lot of the few does it fall to pass through such a horror of great darkness as that which fell upon me after the deplorable accident at the Surrey Music Hall. I was pressed beyond measure and out of bounds with an enormous weight of misery. The tumult, the panic, the deaths, were day and night before me, and made life a burden. Then I sang in my

sorrow:

> The tumult of my thoughts
> Doth but increase my woe,
> My spirit languisheth, my heart
> Is desolate and low.

From that dream of horror I was awakened in a moment by the gracious application to my soul of the text, "Him hath God the Father exalted." The fact that Jesus is still great, let His servants suffer as they may, piloted me back to calm reason and peace. Should so terrible a calamity overtake any of my brethren, let them both patiently hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God.

When troubles multiply, and discouragements follow each other in long succession, like Job's messengers, then, too, amid the perturbation of soul occasioned by evil tidings, despondency despoils the heart of all its peace. Constant dropping wears away stones, and the bravest minds feel the fret of repeated afflictions. If a scanty cupboard is rendered a severer trial by the sickness of a wife or the loss of a child, and if ungenerous remarks of hearers are followed by the opposition of deacons and the coolness of members, then, like Jacob, we are apt to cry, "All these things are against me." When David returned to Ziklag and found the city burned, goods stolen, wives carried off, and his troops ready to stone him, we read, "he encouraged himself in his God"; and well was it for him that he could do so, for he would then have fainted if he had not believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Accumulated distresses increase each other's weight; they play into each other's hands, and, like bands of robbers, ruthlessly destroy our comfort. Wave upon wave is severe work for the strongest swimmer. The place where two seas meet strains the most seaworthy keel. If there were a regulated pause between the buffetings of adversity, the spirit would stand prepared; but when they come suddenly and heavily, like the battering of great hailstones, the pilgrim may well be amazed. The last ounce breaks the camel's back,

and when that last ounce is laid upon us, what wonder if we for awhile are ready to give up the ghost!

This evil will also come upon us, we know not why, and then it is all the more difficult to drive it away. Causeless depression is not to be reasoned with, nor can David's harp charm it away by sweet discoursings. As well fight with the mist as with this shapeless, undefinable, yet all-beclouding hopelessness. One affords himself no pity when in this case, because it seems so unreasonable, and even sinful, to be troubled without manifest cause; and yet troubled the man is, even in the very depths of his spirit. If those who laugh at such melancholy did but feel the grief of it for one hour, their laughter would be sobered into compassion. Resolution might, perhaps, shake it off, but where are we to find the resolution when the whole man is unstrung? The physician and the divine may unite their skill in such cases, and both find their hands full, and more than full. The iron bolt which so mysteriously fastens the door of hope and holds our spirits in gloomy prison, needs a heavenly hand to push it back; and when that hand is seen we cry with the apostle, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" 2 Cor. 1:3, 4. It is the God of all consolation who can:

> With sweet oblivious antidote
> Cleanse our poor bosoms of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart.

Simon sinks till Jesus takes him by the hand. The devil within rends and tears the poor child till the word of authority commands him to come out of him. When we are ridden with horrible fears, and weighed down with an intolerable incubus, we need but the Sun of Righteousness to rise, and the evils generated of our darkness are driven away; but nothing short of this will chase away the nightmare of the soul. Timothy

Rogers, the author of a treatise on Melancholy, and Simon Browne, the writer of some remarkably sweet hymns, proved in their own cases how unavailing is the help of man if the Lord withdraw the light from the soul.

If it be enquired why the Valley of the Shadow of Death must so often be traversed by the servants of King Jesus, the answer is not far to find. All this is promotive of the Lord's mode of working, which is summed up in these words: "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Instruments shall be used, but their intrinsic weakness shall be clearly manifested; there shall be no division of the glory, no diminishing the honor due to the Great Worker. The man shall be emptied of self, and then filled with the Holy Ghost. In his own apprehension he shall be like a dry and withered leaf driven of the tempest, and then shall be strengthened into a brazen wall against the enemies of truth. To hide pride from the worker is the great difficulty. Uninterrupted success and unfading joy in it would be more than our weak heads could bear. Our wine must needs be mixed with water, lest it turn our brains. My witness is, that those who are honored of their Lord in public have usually to endure a secret chastening, or to carry a peculiar cross, lest by any means they exalt themselves, and fall into the snare of the devil. How constantly the Lord calls Ezekiel "Son of man"! Amid his soarings into the superlative splendors, just when with eye undimmed he is strengthened to gaze into the excellent glory, the word "Son of man" falls on his ears, sobering the heart which else might have been intoxicated with the honor conferred upon it. Such humbling but salutary messages our depressions whisper in our ears; they tell us in a manner not to be mistaken that we are but men, frail, feeble, apt to faint.

By all the castings down of His servants God is glorified, for they are led to magnify Him when He sets them on their feet, and even while prostrate in the dust their faith yields Him praise. They speak all the more sweetly of His faithfulness, and are the more firmly established in His love. Such mature men as some elderly preachers are, could scarcely have been produced if they had not been emptied from vessel

to vessel, and made to see their own emptiness and the vanity of all things round about them. Glory be to God for the furnace, the hammer, and the file. Heaven shall be all the fuller of bliss because we have been filled with anguish here below, and earth shall be better tilled because of our training in the school of adversity.

The lesson of wisdom is, be not dismayed by soul-trouble. Count it no strange thing, but a part of ordinary ministerial experience. Should the power of depression be more than ordinary, think not that all is over with your usefulness. Cast not away your confidence, for it hath great recompense of reward. Even if the enemy's foot be on your neck, expect to rise and overthrow him. Cast the burden of the present, along with the sin of the past and the fear of the future, upon the Lord, who forsaketh not His saints. Live by the day--ay, by the hour. Put no trust in frames and feelings. Care more for a grain of faith than a ton of excitement. Trust in God alone, and lean not on the needs of human help. Be not surprised when friends fail you: it is a failing world. Never count upon immutability in man: inconstancy you may reckon upon without fear of disappointment. The disciples of Jesus forsook Him; be not amazed if your adherents wander away to other teachers: as they were not your all when with you, all is not gone from you with their departure. Serve God with all your might while the candle is burning, and then when it goes out for a season, you will have the less to regret. Be content to be nothing, for that is what you are. When your own emptiness is painfully forced upon your consciousness, chide yourself that you ever dreamed of being full, except in the Lord. Set small store by present rewards; be grateful for earnests by the way, but look for the recompensing joy hereafter.

Continue with double earnestness to serve your Lord when no visible result is before you. Any simpleton can follow the narrow path in the light: faith's rare wisdom enables us to march on in the dark with infallible accuracy, since she places her hand in that of her Great Guide. Between this and heaven there may be rougher weather yet, but it is all provided for by our covenant Head. In nothing let us be turned aside from the

path which the divine call has urged us to pursue. Come fair or come foul, the pulpit is our watch-tower, and the ministry our warfare; be it ours, when we cannot see the face of our God, to trust under THE SHADOW OF HIS WINGS.

9

THE MINISTER'S ORDINARY CONVERSATION

Our subject is to be the minister's common conversation when he mingles with men in general, and is supposed to be quite at his ease. How shall he order his speech among his fellow-men? First and foremost, let me say, let him give himself no ministerial airs, but avoid everything which is stilted, official, fussy, and pretentious. "The Son of Man" is a noble title; it was given to Ezekiel, and to a greater than he: let not the ambassador of heaven be other than a son of man. In fact, let him remember that the more simple and unaffected he is, the more closely will he resemble that child-man, the holy child Jesus. There is such a thing as trying to be too much a minister, and becoming too little a man; though the more of a true man you are, the more truly will you be what a servant of the Lord should be. Schoolmasters and ministers have generally an appearance peculiarly their own; in the wrong sense, they "are not as other men are." They are too often speckled birds, looking as if they were not at home among the other inhabitants of the country, but awkward and peculiar. When I have seen a flamingo gravely stalking along, an owl blinking in the shade, or a stork demurely lost in thought, I have been irresistibly led to remember some of my dignified brethren of the teaching and preaching fraternity, who are so marvellously proper at all times that they are just a shade amusing. Their very respectable, stilted, dignified, important, self-restrained manner is easily acquired; but is it worth acquiring?

Theodore Hook once stepped up to a gentleman who was parading the street with great pomposity, and said to him, "Sir, are you not a person of great importance?" and one has felt half inclined to do the same with certain brethren of the

cloth. I know brethren who, from head to foot, in garb, tone, manner, necktie, and boots, are so utterly parsonic that no particle of manhood is visible. One young sprig of divinity must needs go through the streets in a gown, and another of the High Church order has recorded it in the newspapers with much complacency that he traversed Switzerland and Italy, wearing in all places his biretta; few boys would have been so proud of a fool's cap.

None of us are likely to go as far as that in our apparel; but we may do the like by our mannerism. Some men appear to have a white cravat twisted round their souls, their manhood is throttled with that starched rag. Certain brethren maintain an air of superiority which they think impressive, but which is simply offensive, and eminently opposed to their pretensions as followers of the lowly Jesus. The proud Duke of Somerset intimated his commands to his servants by signs, not condescending to speak to such base beings; his children never sat down in his presence, and when he slept in the afternoon one of his daughters stood on each side of him during his august slumbers. When proud Somersets get into the ministry, they affect dignity in other ways almost equally absurd. "Stand by, I am holier than thou," is written across their foreheads.

A well-known minister was once rebuked by a sublime brother for his indulgence in a certain luxury, and the expense was made a great argument. "Well, well," he replied, "there may be something in that; but remember, I do not spend half so much upon my weakness as you do in starch." That is the article I am deprecating, that dreadful ministerial starch. If you have indulged in it, I would earnestly advise you to "go and wash in Jordan seven times," and get it out of you, every particle of it. I am persuaded that one reason why our working men so universally keep clear of ministers is because they abhor their artificial and unmanly ways. If they saw us, in the pulpit and out of it, acting like real men, and speaking naturally, like honest men, they would come around us. Baxter's remark still holds good: "The want of a familiar tone and expression is a great fault in most of our deliveries, and

that which we should be very careful to amend." The vice of the ministry is that ministers will parsonificate the gospel. We must have humanity along with our divinity if we would win the masses. Everybody can see through affectations, and people are not likely to be taken in by them. Fling away your stilts, brethren, and walk on your feet; doff your ecclesiasticism, and array yourselves in truth.

Still, a minister, wherever he is, is a minister, and should recollect that he is on duty. A policeman or a soldier may be off duty, but a minister never is. Even in our recreations we should still pursue the great object of our lives; for we are called to be diligent "in season and out of season." There is no position in which we may be placed but the Lord may come with the question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" and we ought to be able at once to answer, "I have something to do for thee even here, and I am trying to do it." The bow, of course, must be at times unstrung, or else it will lose its elasticity; but there is no need to cut the string. I am speaking at this time of the minister in times of relaxation; and I say that even then he should conduct himself as the ambassador of God, and seize opportunities of doing good: this will not mar his rest, but sanctify it. A minister should be like a certain chamber which I saw at Beaulieu, in the New Forest, in which a cobweb is never seen, It is a large lumber-room, and is never swept; yet no spider ever defiles it with the emblems of neglect. It is roofed with chestnut, and for some reason, I know not what, spiders will not come near that wood by the year together. The same thing was mentioned to me in the corridors of Winchester School: I was told, "No spiders ever come here." Our minds should be equally clear of idle habits.

On our public rests for porters in the City of London you may read the words, "Rest, but do not loiter"; and they contain advice worthy of our attention. I do not call the *dolce far niente* laziness; there is a sweet doing of nothing which is just the finest medicine in the world for a jaded mind. When the mind gets fatigued and out of order, to rest it is no more idleness than sleep is idleness; and no man is called lazy for sleeping the proper time. It is far better to be industriously

asleep than lazily awake. Be ready to do good even in your resting times and in your leisure hours; and so be really a minister, and there will be no need for you to proclaim that you are so.

The Christian minister out of the pulpit should be a sociable man. He is not sent into the world to be a hermit, or a monk of La Trappe. It is not his vocation to stand on a pillar all day, above his fellow men, like that hare-brained Simon Stylites of olden time. You are not to warble from the top of a tree, like an invisible nightingale; but to be a man among men, saying to them, "I also am as you are in all that relates to man." Salt is of no use in the box; it must be rubbed into the meat; and our personal influence must penetrate and season society. Keep aloof from others, and how can you benefit them? Our Master went to a wedding, and ate bread with publicans and sinners, and yet was far more pure than those sanctimonious Pharisees, whose glory was that they were separate from their fellow-men. Some ministers need to be told that they are of the same species as their hearers. It is a remarkable fact, but we may as well state it, that bishops, canons, archdeacons, prebendaries, rural deans, rectors, vicars and even archbishops, are only men after all; and God has not railed off a holy corner of the earth to serve as a chancel for them, to abide therein by themselves.

It would not be amiss if there could be a revival of holy talk in the church-yard and the meeting-yard. I like to see the big yew-trees outside our ancient churches with seats all round them. They seem to say: "Sit down here, neighbor, and talk upon the sermon; here comes the pastor; he will join us, and we shall have a pleasant, holy chat." It is not every preacher we would care to talk with; but there are some whom one would give a fortune to converse with for an hour. I love a minister whose face invites me to make him my friend- -a man upon whose doorstep you read, *"Salve,"* "Welcome"; and feel that there is no need of that Pompeian warning, *"Cave Canem,"* "Beware of the dog."

Give me the man around whom the children come, like flies around a honey-pot: they are first-class judges of a good

man. When Solomon was tried by the Queen of Sheba, as to his wisdom, the rabbis tell us that she brought some artificial flowers with her, beautifully made and delicately scented, so as to be facsimiles of real flowers. She asked Solomon to discover which were artificial and which were real. The wise man bade his servants open the window, and when the bees came in they flew at once to the natural flowers, and cared nothing for the artificial. So you will find that children have their instincts, and discover very speedily who is their friend, and depend upon it the children's friend is one who will be worth knowing. Have a good word to say to each and every member of the family–the big boys, and the young ladies, and the little girls, and everybody. No one knows what a smile and a hearty sentence may do. A man who is to do much with men must love them, and feel at home with them. An individual who has no geniality about him had better be an undertaker, and bury the dead, for he will never succeed in influencing the living.

I have met somewhere with the observation that to be a popular preacher one must have bowels. I fear that the observation was meant as a mild criticism upon the bulk to which certain brethren have attained: but there is truth in it. A man must have a great heart if he would have a great congregation. His heart should be as capacious as those noble harbors along our coast, which contain sea-room for a fleet. When a man has a large, loving heart, men go to him as ships to a haven, and feel at peace when they have anchored under the lee of his friendship. Such a man is hearty in private as well as in public; his blood is not cold and fishy, but he is warm as your own fireside. No pride and selfishness chill you when you approach him; he has his doors all open to receive you, and you are at home with him at once. Such men I would persuade you to be, every one of you.

The Christian minister should also be very cheerful. I don't believe in going about like certain monks whom I saw in Rome, who salute each other in sepulchral tones, and convey the pleasant information, "Brother, we must die:" to which lively salutation each lively brother of the order replies,

"Yes, brother, we must die." I was glad to be assured upon such good authority that all these lazy fellows are about to die; upon the whole, it is about the best thing they can do; but till that event occurs, they might use some more comfortable form of salutation.

No doubt there are some people who will be impressed by the very solemn appearance of ministers. I have heard of one who felt convinced that there must be something in the Roman Catholic religion, from the extremely starved and pinched appearance of a certain ecclesiastic. "Look," said he, "how the man is worn to a skeleton by his daily fastings and nightly vigils! How he must mortity his flesh!" Now, the probabilities are that the emaciated priest was laboring under some internal disease, which he would have been heartily glad to be rid of, and it was not conquest of appetite, but failure in digestion, which had so reduced him; or possibly a troubled conscience, which made him fret himself down to the light weights. Certainly, I have never met with a text which mentions prominence of bone as an evidence of grace. If so, "The Living Skeleton" should have been exhibited, not merely as a natural curiosity, but as the standard of virtue. Some of the biggest rogues in the world have been as mortified in appearance as if they had lived on locusts and wild honey. It is a very vulgar error to suppose that a melancholy countenance is the index of a gracious heart. I commend cheerfulness to all who would win souls; not levity and frothiness, but a genial happy spirit. There are more flies caught with honey than with vinegar, and there will be more souls led to heaven by a man who wears heaven in his face than by one who bears Tartarus in his looks.

Young ministers, and, indeed, all others, when they are in company, should take care not to engross all the conversation. They are quite qualified to do so, no doubt; I mean from their capacity to instruct, and readiness of utterance; but they must remember that people do not care to be perpetually instructed; they like to take a turn in the conversation themselves. Nothing pleases some people so much as to let them talk, and it may be for their good to let them be pleased. I spent an hour one evening with a person who did me the honor to say that he

found me a very charming companion, and most instructive in conversation, yet I do not hesitate to confess that I said scarcely anything at all, but allowed him to have the talk to himself. By exercising patience I gained his good opinion, and an opportunity to address him on other occasions. A man has no more right at table to talk all than to eat all. We are not to think ourselves Sir Oracle, before whom no dog must open his mouth. No; let all the company contribute of their stores, and they will think all the better of the godly words with which you try to season the discourse.

There are some companies into which you will go, especially when you are first settled, where everybody will be awed by the majesty of your presence, and people will be invited because the new minister is to be there. Such a position reminds me of the choicest statuary in the Vatican. A little room is screened off, a curtain is drawn, and lo! before you stands the great Apollo! If it be your trying lot to be the Apollo of the little party, put an end to the nonsense. If I were the Apollo, I should like to step right off the pedestal and shake hands all round, and you had better do the same; for sooner or later the fuss they make about you will come to an end, and the wisest course is to end it yourself. Hero-worship is a kind of idolatry, and must not be encouraged. Heroes do well when they, like the apostles at Lystra, are horrified at the honors done to them, and run in among the people crying, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you." Ministers will not have to do it long; for their foolish admirers are very apt to turn round upon them, and if they do
not stone them nearly to death, they will go as far as they dare in unkindness and contempt.

While I say, "Do not talk all, and assume an importance which is mere imposture;" still, do not be a dummy. People will form their estimate of you and your ministry by what they see of you in private as well as by your public deliverances. Many young men have ruined themselves in the pulpit by being indiscreet in the parlor, and have lost all hope of doing good by their stupidity or frivolity in company. Don't be an inanimate log. At Antwerp Fair, among many curiosities

advertised by huge paintings and big drums, I observed a booth containing "a great wonder," to be seen for a penny a head; it was a petrified man. I did not expend the amount required for admission, for I had seen so many petrified men for nothing, both in and out of the pulpit–lifeless, careless, destitute of common sense, and altogether inert, though occupied with the weightiest business which man could undertake.

Try to turn the conversation to profitable use. Be sociable and cheerful and all that, but labor to accomplish something. Why should you sow the wind, or plough a rock? Consider yourself, after all, as being very much responsible for the conversation which goes on where you are; for such is the esteem in which you will usually be held, that you will be the helmsman of the conversation. Therefore, steer it into a good channel. Do this without roughness or force. Keep the points of the line in good order, and the train will run on to your rails without a jerk. Be ready to seize opportunities adroitly, and lead on imperceptibly in the desired track. If your heart is in it and your wits are awake, this will be easy enough, especially if you breathe a prayer for guidance.

I shall never forget the manner in which a thirsty individual once begged of me upon Clapham Common. I saw him with a very large truck, in which he was carrying an extremely small parcel, and I wondered why he had not put the parcel into his pocket, and left the machine at home. I said, "It looks odd to see so large a truck for such a small load." He stopped, and looking me seriously in the face, he said, "Yes, sir, it is a very odd thing; but, do you know, I have met with an odder thing than that this very day. I've been about, working and sweating all this 'ere blessed day, and till now I haven't met a single gentleman that looked as if he'd give me a pint of beer, till I saw you." I considered that turn of the conversation very neatly managed, and we, with a far better subject upon our minds, ought to be equally able to introduce the topic upon which our heart is set. There was an ease in the man's manner which I envied, for I did not find it quite so simple a matter to introduce my own topic to his notice; yet if I had been thinking as much about how I could do him good

as he had upon how to obtain a drink, I feel sure I should have succeeded in reaching my point. If by any means we may save some, we must, like our Lord, talk at table to good purpose– yes, and on the margin of the well, and by the road, and on the sea-shore, and in the house, and in the field. To be a holy talker for Jesus might be almost as fruitful an office as to be a faithful preacher. Aim at excellence in both exercises, and if the Holy Spirit's aid be called in, you will attain your desire.

Here, perhaps, I may insert a canon, which nevertheless I believe to be quite needless, in reference to each one of the honorable brethren whom I am now addressing. Do not frequent rich men's tables to gain their countenance, and never make yourself a sort of general hanger-on at tea-parties and entertainments. Who are you that you should be dancing attendance upon this wealthy man and the other, when the Lord's poor, his sick people, and his wandering sheep require you? To sacrifice the study to the parlor is criminal. To be a tout for your church, and waylay people at their homes to draw them to fill your pews, is a degradation to which no man should submit. To see ministers of different sects fluttering round a wealthy man, like vultures round a dead camel, is sickening. Deliciously sarcastic was that famous letter "from an old and beloved minister to his dear son" upon his entrance into the ministry, the following extract from which hits our present point. It is said to have been copied from the Smellfungus Gazette, but I suspect our friend Paxton Hood knows all about its authorship:

> Keep also a watchful eye on all likely persons, especially wealthy or influential, who may come to your town; call upon them, and attempt to win them over by the devoutions of the drawing-room to your cause. Thus you may most efficiently serve the Master's interests. People need looking after, and the result of a long experience goes to confirm my conviction, long cherished, that the power of the pulpit is trifling compared with the power of the parlor. We must imitate and sanctify, by the word

> of God and prayer, the exercises of the Jesuits. They succeeded not by the pulpit so much as by the parlor. In the parlor you can whisper–you can meet people on all their little personal private ideas. The pulpit is a very unpleasant place; of course it is the great power of God, and so on, but it is the parlor that tells, and a minister has not the same chance of success if he be a good preacher as if he is a perfect gentleman; nor in cultivated society has any man a legitimate prospect of success if he is not, whatever he may be, a gentleman. I have always admired Lord Shaftesbury's character of St. Paul in his 'Characteristics'–that he was a fine gentleman. And I would say to you, be a gentleman. Not that I need to say so, but am persuaded that only in this way can we hope for the conversion of our growing wealthy middle classes. We must show that our religion is the religion of good sense and good taste; that we disapprove of strong excitements and strong stimulants; and oh, my dear boy, if you would be useful, often in your closet make it a matter of earnest prayer that you may be proper. If I were asked what is your first duty, be proper; and your second, be proper; and your third, be proper.

Those who remember a class of preachers who flourished fifty years ago will see the keenness of the satire in this extract. The evil is greatly mitigated now; in fact, I fear we may be drifting into another extreme.

In all probability, sensible conversation will sometimes drift into controversy, and here many a good man runs upon a snag. The sensible minister will be particularly gentle in argument. He, above all men, should not make the mistake of fancying that there is force in temper, and power in speaking angrily. A heathen who stood in a crowd in Calcutta, listening to a missionary disputing with a Brahmin, said he knew which was right though he did not understand the language–he knew

that he was in the wrong who lost his temper first. For the most part, that is a very accurate way of judging. Try to avoid debating with people. State your opinion and let them state theirs. If you see that a stick is crooked, and you want people to see how crooked it is, lay a straight rod down beside it; that will be quite enough. But if you are drawn into controversy, use very hard arguments and very soft words. Frequently you cannot convince a man by tugging at his reason, but you can persuade him by winning his affections. The other day I had the misery to need a pair of new boots, and though I bade the fellow make them as large as canoes, I had to labor fearfully to get them on. With a pair of boot-hooks I toiled like the men on board the vessel with Jonah, but all in vain. Just then my friend put in my way a little French chalk, and the work was done in a moment. Wonderfully coaxing was that French chalk. Gentlemen, always carry a little French chalk with you into society, a neat packet of Christian persuasiveness, and you will soon discover the virtues of it.

And lastly, with all his amiability, the minister should be firm for his principles, and bold to avow and defend them in all companies. When a fair opportunity occurs, or he has managed to create one, let him not be slow to make use of it. Strong in his principles, earnest in his tone, and affectionate in heart, let him speak out like a man and thank God for the privilege. There need be no reticence–there should be none. The maddest romances of Spiritualists, the wildest dreams of Utopian reformers, the silliest chit-chat of the town, and the vainest nonsense of the frivolous world, demand a hearing and get it. And shall not Christ be heard? Shall His message of love remain untold, for fear we should be charged with intrusion or accused of cant? Is religion to be tabooed--the best and noblest of all themes forbidden? If this be the rule of any society, we will not comply with it. If we cannot break it down, we will leave the society to itself, as men desert a house smitten with leprosy. We cannot consent to be gagged. There is no reason why we should be. We will go to no place where we cannot take our Master with us. While others take liberty

to sin, we shall not renounce our liberty to rebuke and warn them.

Wisely used, our common conversation may be a potent means for good. Trains of thought may be started by a single sentence which may lead to the conversion of persons whom our sermons have never reached. The method of button-holing people, or bringing the truth before them individually, has been greatly successful: this is another subject, and can hardly come under the head of Common Conversation; but we will close by saying that it is to be hoped that we shall never, in our ordinary talk, any more than in the pulpit, be looked upon as nice sort of persons, whose business it is to make things agreeable all round, and who never by any possibility cause uneasiness to any one, however ungodly their lives may be. Such persons go in and out among the families of their hearers, and make merry with them, when they ought to be mourning over them. They sit down at their tables and feast at their ease, when they ought to be warning them to flee from the wrath to come. They are like that American alarm I have heard of, which was warranted not to wake you if you did not wish it to do so. Be it ours to sow, not only on the honest and good soil, but on the rock and on the highway, and at the last great day to reap a glad harvest. May the bread which we cast upon the waters in odd times and strange occasions be found again after many days.

10

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONNECTION WITH OUR MINISTRY

I have selected a topic upon which it would be difficult to say anything which has not been often said before; but as the theme is of the highest importance it is good to dwell upon it frequently, and even if we bring forth only old things and nothing more, it may be wise to put you in remembrance of them. Our subject is *"The Holy Spirit in connection with our ministry,"* or –the work of the Holy Ghost in relation to ourselves as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"I believe in the Holy Ghost." Having pronounced that sentence as a matter of creed, I hope we can also repeat it as a devout soliloquy forced to our lips by personal experience. To us the presence and work of the Holy Spirit are the ground of our confidence as to the wisdom and hopefulness of our life work. If we had not believed in the Holy Ghost we should have laid down our ministry long ere this, for "who is sufficient for these things?" Our hope of success, and our strength for continuing the service, lie in our belief that the Spirit of the Lord resteth upon us.

I will for the time being take it for granted that we are all of us conscious of the existence of the Holy Spirit. We have said we believe in Him; but in very deed we have advanced beyond faith in this matter, and have come into the region of consciousness. Time was when most of us believed in the existence of our present friends, for we had heard of them by the hearing of the ear, but we have now seen each other, and returned the fraternal grip, and felt the influence of happy companionship, and therefore we do not now so much believe as know. Even so we have felt the Spirit of God operating upon our hearts, we have known and perceived the power

which He wields over human spirits, and we know Him by frequent, conscious, personal contact. By the sensitiveness of our spirit we are as much made conscious of the presence of the Spirit of God as we are made cognizant of the existence of the souls of our fellow-men by their action upon our souls, or as we are certified of the existence of matter by its action upon our senses. We have been raised from the dull sphere of mere mind and matter into the heavenly radiance of the spirit-world; and now, as spiritual men, we discern spiritual things, we feel the forces which are paramount in the spirit-realm, and we know that there is a Holy Ghost, for we feel Him operating upon our spirits. If it were not so, we should certainly have no right to be in the ministry of Christ's church. Should we even dare to remain in her membership? But, my brethren, we have been spiritually quickened. We are distinctly conscious of a new life, with all that comes out of it: we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and dwell in a new world. We have been illuminated, and made to behold the things which eye hath not seen; we have been guided into truth such as flesh and blood could never have revealed. We have been comforted of the Spirit: full often have we been lifted up from the deeps of sorrow to the heights of joy by the sacred Paraclete. We have also, in a measure, been sanctified by Him; and we are conscious that the operation of sanctification is going on in us in different forms and ways. Therefore, because of all these personal experiences, we know that there is a Holy Ghost, as surely as we know that we ourselves exist.

I am tempted to linger here, for the point is worthy of longer notice. Unbelievers ask for phenomena. The old business doctrine of Gradgrind has entered into religion, and the sceptic cries, "What I want is facts." These are our facts: let us not forget to use them. A sceptic challenges me with the remark, "I cannot pin my faith to a book or a history; I want to see present facts." My reply is, "You cannot see them, because your eyes are blinded; but the facts are there none the less. Those of us who have eyes see marvellous things, though you do not." If he ridicules my assertion, I am not at all astonished. I expected him to do so, and should have been very much

surprised if he had not done so; but I demand respect to my own position as a witness to facts, and I turn upon the objector with the enquiry– "What right have you to deny my evidence? If I were a blind man, and were told by you that you possessed a faculty called sight, I should be unreasonable if I railed at you as a conceited enthusiast. All you have a right to say is– that you know nothing about it, but you are not authorized to call us all liars or dupes. You may join with revilers of old and declare that the spiritual man is mad, but that does not disprove his statements." Brethren, to me the phenomena which are produced by the Spirit of God demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion as clearly as ever the destruction of Pharaoh at the Red Sea, or the fall of manna in the wilderness, or the water leaping from the smitten rock, could have proved to Israel the presence of God in the midst of her tribes.

We will now come to the core of our subject. To us, as ministers, the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential. Without Him our office is a mere name. We claim no priesthood over and above that which belongs to every child of God; but we are the successors of those who, in olden times, were moved of God to declare His word, to testify against transgression, and to lead His cause. Unless we have the spirit of the prophets resting upon us, the mantle which we wear is nothing but a rough garment to deceive. We ought to be driven forth with abhorrence from the society of honest men for daring to speak in the name of the Lord if the Spirit of God rests not upon us. We believe ourselves to be spokesmen for Jesus Christ, appointed to continue His witness upon earth; but upon Him and His testimony the Spirit of God always rested, and if it does not rest upon us, we are evidently not sent forth into the world as He was. At Pentecost the commencement of the great work of converting the world was with flaming tongues and a rushing mighty wind, symbols of the presence of the Spirit; if, therefore, we think to succeed without the Spirit, we are not after the Pentecostal order. If we have not the Spirit which Jesus promised, we cannot perform the commission which Jesus gave.

I need scarcely warn any brother here against falling

into the delusion that we may have the Spirit so as to become inspired. Yet the members of a certain litigious modern sect need to be warned against this folly. They hold that their meetings are under "the presidency of the Holy Spirit": concerning which notion I can only say that I have been unable to discover in holy Scripture either the term or the idea. I do find in the New Testament a body of Corinthians eminently gifted, fond of speaking, and given to party strifes– true representatives of those to whom I allude, but as Paul said of them, "I thank God I baptized none of you," so also do I thank the Lord that few of that school have ever been found in our midst. It would seem that their assemblies possess a peculiar gift of inspiration, not quite perhaps amounting to infallibility, but nearly approximating thereto. If you have mingled in their gatherings, I greatly question whether you have been more edified by the prelections produced under celestial presidency, than you have been by those of ordinary preachers of the Word, who only consider themselves to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as one spirit is under the influence of another spirit, or one mind under the influence of another mind. We are not the passive communicators of infallibility, but the honest teachers of such things as we have learned, so far as we have been able to grasp them. As our minds are active, and have a personal existence while the mind of the Spirit is acting upon them, our infirmities are apparent as well as His wisdom; and while we reveal what He has made us to know, we are greatly abased by the fear that our own ignorance and error are in a measure manifested at the same time, because we have not been more perfectly subject to the divine power. I do not suspect that you will go astray in the direction I have hinted at: certainly the results of previous experiments are not likely to tempt wise men to that folly.

This is our first question. *Wherein may we look for the aid of the Holy Spirit?* When we have spoken on this point, we will, very solemnly, consider a second—*How may we lose that assistance?* Let us pray that, by God's blessing, this consideration may help us to retain it.

Wherein may we look for the aid of the Holy Spirit? I

should reply,–in seven or eight ways.

First, *He is the Spirit of knowledge*,—"He shall guide you into all truth." In this character we need His teaching.

We have urgent need to study, for the teacher of others must himself be instructed. Habitually to come into the pulpit unprepared is unpardonable presumption: nothing can more effectually lower ourselves and our office. After a visitation discourse by the Bishop of Lichfield upon the necessity of earnestly studying the Word, a certain vicar told his lordship that he could not believe his doctrine, "for," said he, "often when I am in the vestry I do not know what I am going to talk about; but I go into the pulpit and preach, and think nothing of it." His lordship replied, "And you are quite right in thinking nothing of it, for your churchwardens have told me that they share your opinion." If we are not instructed, how can we instruct? If we have not thought, how shall we lead others to think? It is in our study-work, in that blessed labor when we are alone with the Book before us, that we need the help of the Holy Spirit. He holds the key of the heavenly treasury, and can enrich us beyond conception; He has the clue of the most labyrinthine doctrine, and can lead us in the way of truth. He can break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron, and give to us the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places. If you study the original, consult the commentaries, and meditate deeply, yet if you neglect to cry mightily unto the Spirit of God your study will not profit you; but even if you are debarred the use of helps (which I trust you will not be), if you wait upon the Holy Ghost in simple dependence upon His teaching, you will lay hold of very much of the divine meaning.

The Spirit of God is peculiarly precious to us, because He especially instructs us as to the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that is the main point of our preaching. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. If He had taken of the things of doctrine or precept, we should have been glad of such gracious assistance; but since He especially delights in the things of Christ, and focuses His sacred light upon the cross, we rejoice to see the center of our testimony

so divinely illuminated, and we are sure that the light will be diffused over all the rest of our ministry. Let us wait upon the Spirit of God with this cry—"O Holy Spirit, reveal to us the Son of God, and thus show us the Father."

As the Spirit of knowledge, He not only instructs us as to the gospel, but He leads us to see the Lord in all other matters. We are not to shut our eyes to God in nature, or to God in general history, or to God in the daily occurrences of providence, or to God in our own experience; and the blessed Spirit is the interpreter to us of the mind of God in all these. If we cry, "Teach me what thou wouldst have me to do; or, show me wherefore thou contendest with me; or, tell me what is thy mind in this precious providence of mercy, or in that other dispensation of mingled judgment and grace,"—we shall in each case be well instructed; for the Spirit is the seven-branched candlestick of the sanctuary, and by His light all things are rightly seen. As Goodwin well observes, "There must be light to accompany the truth if we are to know it. The experience of all gracious men proves this. What is the reason that you shall see some things in a chapter at one time, and not at another; some grace in your hearts at one time, and not at another; have a sight of spiritual things at one time, and not at another? The eye is the same, but it is the Holy Ghost that openeth and shutteth this dark lantern, as I may so call it; as He openeth it wider, or contracts it, or shutteth it narrower, so do we see more or less: and sometimes He shutteth it wholly, and then the soul is in darkness, though it have never so good an eye."

Beloved brethren, wait upon Him for this light, or you will abide in darkness and become blind leaders of the blind.

In the second place, the Spirit is called *the Spirit of wisdom*, and we greatly need Him in that capacity; for knowledge may be dangerous if unaccompanied with wisdom, which is the art of rightly using what we know. Rightly to divide the Word of God is as important as fully to understand it, for some who have evidently understood a part of the gospel have given undue prominence to that one portion of it, and have therefore exhibited a distorted Christianity, to the

injury of those who have received it, since they in their turn have exhibited a distorted character in consequence thereof. A man's nose is a prominent feature in his face, but it is possible to make it so large that eyes and mouth and everything else are thrown into insignificance, and the drawing is a caricature and not a portrait: so certain important doctrines of the gospel can be so proclaimed in excess as to throw the rest of truth into the shade, and the preaching is no longer the gospel in its natural beauty, but a caricature of the truth, of which caricature, however, let me say, some people seem to be mightily fond.

The Spirit of God will teach you the use of the sacrificial knife to divide the offerings; and He will show you how to use the balances of the sanctuary so as to weigh out and mix the precious spices in their proper quantities. Every experienced preacher feels this to be of the utmost moment, and it is well if he is able to resist all temptation to neglect it. Alas, some of our hearers do not desire to hear the whole counsel of God. They have their favorite doctrines, and would have us silent on all besides. Many are like the Scotchwoman, who, after hearing a sermon, said, "It was very well if it hadna been for the trash of duties at the *hinner* end." There are brethren of that kind; they enjoy the comforting part–the promises and the doctrines, but practical holiness must scarcely be touched upon. Faithfulness requires us to give them a four-square gospel, from which nothing is omitted, and in which nothing is exaggerated, and for this much wisdom is requisite. I gravely question whether any of us have so much of this wisdom as we need. We are probably afflicted by some inexcusable partialities and unjustifiable leanings; let us search them out and have done with them.

We may be conscious of having passed by certain texts, not because we do not understand them (which might be justifiable), but because we do understand them, and hardly like to say what they have taught us, or because there may be some imperfection in ourselves, or some prejudice among our hearers which those texts would reveal too clearly for our comfort. Such sinful silence must be ended forthwith. To be

wise stewards and bring forth the right portions of meat for our Master's household we need Thy teaching, O Spirit of the Lord!

Nor is this all, for even if we know how rightly to divide the Word of God, we want wisdom in the selection of the particular part of truth which is most applicable to the season and to the people assembled; and equal discretion in the tone and manner in which the doctrine shall be presented. I believe that many brethren who preach human responsibility deliver themselves in so legal a manner as to disgust all those who love the doctrines of grace. On the other hand, I fear that many have preached the sovereignty of God in such a way as to drive all persons who believe in man's free agency entirely away from the Calvinistic side. We should not hide truth for a moment, but we should have wisdom so to preach it that there shall be no needless jarring or offending, but a gradual enlightenment of those who cannot see it at all, and a leading of weaker brethren into the full circle of gospel doctrine.

Brethren, we also need wisdom in the way of putting things to different people. You can cast a man down with the very truth which was intended to build him up. You can sicken a man with the honey with which you meant to sweeten his mouth. The great mercy of God has been preached unguardedly, and has led hundreds into licentiousness; and, on the other hand, the terrors of the Lord have been occasionally fulminated with such violence that they have driven men into despair, and so into a settled defiance of the Most High. Wisdom is profitable to direct, and He who hath it brings forth each truth in its season, dressed in its most appropriate garments. Who can give us this wisdom but the blessed Spirit? O, my brethren, see to it, that in lowliest reverence you wait for His direction.

Thirdly, we need the Spirit in another manner, namely, as the live coal from off the altar, touching our lips, so that when we have knowledge and wisdom to select the fitting portion of truth, we may enjoy *freedom of utterance* when we come to deliver it. "Lo, this hath touched thy lips." Oh, how gloriously a man speaks when his lips are blistered with

the live coal from the altar—feeling the burning power of the truth, not only in his inmost soul, but on the very lip with which he is speaking! Mark at such times how his very utterance quivers. Did you not notice in the prayer-meeting just now, in two of the suppliant brethren, how their tones were tremulous, and their bodily frames were quivering, because not only were their hearts touched, as I hope all our hearts were, but their lips were touched, and their speech was thereby affected. Brethren, we need the Spirit of God to open our mouths that we may show forth the praises of the Lord, or else we shall not speak with power.

We need the divine influence to keep us back from saying many things which, if they actually left our tongue, would mar our message. Those of us who are endowed with the dangerous gift of humour have need, sometimes, to stop and take the word out of our mouth and look at it, and see whether it is quite to edification; and those whose previous lives have borne them among the coarse and the rough had need watch with lynx eyes against indelicacy.

Brethren, far be it from us to utter a syllable which would suggest an impure thought, or raise a questionable memory. We need the Spirit of God to put bit and bridle upon us to keep us from saying that which would take the minds of our hearers away from Christ and eternal realities, and set them thinking upon the grovelling things of earth. Brethren, we require the Holy Spirit also to incite us in our utterance. I doubt not you are all conscious of different states of mind in preaching. Some of those states arise from your body being in different conditions. A bad cold will not only spoil the clearness of the voice, but freeze the flow of the thoughts. For my own part if I cannot speak clearly I am unable to think clearly, and the matter becomes hoarse as well as the voice. The stomach, also, and all the other organs of the body, affect the mind; but it is not to these things that I allude. Are you not conscious of changes altogether independent of the body? When you are in robust health do you not find yourselves one day as heavy as Pharaoh's chariots with the wheels taken off, and at another time as much at liberty as "a hind let loose"?

Today your branch glitters with the dew, yesterday it was parched with drought. Who knoweth not that the Spirit of God is in all this? The divine Spirit will sometimes work upon us so as to bear us completely out of ourselves. From the beginning of the sermon to the end we might at such times say, "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth." Everything has been forgotten but the one all-engrossing subject in hand. If I were forbidden to enter heaven, but were permitted to select my state for all eternity, I should choose to be as I sometimes feel in preaching the gospel. Heaven is foreshadowed in such a state: the mind shut out from all disturbing influences, adoring the majestic and consciously present God, every faculty aroused and joyously excited to its utmost capability, all the thoughts and powers of the soul joyously occupied in contemplating the glory of the Lord, and extolling to listening crowds the Beloved of our soul; and all the while the purest conceivable benevolence towards one's fellow creatures urging the heart to plead with them on God's behalf—what state of mind can rival this?

Alas, we have reached this ideal, but we cannot always maintain it, for we know also what it is to preach in chains, or beat the air. We may not attribute holy and happy changes in our ministry to anything less than the action of the Holy Spirit upon our souls. I am sure the Spirit does so work. Often and often, when I have had doubts suggested by the infidel, I have been able to fling them to the winds with utter scorn, because I am distinctly conscious of a power working upon me when I am speaking in the name of the Lord, infinitely transcending any personal power of fluency, and far surpassing any energy derived from excitement such as I have felt when delivering a secular lecture or making a speech—so utterly distinct from such power that I am quite certain it is not of the same order or class as the enthusiasm of the politician or the glow of the orator. May we full often feel the divine energy, and speak with power.

But then, fourthly, the Spirit of God acts also as *an anointing oil*, and this relates to *the entire delivery* —not to the utterance merely from the mouth, but to the whole delivery of

the discourse. He can make you feel your subject till it thrills you, and you become depressed by it so as to be crushed into the earth, or elevated by it so as to be borne upon its eagle wings; making you feel, besides your subject, your object, till you yearn for the conversion of men, and for the uplifting of Christians to something nobler than they have known as yet. At the same time, another feeling is with you, namely, an intense desire that God may be glorified through the truth which you are delivering. You are conscious of a deep sympathy with the people to whom you are speaking, making you mourn over some of them because they know so little, and over others because they have known much, but have rejected it. You look into some faces, and your heart silently says, "The dew is dropping there;" and, turning to others, you sorrowfully perceive that they are as Gilboa's dewless mountain. All this will be going on during the discourse. We cannot tell how many thoughts can traverse the mind at once.

I once counted eight sets of thoughts which were going on in my brain simultaneously, or at least within the space of the same second. I was preaching the gospel with all my might, but could not help feeling for a lady who was evidently about to faint, and also looking out for our brother who opens the windows that he might give us more air. I was thinking of that illustration which I had omitted under the first head, casting the form of the second division, wondering if A felt my rebuke, and praying that B might get comfort from the consoling observation, and at the same time praising God for my own personal enjoyment of the truth I was proclaiming. Some interpreters consider the cherubim with their four faces to be emblems of ministers, and assuredly I see no difficulty in the quadruple form, for the sacred Spirit can multiply our mental states, and make us many times the men we are by nature. How much He can make of us, and how grandly He can elevate us, I will not dare to surmise: certainly, He can do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think.

Especially is it the Holy Spirit's work to maintain in us a devoutional frame of mind whilst we are discoursing. This is a condition to be greatly coveted–to continue praying

while you are occupied with preaching; to do the Lord's commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word; to keep the eye on the throne, and the wing in perpetual motion. I hope we know what this means; I am sure we know, or may soon experience, its opposite, namely, the evil of preaching in an un-devoutional spirit. What can be worse than to speak under the influence of a proud or angry spirit? What more weakening than to preach in an unbelieving spirit? But, oh, to burn in our secret heart while we blaze before the eyes of others! This is the work of the Spirit of God. Work it in us, O adorable Comforter!

In our pulpits we need the spirit of dependence to be mixed with that of devoution, so that all along, from the first word to the last syllable, we may be looking up to the strong for strength. It is well to feel that though you have continued up to the present point, yet if the Holy Spirit were to leave you, you would play the fool ere the sermon closed. Looking to the hills whence cometh your help all the sermon through, with absolute dependence upon God, you will preach in a brave confident spirit all the while. Perhaps I was wrong to say "brave," for it is not a brave thing to trust God: to true believers it is a simple matter of sweet necessity--how can they help trusting Him? Wherefore should they doubt their ever faithful Friend? I told my people the other morning, when preaching from the text, "My grace is sufficient for thee," that for the first time in my life I experienced what Abraham felt when he fell upon his face and laughed. I was riding home, very weary with a long week's work, when there came to my mind this text: "My grace is sufficient for thee"; but it came with the emphasis laid upon two words. "My grace is sufficient for thee." My soul said, "Doubtless it is. Surely the grace of the infinite God is more than sufficient for such a mere insect as I am," and I laughed, and laughed again, to think how far the supply exceeded all my needs. It seemed to me as though I were a little fish in the sea, and in my thirst I said, "Alas, I shall drink up the ocean." Then the Father of the waters lifted up His head sublimed and smilingly replied, "Little fish, the boundless main is sufficient for thee." The

thought made unbelief appear supremely ridiculous, as indeed it is.

Oh, brethren we ought to preach feeling that God means to bless the word, for we have His promise for it; and when we have done preaching we should look out for the people who have received a blessing. Do you ever say, "I am overwhelmed with astonishment to find that the Lord has converted souls through my poor ministry"? Mock humility! Your ministry is poor enough. Everybody knows that, and you ought to know it most of all: but, at the same time, is it any wonder that God, who said "My word shall not return unto me void," has kept His promise? Is the meat to lose its nourishment because the dish is a poor platter? Is divine grace to be overcome by our infirmity? No, but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

We need the Spirit of God, then, all through the sermon to keep our hearts and minds in a proper condition, for if we have not the right spirit we shall lose the tone which persuades and prevails, and our people will discover that Samson's strength has departed from him. Some speak scoldingly, and so betray their bad temper; others preach themselves, and so reveal their pride. Some discourse as though it were a condescension on their part to occupy the pulpit, while others preach as though they apologized for their existence. To avoid errors of manners and tone, we must be led of the Holy Spirit, who alone teacheth us to profit.

Fifthly, we depend entirely upon the Spirit of God *to produce actual effect from the gospel*, and at this effect we must always aim. We do not stand up in our pulpits to display our skill in spiritual sword play, but we come to actual fighting: our object is to drive the sword of the Spirit through men's hearts. If preaching can ever in any sense be viewed as a public exhibition, it should be like the exhibition of a ploughing match, which consists in actual ploughing. The competition does not lie in the appearance of the ploughs, but in the work done; so let ministers be judged by the way in which they drive the gospel plough, and cut the furrow from end to end of

the field. Always aim at effect. "Oh," says one, "I thought you would have said, 'Never do that.'" I do also say, never aim at effect, in the unhappy sense of that expression. Never aim at effect after the manner of the climax makers, poetry quoters, handkerchief manipulators, and bombast blowers. Far better for a man that he had never been born than that he should degrade a pulpit into a show box to exhibit himself in. Aim at the right sort of effect; the inspiring of saints to nobler things, the leading of Christians closer to their Master, the comforting of doubters till they rise out of their terrors, the repentance of sinners, and their exercise of immediate faith in Christ. Without these signs following, what is the use of our sermons?

It would be a miserable thing to have to say with a certain archbishop, "I have passed through many places of honor and trust, both in Church and State, more than any of my order in England, for seventy years before; but were I assured that by my preaching I had but converted one soul to God, I should herein take more comfort than in all the honored offices that have been bestowed upon me." Miracles of grace must be the seals of our ministry; who can bestow them but the Spirit of God? Convert a soul without the Spirit of God! Why, you cannot even make a fly, much less create a new heart and a right spirit. Lead the children of God to a higher life without the Holy Ghost! You are inexpressibly more likely to conduct them into carnal security, if you attempt their elevation, by any method of your own. Our ends can never be gained if we miss the co-operation of the Spirit of the Lord. Therefore, with strong crying and tears, wait upon Him from day to day.

The lack of distinctly recognizing the power of the Holy Ghost lies at the root of many useless ministries. The forcible words of Robert Hall are as true now as when he poured them forth like molten lava upon a semi-socinian generation.

> "On the one hand it deserves attention, that the most eminent and successful preachers of the gospel in different communities; a Brainerd, a Baxter, and a Schwartz, have been the most conspicuous for

> simple dependence on spiritual aid; and on the other that no success whatever has attended the ministrations of those by whom this doctrine has been either neglected or denied. They have met with such a rebuke of their presumption, in the total failure of their efforts, that none will contend for the reality of Divine interposition, as far as they are concerned; for when has the arm of the Lord been revealed to those pretended teachers of Christianity, who believe there is no such arm? We must leave them to labor in a field respecting which God has commanded the clouds not to rain upon it. As if conscious of this, of late they have turned their efforts into a new channel, and despairing of the conversion of sinners, have confined themselves to the seduction of the faithful; in which, it must be confessed, they have acted in a manner perfectly consistent with their principles; the propagation of heresy requiring, at least, no divine assistance."

Sixthly, we need the Spirit of God as *the Spirit of supplications*, who maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. A very important part of our lives consists in praying in the Holy Ghost, and that minister who does not think so had better escape from his ministry. Abundant prayer must go with earnest preaching. We cannot be always on the knees of the body, but the soul should never leave the posture of devoution. The habit of prayer is good, but the spirit of prayer is better. Regular retirement is to be maintained, but continued communion with God is to be our aim. As a rule, we ministers ought never to be many minutes without actually lifting up our hearts in prayer. Some of us could honestly say that we are seldom a quarter of an hour without speaking to God, and that not as a duty but as an instinct, a habit of the new nature for which we claim no more credit than a babe does for crying after its mother. How could we do otherwise? Now, if we are to be much in the spirit of prayer, we need secret oil to be poured upon the sacred fire of our heart's devoution; we want

to be again and again visited by the Spirit of grace and of supplications.

As to our prayers in public, let it never be truthfully said that they are official, formal, and cold; yet they will be so if the supply of the Spirit be scant. Those who use a liturgy I judge not; but to those who are accustomed to free prayer I say,–you cannot pray acceptably in public year after year without the Spirit of God; dead praying will become offensive to the people long before that time. What then? Whence shall our help come? Certain weaklings have said, "Let us have a liturgy!" Rather than seek divine aid they will go down to Egypt for help. Rather than be dependent upon the Spirit of God, they will pray by a book! For my part, if I cannot pray, I would rather know it, and groan over my soul's barrenness till the Lord shall again visit me with fruitfulness of devotion. If you are filled with the Spirit, you will be glad to throw off all formal fetters, that you may commit yourself to the sacred current, to be borne along till you find waters to swim in.

Sometimes you will enjoy closer fellowship with God in prayer in the pulpit than you have known anywhere else. To me my greatest secrecy in prayer has often been in public; my truest loneliness with God has occurred to me while pleading in the midst of thousands. I have opened my eyes at the close of a prayer and come back to the assembly with a sort of a shock at finding myself upon earth and among men. Such seasons are not at our command, neither can we raise ourselves into such conditions by any preparations or efforts. How blessed they are both to the minister and his people no tongue can tell! How full of power and blessing habitual prayerfulness must also be I cannot here pause to declare, but for it all we must look to the Holy Spirit, and blessed be God we shall not look in vain, for it is especially said of Him that He helped our infirmities in prayer.

Furthermore, it is important that we be under the influence of the Holy Ghost, as He is the Spirit of Holiness; for a very considerable and essential part of Christian ministry lies in example. Our people take much note of what we say out of the pulpit, and what we do in the social circle and

elsewhere. Do you find it easy, my brethren, to be saints? Such saints that others may regard you as examples? We ought to be such husbands that every husband in the parish may safely be such as we are. Is it so? We ought to be the best of fathers. Alas! some ministers, to my knowledge, are far from this, for as to their families, they have kept the vineyards of others, but their own vineyards they have not kept. Their children are neglected, and do not grow up as a godly seed. Is it so with yours? In our converse with our fellow men are we blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke? Such we ought to be. I admire Mr. Whitfield's reasons for always having his linen scrupulously clean. "No, no," he would say, "these are not trifles; a minister must be without spot, even in his garments, if he can." Purity cannot be carried too far in a minister. You have known an unhappy brother bespatter himself, and you have affectionately aided in removing the spots, but you have felt that it would have been better had the garments been always white. O to keep ourselves unspotted from the world! How can this be in such a scene of temptation, and with such besetting sins unless we are preserved by superior power? If you are to walk in all holiness and purity, as becometh ministers of the gospel, you must be daily baptized into the Spirit of God.

Once again, we need the Spirit as a Spirit of discernment, for He knows the minds of men as He knows the mind of God, and we need this very much in dealing with difficult characters. There are in this world some persons who might possibly be allowed to preach, but they should never be suffered to become pastors. They have a mental or spiritual disqualification. In the church of San Zeno, at Verona, I saw the statue of that saint in a sitting posture, and the artist has given him knees so short that he has no lap whatever, so that he could not have been a nursing father. I fear there are many others who labor under a similar disability: they cannot bring their minds to enter heartily into the pastoral care. They can dogmatize upon a doctrine, and controvert upon an ordinance, but as to sympathizing with an experience, it is far from them. Cold comfort can such render to afflicted consciences; their

advice will be equally valuable with that of the highlander who is reported to have seen an Englishman sinking in a bog on Ben Nevis. "I am sinking!" cried the traveller. "Can you tell me how to get out?" The highlander calmly replied, "I think it is likely you never will," and walked away. We have known ministers of that kind, puzzled, and almost annoyed with sinners struggling in the slough of despond. If you and I untrained in the shepherd's art, were placed among the ewes and young lambs in the early spring, what should we do with them? In some such perplexity are those found who have never been taught of the Holy Spirit how to care for the souls of men. May His instructions save us from such wretched incompetence.

Moreover, brethren, whatever our tenderness of heart, or loving anxiety, we shall not know how to deal with the vast variety of cases unless the Spirit of God shall direct us, for no two individuals are alike; and even the same case will require different treatment at different times. At one period it may be best to console, at another to rebuke; and the person with whom you sympathized even to tears today may need that you confront him with a frown tomorrow, for trifling with the consolation which you presented. Those who bind up the broken-hearted, and set free the captives, must have the Spirit of the Lord upon them.

In the oversight and guidance of a church the Spirit's aid is needed. At bottom the chief reason for secession from our denomination has been the difficulty arising out of our church government. It is said to "tend to the unrest of the ministry." Doubtless, it is very trying to those who crave for the dignity of officialism, and must need be Sir Oracles, before whom not a dog must bark. Those who are no more capable of ruling than mere babes are the very persons who have the greatest thirst for authority, and, finding little of it awarded to them in these parts, they seek other regions. If you cannot rule yourself, if you are not manly and independent, if you are not superior in moral weight, if you have not more gift and more grace than your ordinary bearers, you may put on a gown and claim to be the ruling person in the church; but it will not be in

a church of the Baptist or New Testament order.

For my part I should loathe to be the pastor of a people who have nothing to say, or who, if they do say anything, might as well be quiet, for the pastor is Lord Paramount, and they are mere laymen and nobodies. I would sooner be the leader of six free men, whose enthusiastic love is my only power over them, than play the dictator to a score of enslaved nations. What position is nobler than that of a spiritual father who claims no authority and yet is universally esteemed, whose word is given only as tender advice, but is allowed to operate with the force of law? Consulting the wishes of others he finds that they first desire to know what he would recommend, and deferring always to the desires of others, he finds that they are glad to defer to him. Lovingly firm and graciously gentle, he is the chief of all because he is the servant of all. Does not this need wisdom from above? What can require it more? David when established on the throne said, "It is He that subdueth my people under me," and so may every happy pastor say when he sees so many brethren of differing temperaments all happily willing to be under discipline, and to accept his leadership in the work of the Lord. If the Lord were not among us how soon there would be confusion. Ministers, deacons, and elders may all be wise, but if the sacred Dove departs, and the spirit of strife enters, it is all over with us.

Brethren, our system will not work without the Spirit of God, and I am glad it will not, for its stoppages and breakages call our attention to the fact of His absence. Our system was never intended to promote the glory of priests and pastors, but it is calculated to educate manly Christians, who will not take their faith at secondhand. What am I, and what are you, that we should be lords over God's heritage? Dare any of us say with the French king, *"L'état, c'est moi"*— "the state is myself,"—I am the most important person in the church? If so, the Holy Spirit is not likely to use such unsuitable instruments; but if we know our places and desire to keep them with all humility, He will help us, and the churches will flourish beneath our care.

I have given you a lengthened catalogue of matters

wherein the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to us, and yet the list is very far from complete. I have intentionally left it imperfect, because if I attempted its completion all our time would have expired before we were able to answer the question, *how may we lose this needful assistance?* Let none of us ever try the experiment, but it is certain that ministers may lose the aid of the Holy Ghost. Each man here may lose it. You shall not perish as believers, for everlasting life is in you; but you may perish as ministers, and be no more heard of as witnesses for the Lord. Should this happen it will not be without a cause. The Spirit claims a sovereignty like that of the wind which bloweth where it listeth; but let us never dream that sovereignty and capriciousness are the same thing. The blessed Spirit acts as He wills, but He always acts justly, wisely, and with motive and reason. At times He gives or withholds His blessing, for reasons connected with ourselves.

Mark the course of a river like the Thames; how it winds and twists according to its own sweet will: yet there is a reason for every bend and curve: the geologist studying the soil and marking the conformation of the rock, sees a reason why the river's bed diverges to the right or to the left: and so, though the Spirit of God blesses one preacher more than another, and the reason cannot be such that any man could congratulate himself upon his own goodness, yet there are certain things about Christian ministers which God blesses, and certain other things which hinder success. The Spirit of God falls like the dew, in mystery and power, but it is in the spiritual world as in the natural: certain substances are wet with the celestial moisture while others are always dry. Is there not a cause? The wind blows where it lists; but if we desire to feel a stiff breeze we must go out to sea, or climb the hills. The Spirit of God has His favored places for displaying His might. He is typified by a dove, and the dove has its chosen haunts: to the rivers of waters, to the peaceful and quiet places, the dove resorts; we meet it not upon the battlefield, neither does it alight on carrion. There are things congruous to the Spirit and things contrary to His mind. The Spirit of God is compared to light, and light can shine where it wills, but some

bodies are opaque, while others are transparent; and so there are men through whom God the Holy Ghost can shine, and there are others through whom His brightness never appears. Thus, then, it can be shown that the Holy Ghost, though He be the "free Spirit" of God, is by no means capricious in His operations.

But, dear brethren, the Spirit of God may be grieved and vexed, and even resisted: to deny this is to oppose the constant testimony of Scripture. Worst of all, we may do despite to Him, and so insult Him that He will speak no more by us, but leave us as He left King Saul of old. Alas, that there should be men in the Christian ministry to whom this has happened; but I am afraid there are.

Brethren, what are those evils which will grieve the Spirit? I answer, anything that would have disqualified you as an ordinary Christian for communion with God also disqualifies you for feeling the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit as a minister: but, apart from that, there are special hindrances.

Among the first we must mention a want of sensitiveness, or that unfeeling condition which arises from disobeying the Spirit's influences. We should be delicately sensitive to His faintest movement, and then we may expect His abiding presence, but if we are as the horse and as the mule, which have no understanding, we shall feel the whip, but we shall not enjoy the tender influences of the Comforter.

Another grieving fault is a want of truthfulness. When a great musician takes a guitar, or touches a harp, and finds that the notes are false, he stays his hand. Some men's souls are not honest; they are sophistical and double-minded. Christ's Spirit will not be an accomplice with men in the wretched business of shuffling and deceiving. Does it really come to this–that you preach certain doctrines, not because you believe them, but because your congregation expects you to do so? Are you biding your time till you can, without risk, renounce your present creed and tell out what your dastardly mind really holds to be true? Then are you fallen indeed, and are baser than the meanest slaves. God deliver us from treacherous men,

and if they enter our ranks, may they speedily be drummed out to the tune of the Rogue's March. If we feel an abhorrence of them, how much more must the Spirit of truth detest them!

You can greatly grieve the Holy Spirit by a general scantiness of grace. The phrase is awkward, but it describes certain persons better than any other which occurs to me. The Scanty-grace family usually have one of the brothers in the ministry. I know the man. He is not dishonest, nor immoral, he is not bad tempered, nor self-indulgent, but there is a something wanting: it would not be easy to prove its absence by any overt offence, but it is wanting in the whole man, and its absence spoils everything. He wants the one thing needful. He is not spiritual, he has no savor of Christ, his heart never burns within him, his soul is not alive, he wants grace. We cannot expect the Spirit of God to bless a ministry which never ought to have been exercised, and certainly a graceless ministry is of that character.

Another evil which drives away the divine Spirit is pride. The way to be very great is to be very little. To be very noteworthy in your own esteem is to be unnoticed of God. If you must needs dwell upon the high places of the earth, you shall find the mountain summits cold and barren: the Lord dwells with the lowly, but He knows the proud afar off.

The Holy Ghost is also vexed by laziness. I cannot imagine the Spirit waiting at the door of a sluggard, and supplying the deficiencies created by indolence. Sloth in the cause of the Redeemer is a vice for which no excuse can be invented. We ourselves feel our flesh creep when we see the dilatory movements of sluggards, and we may be sure that the active Spirit is equally vexed with those who trifle in the work of the Lord.

Neglect of private prayer and many other evils will produce the same unhappy result, but there is no need to enlarge, for your own consciences will tell you, brethren, what it is that grieves the Holy One of Israel.

And now, let me entreat you, listen to this word: *Do you know what may happen if the Spirit of God be greatly grieved and depart from us?* There are two suppositions.

The first is that we never were God's true servants at all, but were only temporarily used by him, as Balaam was, and even the ass on which he rode. Suppose, brethren, that you and I go on comfortably preaching a while, and are neither suspected by ourselves nor others to be destitute of the Spirit of God: our ministry may all come to an end on a sudden, and we may come to an end with it; we may be smitten down in our prime, as were Nadab and Abidu, no more to be seen ministering before the Lord, or removed in riper years, like Hophni and Phineas, no longer to serve in the tabernacle of the congregation. We have no inspired annalist to record for us the sudden cutting off of promising men, but if we had, it may be we should read with terror–of zeal sustained by strong drink, of public Phariseeism associated with secret defilement, of avowed orthodoxy concealing absolute infidelity, or of some other form of strange fire presented upon the altar till the Lord would endure it no more, and cut off the offenders with a sudden stroke. Shall this terrible doom happen to any one of us?

Alas, I have seen some deserted by the Holy Spirit, as Saul was. It is written that the Spirit of God came upon Saul, but he was faithless to the divine influence, and it departed, and an evil spirit occupied its place. See how the deserted preacher moodily plays the cynic, criticizes all others, and hurls the javelin of detraction at a better man than himself. Saul was once among the prophets, but he was more at home among the persecutors. The disappointed preacher worries the true evangelist, resorts to the witchcraft of philosophy, and seeks help from dead heresies; but his power is gone, and the Philistines will soon find him among the slain. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon! ye daughters of Israel weep over Saul! How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!"

Some, too, deserted by the Spirit of God, have become like the sons of one Sceva, a Jew. These pretenders tried to cast out devils in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preached, but the devils leaped upon them and overcame them; thus while certain preachers have declaimed against sin, the very

vices which they denounced have overthrown them. The Sons of Sceva have been among us in England: the devils of drunkenness have prevailed over the very man who denounced the bewitching cup, and the demon of unchastity has leaped upon the preacher who applauded purity. If the Holy Ghost be absent, ours is of all positions the most perilous; therefore let us beware.

Alas, some ministers become like Balaam. He was a prophet, was he not? Did he not speak in the name of the Lord? Is he not called "the man whose eyes are opened, which saw the vision of the Almighty?" Yet Balaam fought against Israel, and cunningly devised a scheme by which the chosen people might be overthrown. Ministers of the gospel have become Papists, infidels, and free-thinkers, and plotted the destruction of what they once professed to prize. We may be apostles, and yet, like Judas, turn out to be sons of perdition. Woe unto us if this be the case!

Brethren, I will assume that we really are the children of God, and what then? Why, even then, if the Spirit of God depart from us, we may be taken away on a sudden as the deceived prophet was who failed to obey the command of the Lord in the days of Jeroboam. He was no doubt a man of God, and the death of his body was no evidence of the loss of his soul, but he broke away from what he knew to be the command of God given specially to himself, and his ministry ended there and then, for a lion met him by the way and slew him. May the Holy Spirit preserve us from deceivers, and keep us true to the voice of God.

Worse still, we may reproduce the life of Samson, upon whom the Spirit of God came in the camps of Dan; but in Delilah's lap he lost his strength, and in the dungeon he lost his eyes. He bravely finished his life-work, blind as he was, but who among us wishes to tempt such a fate?

Or–and this last has saddened me beyond all expression, because it is much more likely than any of the rest–we may be left by the Spirit of God, in a painful degree, to mar the close of our life-work as Moses did. Not to lose our souls, nay, not even to lose our crowns in heaven, or even our reputations on

earth; but, still, to be under a cloud in our last days through once speaking unadvisedly with our lips. I have lately studied the later days of the great prophet of Horeb, and I have not yet recovered from the deep gloom of spirit which it cast over me. What was the sin of Moses? You need not enquire. It was not gross like the transgression of David, nor startling like the failure of Peter, nor weak and foolish like the grave fault of his brother Aaron; indeed, it seems an infinitesimal offence as weighed in the balances of ordinary judgment. But then, you see, it was the sin of Moses, of a man favored of God beyond all others, of a leader of the people, of a representative of the divine King. The Lord could have overlooked it in anyone else, but not in Moses: Moses must be chastened by being forbidden to lead the people into the promised land. Truly, he had a glorious view from the top of Pisgah, and everything else which could mitigate the rigour of the sentence, but it was a great disappointment never to enter the land of Israel's inheritance, and that for once speaking unadvisedly.

I would not shun my Master's service, but I tremble in His presence. Who can be faultless when even Moses erred? It is a dreadful thing to be beloved of God. "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly"–he alone can face that sin-consuming flame of love. Brethren, I beseech you, crave Moses's place, but tremble as you take it. Fear and tremble for all the good that God shall make to pass before you. When you are fullest of the fruits of the Spirit bow lowest before the throne, and serve the Lord with fear. "The Lord our God is a jealous God." Remember that God has come unto us, not to exalt us, but to exalt Himself, and we must see to it that His glory is the one sole object of all that we do. "He must increase, and I must decrease."

Oh, may God bring us to this, and make us walk very carefully and humbly before Him. God will search us and try us, for judgment begins at His house, and in that house it begins with His ministers. Will any of us be found wanting? Shall the pit of hell draw a portion of its wretched inhabitants

from among our band of pastors? Terrible will be the doom of a fallen preacher: his condemnation will astonish common transgressors. “Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming.” All they shall speak and say unto thee, “Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?” O for the Spirit of God to make and keep us alive unto God, faithful to our office, and useful to our generation, and clear of the blood of men’s souls. Amen.

11

THE NECESSITY OF MINISTERIAL PROGRESS

*Dear fellow soldiers! W*e are few, and we have a desperate fight before us, therefore it is needful that every man should be made the most of, and nerved to his highest point of strength. It is desirable that the Lord's ministers should be the picked men of the church, yea, of the entire universe, for such the age demands; therefore, in reference to yourselves and your personal qualifications, I give you the motto, "Go forward." Go *forward* in personal attainments*, forward* in gifts and in grace, *forward* in fitness for the work, and *forward* in conformity to the image of Jesus. The points I shall speak upon begin at the base, and ascend.

1. First, dear brethren, I think it necessary to say to myself and to you that *we must go forward in our mental acquirements.* It will never do for us continually to present ourselves to God at our worst. We are not worth His having at our best; but at any rate let not the offering be maimed and blemished by our idleness. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" is, perhaps, more easy to comply with, than to love Him with all our mind; yet we must give Him our mind as well as our affections, and that mind should be well furnished, that we may not offer Him an empty casket. Our ministry demands mind. I shall not insist upon "the enlightenment of the age"; still it is quite certain that there is a great educational advance among all classes, and that there will yet be much more of it. The time is passed when ungrammatical speech will suffice for a preacher. Even in a country village, where, according to tradition, "nobody knows nothing," the schoolmaster is now abroad, and want of education will

hinder usefulness more than it once did; for, when the speaker wishes his audience to remember the gospel, they on the other hand will remember his ungrammatical expressions, and will repeat them as themes for jest, when we could have wished they had rehearsed the divine doctrines to one another in solemn earnest. Dear brethren, we must cultivate ourselves to the highest possible point, and we should 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, by which we may lay up the winnowed grain in the storehouse. These three points may not be equally important, but they are all necessary to a complete man.

We must, I say, make great efforts to acquire information, especially of a Biblical kind. We must not confine ourselves to one topic of study, or we shall not exercise our whole mental manhood. God made the world for man, and He made man with a mind intended to occupy and use all the world; he is the tenant, and nature is for a while his house, why should he shut himself out of any of its rooms? Why refuse to taste any of the cleansed meats the great Father has put upon the table? Still, our main business is to study the Scriptures. The smith's main business is to shoe horses; let him see that he knows how to do it, for should he be able to belt an angel with a girdle of gold he will fail as a smith if he cannot make and fix a horse-shoe. It is a small matter that you should be able to write the most brilliant poetry, as possibly you could, unless you can preach a good and telling sermon, which will have the effect of comforting saints and convincing sinners. Study the Bible, dear brethren, through and through, with all helps that you can possibly obtain: remember that the appliances now within the reach of ordinary Christians are much more extensive than they were in our fathers' days, and therefore you must be greater Biblical scholars if you would keep in front of your hearers. Intermeddle with all knowledge, but above all things meditate day and night in the law of the Lord.

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 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 ages past, they would not have been quite so fast in vaunting their marvellous knowledge. Let us be throughly well acquainted with the great doctrines of the Word of God, and let us be mighty expounding Scripture.

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 you must understand the Word yourselves, and be able so to comment upon it that the people may be built up by this 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."

Having given precedence to the inspired writings, neglect no field of knowledge. The presence of Jesus on the earth has sanctified the realms of nature, and what He has cleansed call not you common. All that your Father has made is yours, and you should learn from it. You may read a naturalist's journal, or a traveller's voyage, and find profit in it. Yes, and even an old herbal, or a manual of alchemy may, like Samson's dead lion, yield you honey. There are pearls in oyster shells, and fruits on thorny boughs. The paths of true science, especially natural history and botany, drop fatness. Geology, so far as it is fact, and not fiction, is full of treasures. History–wonderful are the visions which it makes to pass

before you–is eminently instructive; indeed, every portion of God's dominion in nature teems with precious teachings. Follow the trails of knowledge, according as you have the time, the opportunity, and the peculiar faculty; and do not hesitate to do so because of any apprehension that you will educate yourselves up to too high a point. When grace abounds, learning will not puff you up, or injure your simplicity in the gospel. Serve God with such education as you have, and thank Him for blowing through you if you are a ram's horn, but if there be a possibility of your becoming a silver trumpet, choose it rather.

I have said that we must also learn to discriminate, and at this particular time that point needs insisting on. Many run after novelties, charmed with every invention: learn to judge between truth and its counterfeits, and you will not be led astray. Others adhere like limpets to old teachings, and yet these may only be ancient errors: prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. The use of the sieve, and the winnowing fan, is much to be commended. Dear brethren, a man who has asked of 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 are not such. 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. Be ye not such children in understanding, but test carefully before you accept. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the faculty of discerning, so shall you conduct your flocks far from poisonous meadows, and lead them into safe pasturage.

When in due time you have gained the power of acquiring knowledge, and the faculty of discrimination, seek next for ability to retain and hold firmly what you have learned. In these times certain men glory in being weathercocks; they hold fast nothing, they have, in fact, nothing worth the holding. They believed yesterday, but not that which they believe to-day, nor that which they will believe tomorrow; and he would

be a greater prophet than Isaiah who should be able to tell what they will believe when next the moon doth fill her horns, for they are constantly altering, and seem to be born under that said moon, and to partake of her changing moods. These men may be as honest as they claim to be, but of what use are they? Like good trees oftentimes transplanted, they may be of a noble nature, but they bring forth nothing; their strength goes out in rooting and re-rooting, they have no sap to spare for fruit.

Be sure you have the truth, and then be sure you hold it. Be ready for fresh truth, *if it be truth*, but be very wary how you subscribe to the belief that a better light has been found than that of the sun. Those who hawk new truth about the Street, as the boys do a second edition of the evening paper, are usually no better than they should be. The fair maid of truth does not paint her cheeks and tire her head like Jezebel, following every new philosophic fashion; she is content with her own native beauty, and her aspect is in the main the same yesterday, today, and for ever. 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, and resemble Nero fiddling upon the top of a tower with Rome burning at his feet. Souls are being damned, and yet these men are spinning theories. Hell gapes wide, and with her open mouth swallows up myriads, and 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 renounce our office. "For ever learning and never coming to the truth" is the motto of the worst rather than the best of men.

I saw in Rome a statue of a boy extracting a thorn from his foot; I went my way, and returned in a year's time, and there sat the selfsame boy, extracting the intruder still. Is this 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 forever poised in mid-air. The natives call them "lost souls," seeking rest and finding none. Assuredly, men who have no personal rest in the truth, if they are not saved themselves, are, at least, very unlikely to save others. He who has no assured truth to tell must not wonder if his hearers set small store by him. We must know the truth, understand it, and hold it with firm grip, or we cannot hope to lead others to believe it. Brethren, I charge you, seek to know and to discriminate; and then, having discriminated, labor to be rooted and grounded in the truth. Keep in full operation the processes of filling the barn, winnowing the grain, and storing it in granaries, so shall you mentally "Go forward."

2. We need to go forward in *oratorical qualifications*. I am beginning at the bottom, but even this is 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 his 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 oratically, and, therefore, I have begun with these points, and again remark that we must improve in utterance. It is not every one of us who can speak as some can do, and even these men cannot speak up to their own ideal. If there be any brother here who thinks he can preach as well as he should, I would advise him to leave off altogether. If he did so he would be acting as wisely as the great painter who broke his palette, and, turning to his wife, said, "My painting days are over, for I have satisfied myself, and therefore I am sure my power is gone." Whatever other perfection may be reachable,

I am certain that he who thinks he has gained perfection in oratory mistakes volubility for eloquence, and verbiage for argument.

Whatever you may know, you cannot be truly efficient ministers if you are not "apt to teach." You know ministers who have mistaken their calling, and evidently have no gifts for it: make sure that none think the same of you. There are brethren in the ministry whose speech is intolerable; either they rouse you to wrath, or else they send you to sleep. No chloral can ever equal some discourses in sleep-giving properties; no human being, unless gifted with infinite patience, could long endure to listen to them, and nature does well to give the victim deliverance through sleep. I heard one say the other day that a certain preacher had no more gifts for the ministry than an oyster, and in my own judgment this was a slander on the oyster, for that worthy bivalve shows great discretion in his openings, and knows when to close. If some men were sentenced to hear their own sermons it would be a righteous judgment upon them, and they would soon cry out with Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Let us not fall under the same condemnation.

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 plain. 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 truth will give clearness to it. It is not enough to be so plain that you can be understood, you must speak so that you cannot be misunderstood.

We must cultivate a cogent as well as a clear style; our speech must be forceful. Some imagine that this consists

in speaking loudly, but I can assure them they are in error. Nonsense does not improve by being bellowed. God does not require us to shout as if we were speaking to ten thousand when we are only addressing three hundred. Let us be forcible by reason of the excellence of our matter, and the energy of spirit which we throw into the delivery of it. In a word, let our speaking be natural and living. I hope we have foresworn the tricks of professional orators, the strain for effect, the studied climax, the pre-arranged pause, the theatric strut, the mouthing of words, and I know not what besides, which you may see in certain pompous divines who still survive upon the face of the earth. May such become extinct animals ere long, and may a living, natural, simple way of talking out the gospel be learned by us all; for I am persuaded that such a style is one which God is likely to bless.

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 button-hole, and drive the truth right into their souls, while others generalize so much, and are so cold withal, that one would think they were speaking of 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 find earnest speech when the Lord is seen by us crucified for sin. If there be any speech in us, this will rouse it. The knowledge of the terrors 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 is my fashion"; but if on the other hand you listen to a preacher who is much admired, and on inquiry find that no souls are savingly converted, say to yourself, "This is not the thing for me, for I am not seeking to be great, but to be really useful."

Let your oratory, therefore, constantly improve in clearness, cogency, naturalness, and persuasiveness. Try, dear brethren, to get such a style of speaking that you s*uit yourselves to your audiences.* Much lies in that. The preacher who should address an educated congregation in the language which he would use in speaking to a company of costermongers would prove himself a fool: and on the other hand, he who goes down amongst miners and colliers with technical theological terms and drawing-room phrases acts like an idiot. The confusion of tongues at Babel was more thorough than we imagine. It did not merely give different lauguages to great nations, but it made the speech of each class to vary from that of others. A fellow of Billingsgate cannot understand a Fellow of Brasenose. Now as the costermonger cannot learn the language of the college, let the college learn the language of the costermonger. "We use the language of the market," said Whitfield, and this was much to his honor; yet when he stood in the drawing-room of the Countess of Huntingdon, and his speech entranced the infidel noblemen whom she brought to hear him, he adopted another style. His language was equally plain in each case, because it was equally familiar to the audience: he did not use the *ipsissima verba*, or his language would have lost its plainness in the one case or the other, and would either have been slang to the nobility, or Greek to the crowd. In our modes of speech we should aim at being "all things to all men." He is the greatest master of oratory who is able to address any class of people in a manner suitable to their condition, and likely to touch their hearts.

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 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 the 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.

3. Brethren, we must be even more earnest to go forward in *moral qualities*. 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, and if so, even if we obtain the mental and oratorical qualifications, 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 that 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.

We must put away all notion of self-importance. God will not bless the man who thinks himself great. To glory even in the work of God the Holy Spirit in yourself is to tread dangerously near to self-adulation. "Let another praise thee, and not thine own lips," and be very glad when that other has sense enough to hold his tongue.

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 it, 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, 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.

We must conquer–some of us especially–our tendency to levity. A great distinction exists between holy cheerfulness, which is a virtue, and that general levity, which is a vice. There is a levity which has not enough heart to laugh, but trifles with everything; it is flippant, hollow, unreal. A hearty laugh is no more levity than a hearty cry. I speak of that religious veneering which is pretentious, but thin, superficial, and insincere about the weightiest matters. Godliness is no jest, nor is it a mere form. Beware of being actors. Never give earnest men the impression that you do not mean what you say, and are mere professionals. To be burning at the lip and freezing at the soul is a mark of reprobation. God deliver us from being superfine and superficial: may we never be the butterflies of the garden of God.

At the same time, we should avoid everything like the ferocity of bigotry. I know a class of religious people 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: were not Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, so reared? Some warlike men of this order have had sufficient mental power to found dynasties of thought; but human kindness and brotherly love consort better with the kingdom of Christ. We are not to go about the world searching out heresies, like terrier dogs sniffing for rats; nor are we to be so confident of our own infallibility as to erect ecclesiastical stakes at which to roast all who differ from us, not, ‘tis true, with fagots of wood, but with those coals of juniper, which consist of strong prejudice and cruel suspicion.

In addition to all this, there are mannerisms, and moods, and ways which I cannot now describe, against which we must struggle, for little faults may often be the source of failure, and to get rid of them may be the secret of success. Count nothing little which even in a small degree hinders your usefulness; cast out from the temple of your soul the seats of

them that sell doves as well as the traffickers in sheep and oxen.

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.

May you also possess the grand moral characteristic of courage. By this we do not mean impertinence, impudence, or self-conceit; but real courage to do and say calmly the right thing, and to go straight on at all hazards, though there should be none to give you a good word. I am astonished at the number of Christians who are afraid to speak the truth to their brethren. I thank God I can say this, there is no member of my church, no officer of the church, and no man in the world to whom I am afraid to say before his face what I would say behind his back. Under God I owe my position in my own church to the absence of all policy, and the habit of saying what I mean. The plan of making things pleasant all round is a perilous as well as a wicked one. If you say one thing to one man, and another to another, they will one day compare notes and find you out, and then you will be despised. The man of two faces will sooner or later be the object of contempt, and justly so. Above all things avoid cowardice, for it makes men liars. If you have anything that you feel you ought to say about a man, let the measure of what you say be this– "How much dare I say to his face?" You must not allow yourselves a word more in censure of any man living. If that be your rule, your courage will save you from a thousand difficulties, and win you lasting respect.

Having the integrity and the courage, dear brethren, may you be gifted with an indomitable 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 resolution, and a combination of sacred obstinacy, self-denial, holy gentleness, and invincible courage.

Excel also in one power, which is both mental and moral, namely, the power of concentrating all your forces upon the work to which you are called. Collect your thoughts, rally all your faculties, mass your energies, focus your capacities. Turn all the springs of your soul into one channel, causing it to flow onward in an undivided stream. Some men lack this quality. They scatter themselves and fail. Mass your battalions, and hurl them upon the enemy. Do not try to be great at this and great at that–to be "everything by turns, and nothing long"; but suffer your entire nature to be led in captivity by Jesus Christ, and lay everything at His dear feet who bled and died for you.

4. Above all these, we need *spiritual qualifications*, graces which must be wrought in us by the Lord Himself. This is the main matter, I am sure. Other things are precious, but this is priceless; we must be rich towards God.

We need to know ourselves. The preacher should be great in the science of the heart, the philosophy of inward experience. There are two schools of experience, and neither is content to learn from the other; let us be content, however, to learn from both. The one school speaks of the child of God as one who knows the deep depravity of his heart, who understands the loathsomeness of his nature, and daily feels that in his flesh there dwelleth no good thing. "That man has not the life of God in his soul," say they, "who does not know and feel this, and feel it by bitter and painful experience from day to day." It is in vain to talk to them about liberty, and joy in the Holy Ghost; they will not have it. Let us learn from these one-sided brethren. They know much that should be known, and woe to that minister who ignores their set of truths. Martin Luther used to say that temptation is the best teacher for a minister. There is truth on that side of the question.

Another school of believers dwell much upon the

glorious work of the Spirit of God, and rightly and blessedly so. 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. Let us learn from these brethren. All the truth they can teach us let us know. Let us become familiar with the hill-tops and the glory that shines thereon, the Hermons and the Tabors, where we may be transfigured with our Lord. Do not be afraid of becoming too holy. Do not be afraid of being too full of the Holy Spirit. I would have you wise on all sides, and able to deal with man both in his conflicts and in his joys, as one familiar with both. Know where Adam left you; know where the Spirit of God has placed you. Do not know either of these so exclusively as to forget the other. I believe that if any men are likely to cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" it will always be the ministers, because we need to be tempted in all points, so that we may be able to comfort others.

In a railway carriage last week I saw a poor man with his leg placed upon the seat. An official happening to see him in this posture, remarked, "Those cushions were not made for you to put your dirty boots on." As soon as the guard was gone the man put up his leg again, and said to me, "He has never broken his leg in two places, I am sure, or he would not be so sharp with me." When I have heard brethren who have lived at ease, enjoying good incomes, condemning others who are much tried, because they could not rejoice in their fashion, I have felt that they knew nothing of the broken bones which others have to carry throughout the whole of their pilgrimage.

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 do this by books; you must have personal spiritual experience; God alone can give you that.

Among spiritual acquirements, it is beyond all other things needful to know him who is the sure remedy for all

human diseases. Know Jesus. Sit at His feet. Consider His nature, His work, His sufferings, His glory. Rejoice in His presence: commune with Him from day to day. To know Christ is to understand the most excellent of sciences. You cannot fail to be wise if you commune with wisdom; you cannot miss of strength if you have fellowship with the mighty Son of God.

I saw the other day in an Italian grotto a little fern, which grew where its leaves continually glistened and danced in the spray of a fountain. It was always green, and neither summer's drought nor winter's cold affected it. So let us for ever abide under the sweet influence of Jesus' love. Dwell in God, brethren; do not occasionally visit Him, but abide in Him. They say in Italy that where the sun does not enter the physician must. Where Jesus does not shine the soul is sick. Bask in His beams and you shall be vigorous in the service of the Lord. 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 beginners yet. The perfect spirits before the throne, who have been or 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 meditations.

Brethren, as the outcome of this, if we are to be strong men, we must be conformed to our Lord. Oh, to be like Him! Blessed be that cross on which we shall suffer, if we suffer for being made like unto the Lord Jesus. If we obtain conformity to Christ, we shall have a wondrous unction upon our ministry, and without that, what is ministry worth?

In a word, we must labor for holiness of character. What is holiness? Is it not wholeness of character? A balanced condition in which there is neither lack nor redundance? It is not morality: that is a cold lifeless statue; holiness is life.

You must have holiness; and dear brethren, if you should fail in mental qualifications (as I hope you will not), and if you should have a slender measure of the oratorical faculty (as I trust you will not), yet, depend upon it, holy life is, in itself, a wonderful power, and will make up for many deficiencies; it is, in fact, the best sermon the best man can deliver. Let us resolve that all the purity which can be had we will have, that all the sanctity which can be reached we will obtain, and that all the likeness to Christ that is possible in this world of sin shall certainly be in us through the work of the Spirit of God. The Lord lift us all as a college right up to a higher platform, and He shall have the glory!

5. Still I have not done, dear brethren. I have to say to you, go forward in *actual work,* for, after all, we shall be known by what we have done. We ought to be mighty in deed as well as word. There are good brethren in the world who are impractical. The grand doctrine of the second advent makes them stand with open mouths peering into the skies, so that I am ready to say, "Ye men of Plymouth why stand ye here gazing up into heaven?" The fact that Jesus Christ is to come is not a reason for star-gazing, but for working in the power of the Holy Ghost. Be not so taken up with speculations as to prefer a Bible reading over a dark passage in the Revelation to teaching in a ragged-school or discoursing to the poor concerning Jesus. We must have done with day-dreams, and get to work. I believe in eggs, but we must get chickens out of them. I do not mind how big your egg is; it may be an ostrich's egg if you like, but if there is nothing in it, pray clear away the shells. If something comes of it God bless your speculations, and even if you should go a little further than I think it wise to venture, still, if you are more useful, God be praised for it. Wewant facts–deeds done, souls saved. It is all very well to write essays, but what souls have you saved 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 so.

I see them in 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 travelling 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, and Satan 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 Suvarov's idea of war is mine: "Forward and strike! No theory! Attack! Form column! Charge bayonets! Plunge into the center of the enemy." Our one aim is to save sinners, and this we are not to talk about, but to do in the power of God.

6. Lastly, and here I am going to deliver a message which weighs upon me,—Go forward in the matter of the choice of your sphere of action. 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 prove honestly 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 be the same; but I hope I would cheerfully go if it were my duty to do so. 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 till we find them. Many difficulties are now removed, all lands are open to us, and distance is 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? The men who ought to go are young brethren of good abilities who have not yet taken upon themselves family cares.

Each student entering the college should consider this matter, and surrender himself to the work unless there are conclusive reasons for his not doing so. It is a fact that even for the colonies it is very difficult to find men, for I have had openings in Australia which I have been obliged to decline. It ought not to be so. Surely there is some self-sacrifice among us yet, and some among us are willing to be exiled for Jesus. The Mission languishes for want of men. If the men were forthcoming the liberality of the church would supply their needs, and, in fact, the liberality of the church had made the supply, and yet there are not the men to go. I shall never feel, brethren, that we, as a band of men, have done our duty until we see our comrades fighting for Jesus in every land in the van of conflict. I believe that if God moves you to go, you will be among the best of missionaries, because you will make the preaching of the gospel the great feature of your work,

and that is God's sure way of power. I wish that our churches would imitate that of Pastor Harms, in Germany, where every member was consecrated to God indeed 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 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 and woman becomes a missionary, and how much they do 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 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."

Forward! In God's name, FORWARD!!

12

THE NEED OF DECISION FOR THE TRUTH

Some things are true and some things are false: I regard that as an axiom; but there are many persons who evidently do not believe it. The current principle of the present age seems to be, "Some things are either true or false, according to the point of view from which you look at them. Black is white, and white is black according to circumstances; and it does not particularly matter which you call it. Truth of course is true, but it would be rude to say that the opposite is a lie; we must not be bigoted, but remember the motto, 'So many men, so many minds,'" Our forefathers were particular about maintaining landmarks; they had strong notions about fixed points of revealed doctrine, and were very tenacious of what they believed to be scriptural; their fields were protected by hedges and ditches, but their sons have grubbed up the hedges, filled up the ditches, laid all level, and played at leap-frog with the boundary stones. The school of modern thought laughs at the ridiculous positiveness of Reformers and Puritans; it is advancing in glorious liberality, and before long will publish a grand alliance between heaven and hell, or, rather, an amalgamation of the two establishments upon terms of mutual concession, allowing falsehood and truth to lie side by side, like the lion with the lamb.

Still, for all that, my firm old-fashioned belief is that some doctrines are true, and that statements which are diametrically opposite to them are not true,–that when "No" is the fact, "Yes" is out of court, and that when "Yes" can be justified, "No" must be abandoned. I believe that the gentleman who has for so long a time perplexed our courts is

either Sir Roger Tichborne or somebody else; I am not yet able to conceive of his being the true heir and an impostor at the same time. Yet in religious matters the fashionable standpoint is somewhat in that latitude.

We have a fixed faith to preach, my brethren, and we are sent forth with a definite message from God. We are not left to fabricate the message as we go along. We are not sent forth by our Master with a general commission arranged on this fashion: "As you shall think in your heart and invent in your head, so preach. Keep abreast of the times. Whatever the people want to hear, tell them that, and they shall be saved." Verily, we read not so. There is something definite in the Bible. It is not quite a lump of wax to be shaped at our will, or a roll or cloth to be cut according to the prevailing fashion. Your great thinkers evidently look upon the Scriptures as a box of letters for them to play with, and make what they like of, or a wizard's bottle, out of which they may pour anything they choose, from atheism up to spiritualism. I am too old-fashioned to fall down and worship this theory. There is something told me in the Bible—told me for certain—not put before me with a "but" and a "perhaps," and an "if," and a "may be," and fifty thousand suspicions behind it, so that really the long and the short of it is, that it may not be so at all; but revealed to me as infallible fact, which must be believed, the opposite of which is deadly error, and comes from the father of lies.

Believing, therefore, that there is such a thing as truth, and such a thing as falsehood, that there are truths in the Bible, and that the gospel consists in something definite which is to be believed by men, it becomes us to be decided as to what we teach, and to teach it in a decided manner. We have to deal with men who will be either lost or saved, and they certainly will not be saved by erroneous doctrine. We have to deal with God, whose servants we are, and He will not be honored by our delivering falsehoods; neither will He give us a reward, and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast mangled the, gospel as judiciously as any man that ever lived before thee." We stand in a very solemn position, and ours should be the spirit of old Micaiah, who said, "As the Lord my God

liveth, before whom I stand, whatsoever the Lord saith unto me that will I speak." Neither less nor more than God's word are we called to state, but that word we are bound to declare in a spirit which convinces the sons of men that, whatever they may think of it, we believe God, and are not to be shaken in our confidence in Him.

Brethren, in what ought we to be positive? Well, there are gentlemen alive who imagine that there are no fixed principles to go upon. "Perhaps a few doctrines," said one to me, "perhaps a few doctrines may be considered as established. It is, perhaps, ascertained that there is a God; but one ought not to dogmatize upon His personality: a great deal may be said for pantheism." Such men creep into the ministry, but they are generally cunning enough to conceal the breadth of their minds beneath Christian phraseology, thus acting in consistency with their principles, for their fundamental rule is that truth is of no consequence.

As for us–as for me, at any rate–I am certain that there is a God, and I mean to preach it as a man does who is absolutely sure. He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the Master of providence, and the Lord of grace: let His name be blessed for ever and ever! We will have no questions and debates as to Him.

We are equally certain that the book which is called "the Bible" is His word, and is inspired: not inspired in the sense in which Shakespeare, and Milton, and Dryden may be inspired, but in an infinitely higher sense; so that, provided we have the exact text, we regard the words themselves as infallible. We believe that everything stated in the book that comes to us from God is to be accepted by us as His sure testimony, and nothing less than that. God forbid we should be ensnared by those various interpretations of the *Modus* of inspiration, which amount to little more than frittering it away. The book is a divine production; it is perfect, and is the last court of appeal— "the judge which ends the strife." I would as soon dream of blaspheming my Maker as of questioning the infallibility of His word.

We are also sure concerning the doctrine of the blessed

Trinity. We cannot explain how the Father, Son, and Spirit can be each one distinct and perfect in himself, and yet that these three are one, so that there is but one God; yet we do verily believe it, and mean to preach it, notwithstanding Unitarian, Socinian, Sabellian, or any other error. We shall hold fast evermore the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity.

And, brethren, there will be no uncertain sound from us as to the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot leave the blood out of our ministry, or the life of it will be gone; for we may say of the gospel, "The blood is the life thereof." The proper substitution of Christ, the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, on the behalf of His people, that they might live through Him,–this we must publish till we die.

Neither can we waver in our mind for a moment concerning the great and glorious Spirit of God–the fact of His existence, His personality, the power of His working, the necessity of His influences, the certainty that no man is regenerated except by Him; that we are born again by the Spirit of God, and that the Spirit dwells in believers, and is the author of all good in them, their sanctifier and preserver, without whom they can do no good thing whatsoever: we shall not at all hesitate as to preaching these truths.

The absolute necessity of the new birth is also a certainty. We come down with demonstration when we touch that point. We shall never poison our people with the notion that a moral reformation will suffice, but we will over and over again say to them, "Ye must be born again." We have not got into the condition of the Scotch minister who, when old John Macdonald preached to his congregation a sermon to sinners, remarked, "Well, Mr. Macdonald, that was a very good sermon which you have preached, but it is very much out of place, for I do not know one single unregenerate person in my congregation." Poor soul, he was in all probability unregenerated himself. No, we dare not flatter our hearers, but we must continue to tell them that they are born sinners, and must be born saints, or they will never see the face of God with acceptance.

The tremendous evil of sin—we shall not hesitate

about that. We shall speak on that matter both sorrowfully and positively; and, though some very wise men raise difficult questions about hell, we shall not fail to declare the terrors of the Lord, and the fact that the Lord has said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Neither will we ever give an uncertain sound as to the glorious truth that salvation is all of grace. If ever we ourselves are saved, we know that sovereign grace alone has done it, and we feel it must be the same with others. We will publish, "Grace! grace! grace!" with all our might, living and dying.

We shall be very decided, also, as to justification by faith; for salvation is "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "Life in a look at the Crucified One" will be Our message. Trust in the Redeemer will be that saving grace which we will pray the Lord to implant in all our hearers' hearts.

And everything else which we believe to be true in the Scriptures we shall preach with decision. If there be questions which may be regarded as moot, or comparatively unimportant, we shall speak with such a measure of decision about them as may be comely. But points which cannot be moot, which are essential and fundamental, will be declared by us without any stammering, without any enquiring of the people, "What would you wish us to say?" Yes, and without the apology, "Those are my views, but other people's views may be correct." We ought to preach the gospel, not as *our views* at all, but as the mind of God–the testimony of Jehovah concerning His own Son, and in reference to salvation for lost men.

If we had been entrusted with the making of the gospel, we might have altered it to suit the taste of this modest century, but never having been employed to originate the good news, but merely to repeat it, we dare not stir beyond the record. What we have been taught of God we teach. If we do not do this, we are not fit for our position. If I have a servant in my house and I send a message by her to the door, and she amends it on her own authority, she may take away the very soul of the message by so doing, and she will be responsible

for what she has done. She will not remain long in my employ, for I need a servant who will repeat what I say, as nearly as possible, word for word; and if she does so, I am responsible for the message, she is not. If any one should be angry with her on account of what she said, they would be very unjust; their quarrel lies with me, and not with the person whom I employ to act as mouth for me. He that hath God's Word, let him speak it faithfully, and he will have no need to answer gainsayers, except with a "Thus saith the Lord." This, then, is the matter concerning which we are decided.

How are we to show this decision? We need not be careful to answer this question; our decision will show itself in its own way. If we really believe a truth, we shall be decided about it. Certainly we are not to show our decision by that obstinate, furious, wolfish bigotry which cuts off every other body from the chance and hope of salvation and the possibility of being regenerate or even decently honest if they happen to differ from us about the color of a scale of the great leviathan. Some individuals appear to be naturally cut on the cross; they are manufactured to be rasps, and rasp they will. Sooner than not quarrel with you they would raise a question upon the color of invisibility, or the weight of a non-existent substance. They are up in arms with you, not because of the importance of the question under discussion, but because of the far greater importance of their being always the Pope of the party.

Don't go about the world with your fist doubled up for fighting, carrying a theological revolver in the leg of your trousers. There is no sense in being a sort of doctrinal gamecock, to be carried about to show your spirit, or a terrier of orthodoxy, ready to tackle heterodox rats by the score. Practice the *suaviter in modo* as well as the *fortiter in re*. Be prepared to fight, and always have your sword buckled on your thigh, but wear a scabbard; there can be no sense in waving your weapon about before everybody's eyes to provoke conflict, after the manner of our beloved friends of the Emerald Isle, who are said to take their coats off at Donnybrook Fair, and drag them along the ground, crying out, while they flourish their shillelaghs, "Will any gentleman be so good as to tread

on the tail of my coat?" These are theologians of such warm, generous blood, that they are never at peace till they are fully engaged in war.

If you really believe the gospel, you will be decided for it in more sensible ways. Your very tone will betray your sincerity; you will speak like a man who has something to say, which he knows to be true. Have you ever watched a rogue when he is about to tell a falsehood? Have you noticed the way in which he has to mouth it? It takes a long time to be able to tell a lie well, for the facial organs were not originally constituted and adapted for the complacent delivery of falsehood. When a man knows he is telling you the truth, everything about him corroborates his sincerity.

Any accomplished cross examining lawyer knows within a little whether a witness is genuine or a deceiver. Truth has her own air and manner, her own tone and emphasis. Yonder is a blundering, ignorant country fellow in the witness-box; the counsel tries to bamboozle and confuse him, if possible, but all the while he feels that he is an honest witness, and he says to himself, "I should like to shake this fellow's evidence, for it will greatly damage my side of the question." There ought to be always that same air of truth about the Christian minister; only as he is not only bearing witness to the truth, but wants other people to feel that truth and own the power of it, he ought to have more decision in his tone than a mere witness who is stating facts which may be believed or not without any serious consequences following either way.

Luther was the man for decision. Nobody doubted that he believed what he spoke. He spoke with thunder, for there was lightning in his faith. The man preached all over, for his entire nature believed. You felt, "Well, he may be mad, or he may be altogether mistaken, but he assuredly believes what he says. He is the incarnation of faith; his heart is running over at his lips."

If we would show decision for the truth, we must not only do so by our tone and manner, but by our daily actions. A man's life is always more forcible than his speech; when men take stock of him they reckon his deeds as pounds and his

words as pence. If his life and his doctrines disagree, the mass of lookers-on accept his practice and reject his preaching. A man may know a great deal about truth, and yet be a very damaging witness on its behalf, because he is no credit to it. The quack who in the classic story cried up an infallible cure for colds, coughing and sneezing between every sentence of his panegyric, may serve as the image and symbol of an unholy minister. The Satyr in Aesop's fable was indignant with the man who blew hot and cold with the same mouth, and well he might be. I can conceive no surer method of prejudicing men against the truth than by sounding her praises through the lips of men of suspicious character. When the devil turned preacher in our Lord's day, the Master bade him hold his peace; He did not care for Satanic praises.

It is very ridiculous to hear good truth from a bad man; it is like flour in a coal-sack. When I was last in one of our Scottish towns I heard of an idiot at the asylum, who thought himself a great historic character. With much solemnity the poor fellow put himself into an impressive attitude and exclaimed, "I'm Sir William Wallace! Gie me a bit of bacca." The descent from Sir William Wallace to a piece of tobacco was too absurd for gravity; yet it was neither so absurd nor so sad as to see a professed ambassador of the cross covetous, worldly, passionate, or sluggish. How strange it would be to hear a man say, "I am a servant of the Most High God, and I will go wherever I can get the most salary. I am called to labor for the glory of Jesus only, and I will go nowhere unless the church is of most respectable standing. For me to live is Christ, but I cannot do it under five hundred pounds per annum."

Brother, if the truth be in thee it will flow out of thine entire being as the perfume streams from every bough of the sandal-wood tree; it will drive thee onward as the trade-wind speeds the ships, filling all their sails; it will consume thy whole nature with its energy as the forest fire burns up all the trees of the wood. Truth has not fully given thee her friendship till all thy doings are marked with her seal.

We must show our decision for the truth by the sacrifices we are ready to make. This is, indeed, the most

efficient as well as the most trying method. We must be ready to give up anything and everything for the sake of the principles which we have espoused, and must be ready to offend our best supporters, to alienate our warmest friends, sooner than belie our consciences. We must be ready to be beggars in purse, and offscourings in reputation, rather than act treacherously. We can die, but we cannot deny the truth. The cost is already counted, and we are determined to buy the truth at any price, and sell it at no price. Too little of this spirit is abroad nowadays. Men have a saving faith, and save their own persons from trouble; they have great discernment, and know on which side their bread is buttered; they are large-hearted, and are all things to all men, if by any means they may save a sum. There are plenty of curs about, who would follow at the heel of any man who would keep them in meat. They are among the first to bark at decision, and call it obstinate dogmatism, and ignorant bigotry. Their condemnatory verdict causes us no distress; it is what we expected.

Above all we must show our zeal for the truth by continually, in season and out of season, endeavoring to maintain it in the tenderest and most loving manner, but still very earnestly and firmly. We must not talk to our congregations as if we were half asleep. Our preaching must not be articulate snoring. There must be power, life, energy, vigor. We must throw our whole selves into it, and show that the zeal of God's house has eaten us up.

How are we to manifest our decision? Certainly not by harping on one string and repeating over and over again the same truths with the declaration that we believe them. Such a course of action could only suggest itself to the incompetent. The barrel-organ grinder is not a pattern of decision; he may have persistency, but that is not the same thing as consistency. I could indicate certain brethren who have learned four or five doctrines, and they grind them over and over again with everlasting monotony. I am always glad when they grind their tunes in some street far removed from my abode. To weary with perpetual repetition is not the way to manifest our firmness in the faith.

My brethren, you will *strengthen your decision* by the recollection of the importance of these truths to your own souls. Are your sins forgiven? Have you a hope of heaven? How do the solemnities of eternity affect you? Certainly you are not saved apart from these things, and therefore you must hold them, for you feel you are a lost man if they be not true. You have to die, and, being conscious that these things alone can sustain you in the last article, you hold them with all your might. You cannot give them up. How can a man resign a truth which he feels to be vitally important to his own soul? He daily feels, "I have to live on it, I have to die on it, I am wretched now, and lost forever apart from it, and therefore by the help of God I cannot relinquish it."

Your own experience from day to day will sustain you, beloved brethren. I hope you have realized already and will experience much more the power of the truth which you preach. I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards; and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love. So I am forced to accept that doctrine.

I am bound to the doctrine of the depravity of the human heart, because I find myself depraved in heart, and have daily proofs that there dwelleth in my flesh no good thing. I cannot help holding that there must be an atonement before there can be pardon, because my conscience demands it, and my peace depends upon it. The little court within my own heart is not satisfied unless some retribution be exacted for dishonor done to God. They tell us sometimes that such and such statements are not true; but when we are able to reply that we have tried them and proved them, what answer is there to such reasoning? A man propounds the wonderful discovery that honey is not sweet. "But I had some for breakfast, and I found it very sweet," say you, and your reply is conclusive. He tells you that salt is poisonous, but you point to your own health, and declare that you have eaten salt these twenty

years. He says that to eat bread is a mistake–a vulgar error, an antiquated absurdity; but at each meal you make his protest the subject for a merry laugh.

If you are daily and habitually experienced in the truth of God's Word, I am not afraid of your being shaken in mind in reference to it. Those young fellows who never felt conviction of sin, but obtained their religion as they get their bath in the morning, by jumping into it–these will as readily leap out of it as they leaped in. Those who feel neither the joys nor yet the depressions of spirit which indicate spiritual life, are torpid, and their palsied hand has no firm grip of truth. Mere skimmers of the Word, who, like swallows, touch the water with their wings, are the first to fly from one land to another as personal considerations guide them. They believe this, and then believe that, for, in truth, they believe nothing intensely. If you have ever been dragged through the mire and clay of soul-despair, if you have been turned upside down, and wiped out like a dish as to all your own strength and pride, and have then been filled with the joy and peace of God, through Jesus Christ, I will trust you among fifty thousand infidels. Whenever I hear the sceptic's stale attacks upon the Word of God, I smile within myself and think, "Why, you simpleton! How can you urge such trifling objections? I have felt, in the contentions of my own unbelief, ten times greater difficulties." We who have contended with horses are not to be wearied by footmen. Gordon Cumming and other lion-killers are not to be scared by wild cats, nor will those who have stood foot to foot with Satan resign the field to pretentious sceptics, or any other of the evil one's inferior servants.

If, my brethren, we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot be made to doubt the fundamentals of the gospel; neither can we be undecided. A glimpse at the thorn-crowned head and pierced hands and feet is the sure cure for "modern doubt" and all its vagaries. Get into the "Rock of Ages, cleft for you," and you will abhor the quicksand. That eminent American preacher, the seraphic Summerfield, when he lay a-dying, turned round to a friend in the room and said, "I have taken a look into eternity. Oh, if I could come back

and preach again, how differently would I preach from what I have done before!" Take a look into eternity, brethren, if you want to be decided. Remember how Atheist met Christian and Hopeful on the road to the New Jerusalem, and said, "There is no celestial country. I have gone a long way, and could not find it." Then Christian said to Hopeful, "Did we not see it from the top of Mount Clear, when we were with the shepherds?" There was an answer! So when men have said, "There is no Christ–there is no truth in religion," we have replied to them, "Have we not sat under His shadow with great delight? Was not His fruit sweet to our taste? Go with your scepticisms to those who do not know whom they have believed. We have tasted and handled the good word of life. What we have seen and heard, that we do testify; and whether men receive our testimony or not, we cannot but speak it, for we, speak what we do know, and testify what we have seen." That, my brethren, is the sure way to be decided.

And now, lastly, *why should we at this particular age be decided and bold?* We should be so because this age is a doubting age. It swarms with doubters as Egypt of old with frogs. You rub against them everywhere. Everybody is doubting everything, not merely in religion, but in politics and social economics, in everything indeed. It is the era of progress, and I suppose it must be the age, therefore, of unloosening, in order that the whole body politic may move on a little further. Well, brethren, as the age is doubting, it is wise for us to put our foot down and stand still where we are sure we have truth beneath us. Perhaps, if it were an age of bigotry, and men would not learn, we might be more inclined to listen to new teachers; but now the Conservative side must be ours, or rather the Radical side, which is the truly Conservative side. We must go back to the radix, or root of truth, and stand sternly by that which God has revealed, and so meet the wavering of the age. Our eloquent neighbor, Mr. Arthur Mursell, has well hit off the present age:

> Have we gone too far in saying that modern thought has grown impatient with the Bible, the gospel,

and the cross? Let us see. What part of the Bible has it not assailed? The Pentateuch it has long ago swept from the canon as unauthentic. What we read about the creation and the flood is branded as fable. And the laws about the landmarks, from which Solomon was not ashamed to quote, are buried or laid upon the shelf.

Different men assail different portions of the book, and various systems level their batteries of prejudice at various points; until by some the Scripture is torn all to pieces, and cast to the four winds of heaven, and by even the most forbearing of the cultured Vandals of what is called modern thought, it is condensed into a thin pamphlet of morality, instead of the tome of teaching through which we have eternal life. There is hardly a prophet but has been *reviewed* by the wiseacres of the day in precisely the same spirit as they would review a work from Mudie's library. The Temanite and the Shuhite never misconstrued the baited Job with half the prejudice of the acknowledged intellects of our time. Isaiah, instead of being sawn asunder, is quartered and hacked in pieces. The weeping prophet is drowned in his own tears. Ezekiel is ground to atoms amidst his wheels. Daniel is devoured bodily by the learned lions. And Jonah is swallowed by the deep monsters with a more inexorable voracity than the fish, for they never cast him up again. The histories and events of the great chronicle are rudely contradicted and gainsaid, because some schoolmaster with a slate and pencil cannot bring his sums right. And every miracle which the might of the Lord wrought for the favor of His people, or the frustration of their foes, is pooh-poohed as an absurdity, because the professors cannot do the like with their enchantments. A few of what are called miracles may be credible, because our leaders

think they can do them themselves. A few natural phenomena, which some doctor can show to a company of martinets in a dark room, or with a table-full of apparatus, will account for the miracle of the Red Sea. An aeronaut goes up in a balloon, and then comes down again, and quite explains away the pillar of fire and of cloud, and trifles of that kind. And so our great men are satisfied when they think that their toy wand has swallowed up the wand of Aaron: but when Aaron's wand threatens to swallow up theirs, they say that part is not authentic, and that miracle never occurred.

Nor does the New Testament fare any better than the Old at the hands of these invaders. There is no toll of deference levied on their homage as they pass across the line. They recognize no voice of warning with the cry, 'Take thy shoes from off thy feet, because the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' The mind which halts in its career of spiritual rapine on any reverential pretext, is denounced as ignorant or slavish. To hesitate to stamp the hoof upon a lily or a spring flower is the sentimental folly of a child, and the vanguard of the thought of the age has only pity and a sneer for such a feeling, as it stalks upon its boasted march of progress. We are told that the legends of our nurseries are obsolete, and that broader views are gaining ground with thoughtful minds. We are unwilling to believe it. The truth is, that a few, a very few, thoughtful men, whose thinking consists in negation from first to last, and whose minds are tortured with a chronic twist or curve, which turns them into intellectual notes of interrogation, have laid the basis of this system; these few honest doubters have been joined by a larger band who are simply restless; and these again by men who are inimical to the spirit and the truths of Scripture, and together they have formed a coterie, and called

themselves the leaders of the thought of the age. They have a following, it is true; but of whom does it consist? Of the mere satellites of fashion. Of the wealth, the pedantry, and the stupidity of our large populations. A string of carriages is seen 'setting down' and 'taking up' at the door where an advanced professor is to lecture, and because the milliner is advertised from floor to ceiling in the lecture room, these views are said to be gaining ground. But in an age of fashion like this, who ever suspects these minions of the mode of having any views at all? It becomes respectable to follow a certain name for a time, and so the vainlings go to follow the name and to display the dress. But as to views, one would no more suspect such people of having any views than they would dream of charging more than a tenth part of the crowds who go to the Royal Academy's exhibition with understanding the laws of perspective. It is the thing to do: and so every one who has a dress to show and a lounge to air, goes to show it, and all who would be in the fashion (and who would not?) are bound to advance with the times. And hence we find the times advancing over the sacred precincts of the New Testament, as though it were the floor of St. Alban's or of a professor's lecture room; and ladies drag their trains, and dandies set their dress-boots on the authenticity of this, or the authority of that, or the inspiration of the other. People who never heard of Strauss, of Bauer, or of Tubingen, are quite prepared to say that our Savior was but a well-meaning man, who had a great many faults, and made a great many mistakes; that His miracles, as recorded in the New Testament, were in part imaginary, and in part accountable by natural theories; that the raising of Lazarus never occurred, since the Gospel of John is a forgery from first to last; that the atonement is a doctrine

> to be scouted as bloody and unrighteous; that Paul was a fanatic who wrote unthinkingly, and that much of what bears his name was never written by him at all. Thus is the Bible rubbed through the tribulum of criticism from Genesis to Revelation, until, in the faith of the age in which we live, as represented by its so-called leaders, there are but a few inspired fragments here and there remaining.

Moreover, after all, this is not an earnestly doubting age; we live among a careless, frivolous race. If the doubters were honest there would be more infidel places of concourse than there are; but infidelity as an organized community does not prosper. Infidelity in London, open and avowed, has come down to one old corrugated iron shed opposite St. Luke's. I believe that is the present position of it. "The Hall of Science" is it not called? Its literature was carried on for a long time in half a shop in Fleet Street; that was all it could manage to support, and I don't know whether even that half shop is used now. It is a poor, doting, drivelling thing. In Tom Paine's time it bullied like a vigorous blasphemer, but it was outspoken, and, in it own way, downright and earnest in its outspokenness. It commanded in former days some names which one might mention with a measure of respect; Hume, to wit, and Bolingbroke, and Voltaire were great in talent, if not in character. But where now will you find a Hobbes or a Gibbon? The doubters now are usually doubters because they do not care about truth at all. They are indifferent altogether. Modern scepticism is playing and toying with truth; and it takes to "modern thought" as an amusement, as ladies take to croquet or archery. This is nothing less than an age of millinery and dolls and comedy. Even good people do not believe out and out as their fathers used to do. Some even among Nonconformists are shamefully lax in their convictions; they have few masterly convictions such as would lead them to the stake, or even to imprisonment. Molluscs have taken the place of men, and men are turned to jelly-fishes. Far from us be the desire to imitate them.

Moreover it is an age which is very impressible, and therefore I should like to see you very decided, that you may impress it. The wonderful progress made in England by the High Church movement shows that earnestness is power. The Ritualists believe something, and that fact has given them influence. To me their distinctive creed is intolerable nonsense, and their proceedings are childish foolery; but they have dared to go against the mob, and have turned the mob round to their side. Bravely did they battle, let us say it to their honor; when their churches became the scenes of riot and disorder, and there was raised the terrible howl of "No Popery" by the lower orders, they boldly confronted the foe and never winced. They went against the whole current of what was thought to be the deep-seated feeling of England in favor of Protestantism, and with scarcely a bishop to patronize them, and but few loaves and fishes of patronage, they have increased from a handful to become the dominant and most vital party in the Church of England, and to our intense surprise and horror they have brought people to receive again the Popery which we thought dead and buried. If anybody had told me twenty years ago that the witch of Endor would become Queen of England, I should as soon have believed it as that we should now have such a High Church development; but the fact is, the men were earnest and decided, and held what they believed most firmly, and did not hesitate to push their cause.

The age, therefore, can be impressed; it will receive what is taught by zealous men, whether it be truth or falsehood. It may be objected that falsehood will be received the more readily; that is just possible, but anything will be accepted by men if you will but preach it with tremendous energy and living earnestness. If they will not receive it into their hearts in a spiritual sense, yet at any rate there will be a mental assent and consent, very much in proportion to the energy with which you proclaim it; ay, and God will bless our decision too, so that when the mind is gained by our earnestness, and the attention is won by our zeal, the heart itself will be opened by the Spirit of God.

We must be decided. What have Dissenters been doing

to a great extent lately but trying to be fine? How many of our ministers are laboring to be grand orators or intellectual thinkers? That is not the thing. Our young ministers have been dazzled by that, and have gone off to bray like wild asses under the notion that they would then be reputed to have come from Jerusalem, or to have been reared in Germany. The world has found them out. There is nothing now I believe that genuine Christians despise more than the foolish affectation of intellectualism. You will hear a good old deacon say, "Mr. So-and-so, whom we had here, was a very clever man, and preached wonderful sermons, but the cause has gone down through it. We can hardly support the minister, and we mean next time to have one of the old-fashioned ministers back again who believe in something and preach it. There will be no addition to our church else."

Will you go out and tell the people that you believe you can say something, but you hardly know what; you are not quite sure that what you preach is correct, but the trust-deed requires you to say it, and therefore you say it? Why, you may cause fools and idiots to be pleased with you, and you will be sure to propagate infidelity, but you cannot do more. When a prophet comes forward he must speak as from the Lord, and if he cannot do that, let him go back to his bed. It is quite certain, dear friends, that now or never we must be decided, because the age is manifestly drifting. You cannot watch for twelve months without seeing how it is going down the tide; the anchors are pulled up, and the vessel is floating to destruction. It is drifting now, as near as I can tell you, south-east, and is nearing Cape Vatican, and if it drives much further in that direction it will be on the rocks of the Roman reef. We must get aboard her, and connect her with the glorious steam-tug of gospel truth, and drag her back. I should be glad if I could take her round by Cape Calvin, right up into the Bay of Calvary, and anchor her in the fair haven which is close over by Vera Cruz, or the cross. God grant us grace to do it. We must have a strong hand, and have our steam well up, and defy the current; and so by God's grace we shall both save this age and the generations yet to come.

13

EARNESTNESS: ITS MARRING AND MAINTENANCE

If I were asked–What in a Christian minister is the most essential quality for securing success in winning souls for Christ? I should reply, "earnestness": and if I were asked a second or a third time, I should not vary the answer, for personal observation drives me to the conclusion that, as a rule, real success is proportionate to the preacher's earnestness. Both great men and little men succeed if they are thoroughly alive unto God, and fail if they are not so. We know men of eminence who have gained a high reputation, who attract large audiences, and obtain much admiration, who nevertheless are very low in the scale as soul winners: for all they do in that direction they might as well have been lecturers on anatomy, or political orators. At the same time we have seen their compeers in ability so useful in the business of conversion that evidently their acquirements and gifts have been no hindrance to them, but the reverse; for by the intense and devout use of their powers, and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, they have turned many to righteousness. We have seen brethren of very scanty abilities who have been terrible drags upon a church, and have proved as inefficient in their spheres as blind men in an observatory; but, on the other hand, men of equally small attainments are well known to us as mighty hunters before the Lord, by whose holy energy many hearts have been captured for the Savior. I delight in M'Cheyne's remark, "It is not so much great talents that God blesses, as great likeness to Christ." In many instances ministerial success is traceable almost entirely to an intense zeal, a consuming passion for

souls, and an eager enthusiasm in the cause of God, and we believe that in every case, other things being equal, men prosper in the divine service in proportion as their hearts are blazing with holy love. "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God"; and the man who has the tongue of fire, let him be God's minister.

Brethren, you and I must, as preachers, be always earnest in reference to our pulpit work. Here we must labor to attain the very highest degree of excellence. Often have I said to my brethren that the pulpit is the Thermopylae of Christendom: there the fight will be lost or won. To us ministers the maintenance of our power in the pulpit should be our great concern; we must occupy that spiritual watch-tower with our hearts and minds awake and in full vigor. It will not avail us to be laborious pastors if we are not earnest preachers. We shall be forgiven a great many sins in the matter of pastoral visitation if the people's souls are really fed on the Sabbath day; but fed they must be, and nothing else will make up for it. The failures of most ministers who drift down the stream may be traced to inefficiency in the pulpit. The chief business of a captain is to know how to handle his vessel; nothing can compensate for deficiency there, and so our pulpits must be our main care, or all will go awry.

Dogs often fight because the supply of bones is scanty, and congregations frequently quarrel because they do not get sufficient spiritual meat to keep them happy and peaceful. The ostensible ground of dissatisfaction may be something else, but nine times out of ten deficiency in their rations is at the bottom of the mutinies which occur in our churches. Men, like all other animals, know when they are fed, and they usually feel good tempered after a meal; and so when our hearers come to the house of God, and obtain "food convenient for them," they forget a great many grievances in the joy of the festival, but if we send them away hungry they will be in as irritable a mood as a bear robbed of her whelps.

Now, in order that we may be acceptable, *we must be earnest when actually engaged in preaching.* Cecil has well said that the spirit and manner of a preacher often effect

more than his matter. To go into the pulpit with the listless air of those gentlemen who loll about, and lean upon the cushion as if they had at last reached a quiet resting place, is, I think, most censurable. To rise before the people to deal out commonplaces which have cost you nothing, as if anything would do for a sermon, is not merely derogatory to the dignity of our office, but is offensive in the sight of God. We must be earnest in the pulpit for our own sakes, for we shall not long be able to maintain our position as leaders in the church of God if we are dull. Moreover, for the sake of our church members, and converted people, we must be energetic, for if we are not zealous, neither will they be. It is not in the order of nature that rivers should run uphill, and it does not often happen that zeal rises from the pew to the pulpit. It is natural that it should flow down from us to our hearers; the pulpit must therefore stand at a high level of ardor, if we are, under God, to make and to keep our people fervent. Those who attend our ministry have a great deal to do during the week. Many of them have family trials, and heavy personal burdens to carry, and they frequently come into the assembly cold and listless, with thoughts wandering hither and thither; it is ours to take those thoughts and thrust them into the furnace of our own earnestness, melt them by holy contemplation and by intense appeal, and pour them out into the mould of the truth. A blacksmith can do nothing when his fire is out, and in this respect he is the type of a minister. If all the lights in the outside world are quenched, the lamp which burns in the sanctuary ought still to remain undimmed; for that fire no curfew must ever be rung. We must regard the people as the wood and the sacrifice, well wetted a second and a third time by the cares of the week, upon which, like the prophet, we must pray down the fire from heaven.

A dull minister creates a dull audience. You cannot expect the officebearers and the members of the church to travel by steam if their own chosen pastor still drives the old broadwheeled waggon. We ought each one to be like that reformer who is described as *"Vividus vultus, vividi occuli, vividae manus, denique omnia vivida,"* which I would rather

freely render—"countenance beaming with life, eyes and hands full of life, in fine, a vivid preacher, altogether alive."

> Thy soul must overflow, if thou
> Another's soul would reach,
> It needs the overflow of heart
> To give the lips full speech.

The world also will suffer as well as the church if we are not fervent. We cannot expect a gospel devoid of earnestness to have any mighty effect upon the unconverted around us. One of the excuses most soporific to the conscience of an ungodly generation is that of half-heartedness in the preacher. If the sinner finds the preacher nodding while he talks of judgment to come, he concludes that the judgment is a thing which the preacher is dreaming about, and he resolves to regard it all as mere fiction. The whole outside world receives serious danger from the cold-hearted preacher, for it draws the same conclusion as the individual sinner: it perseveres in its own listlessness, it gives its strength to its own transient objects, and thinks itself wise for so doing. How can it be otherwise? If the prophet leaves his heart behind him when he professes to speak in the name of God, what can he expect but that the ungodly around him will persuade themselves that there is nothing in his message, and that his commission is a farce.

Hear how Whitefield preached, and never dare to be lethargic again. Winter says of him that "sometimes he exceedingly wept, and was frequently so overcome, that for a few seconds you would suspect he never would recover; and when he did, nature required some little time to compose herself. I hardly ever knew him go through a sermon without weeping more or less. His voice was often interrupted by his affections; and I have heard him say in the pulpit, 'You blame me for weeping; but how can I help it, when you will not weep for yourselves, although your own immortal souls are on the verge of destruction, and, for aught I know, you are hearing your last sermon, and may never more have an opportunity to

have Christ offered to you?"

Earnestness in the pulpit must be real. It is not to be mimicked. We have seen it counterfeited, but every person with a grain of sense could detect the imposition. To stamp the foot, to smite the desk, to perspire, to shout, to bawl, to quote the pathetic portions of other people's sermons, or to pour out voluntary tears from a watery eye will never make up for true agony of soul and real tenderness of spirit. The best piece of acting is but acting; those who only look at appearances may be pleased by it, but lovers of reality will be disgusted. What presumption!–what hypocrisy it is by skilful management of the voice to mimic the passion which is the genuine work of the Holy Ghost. Let mere actors beware, lest they be found sinning against the Holy Spirit by their theatrical performances. We must be earnest in the pulpit because we are earnest everywhere; we must blaze in our discourses because we are continually on fire. Zeal which is stored up to be let off only on grand occasions is a gas which will one day destroy its proprietor. Nothing but truth may appear in the house of the Lord; all affectation is strange fire, and excites the indignation of the God of truth. Be earnest, and you will seem to be earnest A burning heart will soon find for itself a flaming tongue. To sham earnestness is one of the most contemptible of dodges for courting popularity; let us abhor the very thought. Go and be listless in the pulpit if you are so in your heart. Be slow in speech, drawling in tone, and monotonous in voice, if so you can best express your soul; even that would be infinitely better than to make your ministry a masquerade and yourself an actor.

But our zeal while in the act of preaching must be followed up by intense solicitude as to the after results; for if it be not so we shall have cause to question our sincerity. God will not send a harvest of souls to those who never watch or water the fields which they have sown. When the sermon is over we have only let down the net which afterwards we are to draw to shore by prayer and watchfulness. Here, I think, I cannot do better than allow a far abler advocate to plead with

you, and quote the words of Dr. Watts:

> 'Be very solicitous about the success of your labors in the pulpit. Water the seed sown, not only with public, but secret prayer. Plead with God importunately that he would not suffer you to labor in vain. Be not like that foolish bird the ostrich, which lays her eggs in the dust, and leaves them there regardless whether they come to life or not (Job 29:14-17). God hath not given her understanding, but let not this folly be your character or practice; labor, and watch, and pray, that your sermons and the fruit of your studies may become words of Divine life to souls.
>
> 'It is an observation of pious Mr. Baxter (which I have read somewhere in his works), that he has never known any considerable success from the brightest and noblest talents, nor from the most excellent kind of preaching, nor even when the preachers themselves have been truly religious, if they have not had a solicitous concern for the success of their ministrations. Let the awful and important thought of souls being saved by our preaching, or left to perish and to be condemned to hell through our negligence,–I say, let this awful and tremendous thought dwell ever upon our spirits. We are made watchmen to the house of Israel, as Ezekiel was; and, if we give no warning of approaching danger, the souls of multitudes may perish through our neglect; but the blood of souls will be terribly required at our hands (Ezekiel 3:17, etc.).'

Such considerations should make us instant in season and out of season, and cause us at all times to be clad with zeal as with a cloak. We ought to be all alive, and always alive. A pillar of light and fire should be the preacher's fit emblem. Our ministry must be emphatic, or it will never affect these thoughtless times; and to this end our hearts must be habitually fervent,

and our whole nature must be fired with an all-consuming passion for the glory of God and the good of men.

Now, my brethren, it is sadly true that holy earnestness when we once obtain it may be easily damped; and as a matter of fact it is more frequently chilled in the loneliness of a village pastorate than amid the society of warm-hearted Christian brethren. Adam, the author of *Private Thoughts*, once observed that "a poor country parson, fighting against the devil in his parish, has nobler ideas than Alexander the Great ever had"; and I will add, that he needs more than Alexander's ardor to enable him to continue victorious in his holy warfare. Sleepy Hollow and Dormer's Land will be too much for us unless we pray for daily quickening.

Yet town life has its dangers too, and zeal is apt to burn low through numerous engagements, like a fire which is scattered abroad instead of being raked together into a heap. Those incessant knocks at our door, and perpetual visits from idle persons, are so many buckets of cold water thrown upon our devout zeal. We must by some means secure uninterrupted meditation, or we shall lose power. London is a peculiarly trying sphere on this account. Zeal also is more quickly checked after long years of continuance in the same service than when novelty gives a charm to our work. Mr. Wesley says, in his fifteenth volume of *Journals and Letters*, "I know that, were I myself to preach one whole year in one place, I should preach both myself and most of my congregation asleep." What then must it be to abide in the same pulpit for many years! In such a case it is not the pace that kills, but the length of the race. Our God is evermore the same, enduring forever, and he alone can enable us to endure even to the end. He, who at the end of twenty years' ministry among the same people is more alive than ever, is a great debtor to the quickening Spirit.

Earnestness may be, and too often is, diminished by neglect of study. If we have not exercised ourselves in the word of God, we shall not preach with the fervor and grace of the man who has fed upon the truth be delivers, and is therefore strong and ardent. An Englishman's earnestness in

battle depends, according to some authorities, upon his being well fed: he has no stomach for the fight if be is starved. If we are well nourished by sound gospel food we shall be vigorous and fervent. An old blunt commander at Cadiz is described by Selden as thus addressing his soldiers: "What a shame will it be, you Englishmen, who feed upon good beef and beer, to let these rascally Spaniards beat you that eat nothing but oranges and lemons!" His philosophy and mine agree: he expected courage and valor from those who were well nourished. Brethren, never neglect your spiritual meals, or you will lack stamina and your spirits will sink. Live on the substantial doctrines of grace, and you will outlive and out-work those who delight in the pastry and syllabubs of "modern thought."

Zeal may, on the other hand, be damped by our studies. There is, no doubt, such a thing as feeding the brain at the expense of the heart, and many a man in his aspirations to be literary has rather qualified himself to write reviews than to preach sermons. A quaint evangelist was wont to say that Christ hung crucified beneath Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. It ought not to be so, but it has often happened that the student in college has gathered fuel, but lost the fire which is to kindle it. It will be to our everlasting disgrace if we bury our flame beneath the logs which are intended to sustain it. If we degenerate into bookworms it will be to the old serpent's delight, and to our own misery.

True earnestness may be greatly lessened by levity in conversation, and especially by jesting with brother ministers, in whose company we often take greater liberties than we would like to do in the society of other Christians. There are excellent reasons for our feeling at home with our brethren, but if this freedom be carried too far we shall soon feel that we have suffered damage through vanity of speech. Cheerfulness is one thing, and frivolity is another; he is a wise man who by a serious happiness of conversation steers between the dark rocks of moroseness, and the quicksands of levity.

We shall often find ourselves in danger of being deteriorated in zeal by the cold Christian people with whom we

come in contact. What terrible wet blankets some professors are! Their remarks after a sermon are enough to stagger you. You think that surely you have moved the very stones to feeling, but you painfully learn that these people are utterly unaffected. You have been burning and they are freezing; you have been pleading as for life or death and they have been calculating how many seconds the sermon occupied, and grudging you the odd five minutes beyond the usual hour, which your earnestness compelled you to occupy in pleading with men's souls. If these frost-bitten men should happen to be the officers of the church, from whom you naturally expect the warmest sympathy, the result is chilling to the last degree, and all the more so if you are young and inexperienced: it is as though an angel were confined in an iceberg. "Thou shalt not yoke the ox and the ass together" was a merciful precept: but when a laborious, ox-like minister comes to be yoked to a deacon who is not another ox, it becomes hard work to plough.

Some crabbed professors have a great deal to answer for in this matter. One of them not so very long ago went up to an earnest young evangelist who had been doing his best, and said, "Young man, do you call that preaching?" He thought himself faithful, but he was cruel and uncourteous, and though the good brother survived the blow it was none the less brutal. Such offences against the Lord's little ones are, I hope, very rare, but they are very grievous, and tend to turn aside our hopeful youth.

Frequently the audience itself, as a whole, will damp your zeal. You can see by their very look and manner that the people are not appreciating your warm-hearted endeavors, and you feel discouraged. Those empty benches also are a serious trial, and if the place be large, and the congregation small, the influence is seriously depressing: it is not every man who can bear to be "a voice crying in the wilderness." Disorder in the congregation also sadly afflicts sensitive speakers. The walking up the aisle of a woman with a pair of pattens, the squeak of a pair of new boots, the frequent fall of umbrellas and walking-sticks, the crying of infants, and

especially the consistent lateness of half the assembly;—all these tend to irritate the mind, take it off from its object, and diminish its ardor. We hardly like to confess that our hearts are so readily affected by such trifles, but it is so, and not at all to be wondered at. As pots of the most precious ointment are more often spoilt by dead flies than by dead camels, so insignificant matters will destroy earnestness more readily than greater annoyances. Under a great discouragement a man pulls himself together, and then throws himself upon his God, and receives divine strength: but under lesser depressions he may possibly worry, and the trifle will irritate and fester till serious consequences follow.

Pardon my saying that the condition of your body must be attended to, especially in the matter of eating, for any measure of excess may injure your digestion and make you stupid when you should be fervent. From the memoir of Duncan Matheson I cull an anecdote which is much to the point: "In a certain place where evangelistic meetings were being held, the lay preachers, among whom was Mr. Matheson, were sumptuously entertained at the house of a Christian gentleman. After dinner they went to the meeting, not without some difference of opinion as to the best method of conducting the services of the evening. 'The Spirit is grieved; He is not here at all, I feel it,' said one of the younger, with a whine which somewhat contrasted with his previous unbounded enjoyment of the luxuries of the table. 'Nonsense,' replied Matheson, who hated all whining and morbid spirituality; 'Nothing of the sort. You have just eaten too much dinner, and you feel heavy.'" Duncan Matheson was right, and a little more of his common sense would be a great gain to some who are ultra spiritual, and attribute all their moods of feeling to some supernatural cause when the real reason lies far nearer to hand. Has it not often happened that dyspepsia has been mistaken for backsliding, and a bad digestion has been set down as a hard heart? I say no more: a word to the wise is enough.

Many physical and mental causes may operate to create apparent lethargy where there is at heart intense

earnestness. Upon some of us a disturbed night, a change in the weather, or an unkind remark, will produce the most lamentable effect. But those who complain of want of zeal are often the most zealous persons in the world, and a confession of want of life is itself an argument that life exists, and is not without vigor. Do not spare yourselves and become self-satisfied; but, on the other hand, do not slander yourselves and sink into despondency. Your own opinion of your state is not worth much: ask the Lord to search you. Long continued labor without visible success is another frequent damp upon zeal, though if rightly viewed it ought to be an incentive to sevenfold diligence. Quaint Thomas Fuller observes that "herein God hath humbled many painstaking pastors, in making them to be clouds to rain, not over Arabia the happy, but over Arabia the desert and stony." If non-success humbles us it is well, but if it discourages us, and especially if it leads us to think bitterly of more prosperous brethren, we ought to look about us with grave concern. It is possible that we have been faithful and have adopted wise methods, and are in our right place, and yet we have not struck the mark; we shall probably be heavily bowed down and feel scarcely able to continue the work; but if we pluck up courage and increase our earnestness we shall one day reap a rich harvest, which will more than repay us for all our waiting. "The husbandman *waiteth* for the precious fruits of the earth"; and with a holy patience begotten of zeal we must wait on, and never doubt that the time to favor Zion will yet come.

Nor must it ever be forgotten that the flesh is weak and naturally inclined to slumber. We need a constant renewal of the divine impulse which first started us in the way of service. We are not as arrows, which find their way to the target by the sole agency of the force with which they started from the bow; nor as birds, which bear within themselves their own motive power: we must be borne onward, like ships at sea, by the constant power of the heavenly wind, or we shall make no headway. Preachers sent from God are not musical boxes which, being once wound up, will play through their set tunes, but they are trumpets which are utterly mute until the living

breath causes them to give forth a certain sound. We read of some who are dumb dogs, given to slumber, and such would be the character of us all if the grace of God did not prevent. We have need to watch against a careless, indifferent spirit, and if we do not so we shall soon be as lukewarm as Laodicea itself.

Remembering then, dear brethren, that we must be in earnest, and that we cannot counterfeit earnestness, or find a substitute for it, and that it is very easy for us to lose it, let us consider for a while the ways and means for retaining all our fervor and gaining more. If it is to continue, *our earnestness must be kindled at an immortal flame,* and I know of but one—the flame of the love of Christ, which many waters cannot quench. A spark from that celestial sun will be as undying as the source from whence it came. If we can get it, yea, if we have it, we shall still be full of enthusiasm, however long we may live, however greatly we may be tried, and however much for many reasons we may be discouraged. To continue fervent for life we must possess the fervor of heavenly life to begin with. Have we this fire? We must have the truth burnt into our souls, or it will not burn upon our lips. Do we understand this? The doctrines of grace must be part and parcel of ourselves, interwoven with the warp and woof of our being, and this can only be effected by the same hand which originally made the fabric. We shall never lose our love to Christ and our love to souls if the Lord has given them to us. The Holy Spirit makes zeal for God to be a permanent principle of life rather than a passion,—does the Holy Spirit rest upon us, or is our present fervor a mere human feeling?

We ought upon this point to be seriously inquisitorial with our hearts, pressing home the question, Have we the holy fire which springs from a true call to the ministry? If not, why are we here? If a man *can* live without preaching, let him live without preaching. If a man can be content without being a soul-winner—I had almost said he had better not attempt the work, but I had rather say–let him seek to have the stone taken out of his heart, that he may feel for perishing men. Till then,

as a minister, he may do positive mischief by occupying the place of one who might have succeeded in the blessed work in which he must be a failure.

The fire of our earnestness must burn upon the hearth of faith in the truths which we preach, and faith in their power to bless mankind when the Spirit applies them to the heart. He who declares what may or what may not be true, and what he considers upon the whole to be as good as any other form of teaching, will of necessity make a very feeble preacher. How can he be zealous about that which he is not sure of? If he knows nothing of the inward power of the truth within his own heart, if he has never tasted and handled of the good word of life, how can he be enthusiastic? But if the Holy Ghost has taught us in secret places, and made our soul to understand within itself the doctrine which we are to proclaim, then shall we speak evermore with the tongue of fire.

Brother, do not begin to teach others till the Lord has taught *you*. It must be dreary work to parrot forth dogmas which have no interest for your heart, and carry no conviction to your understanding. I would prefer to pick oakum or turn a crank for my breakfast, like the paupers in the casual ward, rather than be the slave of a congregation and bring them spiritual meat of which I never taste myself. And then how dreadful the end of such a course must be! How fearful the account to be rendered at the last by one who publicly taught what he did not heartily believe, and perpetrated this detestable hypocrisy in the name of God!

Brethren, if the fire is brought *from* the right place *to* the right place, we have a good beginning; and the main elements of a glorious ending. Kindled by a live coal, borne to our lips from off the altar by the winged cherub, the fire has begun to feed upon our inmost spirit, and there it will burn though Satan himself should labor to stamp it out.

Yet the best flame in the word needs renewing. I know not whether immortal spirits, like the angels, drink on the wing, and feed on some superior manna prepared in heaven for them; but the probability is that no created being, though

immortal, is quite free from the necessity to receive from without sustenance for its strength. Certainly the flame of zeal in the renewed heart, however divine, must be continually fed with fresh fuel. Even the lamps of the sanctuary needed oil. *Feed the flame, my brother, feed it frequently;* feed it with holy thought and contemplation, especially with thought about your work, your motives in pursuing it, the design of it, the helps that are waiting for you, and the grand results of it if the Lord be with you. Dwell much upon the love of God to sinners, and the death of Christ on their behalf, and the work of the Spirit upon men's hearts. Think of what must be wrought in men's hearts ere they can be saved. Remember, you are not sent to whiten tombs, but to open them, and this is a work which no man can perform unless, like the Lord Jesus at the grave of Lazarus, he groans in spirit; and even then he is powerless apart from the Holy Ghost.

Meditate with deep solemnity upon the fate of the lost sinner, and, like Abraham, when you get up early to go to the place where you commune with God, cast an eye towards Sodom and see the smoke thereof going up like the smoke of a furnace. Shun all views of future punishment which would make it appear less terrible, and so take off the edge of your anxiety to save immortals from the quenchless flame. If men are indeed only a nobler kind of ape, and expire as the beasts, you may well enough let them die unpitied; but if their creation in the image of God involves immortality, and there is any fear that through their unbelief they will bring upon themselves endless woe, arouse yourselves to the agonies of the occasion, and be ashamed at the bare suspicion of unconcern. Think much also of the bliss of the sinner saved, and like holy Baxter derive rich arguments for earnestness from "the saints' everlasting rest." Go to the heavenly hills and gather fuel there; pile on the glorious logs of the wood of Lebanon, and the fire will burn freely and yield a sweet perfume as each piece of choice cedar glows in the flame. There will be no fear of your being lethargic if you are continually familiar with eternal realities.

Above all, feed the flame with intimate fellowship

with Christ. No man was ever cold in heart who lived with Jesus on such terms as John and Mary did of old, for *he* makes men's hearts burn within them. I never met with a half-hearted preacher who was much in communion with the Lord Jesus. The zeal of God's house ate up our Lord, and when we come into contact with him it begins to consume us also, and we feel that we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard in his company, nor can we help speaking of them with the fervor which comes out of actual acquaintance with them.

Those of us who have been preaching for these five-and-twenty years sometimes feel that the same work, the same subject, the same people, and the same pulpit, are together apt to beget a feeling of monotony, and monotony may soon lead on to weariness. But then we call to mind another sameness, which becomes our complete deliverance; there is the same Savior, and we may go to him in the same way as we did at the first, since he is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." In his presence we drink in the new wine and renew our youth. He is the fountain, forever flowing with the cool, refreshing water of life, and in fellowship with him we find our souls quickened into perpetual energy. Beneath his smile our long-accustomed work is always delightful, and wears a brighter charm than novelty could have conferred. We gather new manna for our people every morning, and as we go to distribute it we feel an anointing of fresh oil distilling upon us. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Newly come from the presence of him that walketh among the golden candlesticks we are ready to write or speak unto the churches in the power which he alone can give. Soldiers of Christ, you can only be worthy of your Captain by abiding in fellowship with him, and listening to his voice as Joshua did when he stood by Jordan, and enquired—"What saith my Lord unto his servant?"

Fan the flame as well as feed it. Fan it with much supplication. We cannot be too urgent with one another upon this point: no language can be too vehement with which to

implore ministers to pray. There is for our brethren and ourselves an absolute necessity for prayer. Necessity! I hardly like to talk of that, let me rather speak of the deliciousness of prayer–the wondrous sweetness and divine felicity which come to the soul that lives in the atmosphere of prayer. John Fox said, "The time we spend with God in secret is the sweetest time, and the best improved. Therefore, if thou lovest thy life, be in love with prayer." The devout Mr. Hervey resolved on the bed of sickness— "If God shall spare my life, I will read less and pray more." John Cooke, of Maidenhead, wrote— "The business, the pleasure, the honor, and advantage of prayer press on my spirit with increasing force every day." A deceased pastor when drawing near his end, exclaimed, "I wish I had prayed more"; that wish many of us might utter. There should be special seasons for devoution, and it is well to maintain them with regularity; but the spirit of prayer is even better than the habit of prayer: to pray without ceasing is better than praying at intervals. It will be a happy circumstance if we can frequently bow the knee with devout brethren, and I think it ought to be a rule with us ministers never to separate without a word of prayer. Much more intercession would rise to heaven if we made a point of this, especially those of us who have been fellow-students. If it be possible, let prayer and praise sanctify each meeting of friend with friend.

It is a refreshing practice to have a minute or two of supplication in the vestry before preaching if you can call in three or four warm-hearted deacons or other brethren. It always nerves me for the fight. But, for all that, to fan your earnestness to a vehement flame you should seek the spirit of continual prayer, so as to pray in the Holy Ghost, everywhere and always; in the study, in the vestry, and in the pulpit. It is well to be pleading evermore with God, when sitting down in the pulpit, when rising to give out the hymn, when reading the chapter, and while delivering the sermon; holding up one hand to God empty, in order to receive, and with the other hand dispensing to the people what the Lord bestows. Be in preaching like a conduit pipe between the everlasting and infinite supplies of heaven and the all but boundless needs of

men, and to do this you must reach heaven, and keep up the communication without a break. Pray *for* the people while you preach *to* them; speak with God for them while you are speaking with them for God. Only so can you expect to be continually in earnest. A man does not often rise from his knees unearnest; or, if he does, he had better return to prayer till the sacred flame descends upon his soul. Adam Clarke once said, "Study yourself to death, and then pray yourself alive again": it was a wise sentence. Do not attempt the first without the second; neither dream that the second can be honestly accomplished without the first. Work and pray, as well as watch and pray; but pray always.

Stir the fire also by frequent attempts at fresh service. Shake yourself out of routine by breaking away from the familiar fields of service and reclaiming virgin soil. I suggest to you, as a subordinate but very useful means of keeping the heart fresh, the frequent addition of new work to your usual engagements. I would say to brethren who are soon going away from the College, to settle in spheres where they will come into contact with but few superior minds, and perhaps will be almost alone in the higher walks of spirituality,–look well to yourselves that you do not become flat, stale, and unprofitable, and keep yourselves sweet by maintaining an enterprising spirit. You will have a good share of work to do, and few to help you in it, and the years will grind along heavily; watch against this, and use all means to prevent your becoming dull and sleepy, and among them use that which experience leads me to press upon you.

I find it good for myself to have some new work always on hand. The old and usual enterprises must be kept up, but somewhat must be added to them. It should be with us as with the squatters upon our commons, the fence of our garden must roll outward a foot or two, and enclose a little more of the common every year. Never say "it is enough," nor accept the policy of "rest and be thankful." Do all you possibly can, and then do a little more. I do not know by what process the gentleman who advertises that he can make short people taller attempts the task, but I should imagine that if

any result could be produced in the direction of adding a cubit to one's stature it would be by every morning reaching up as high as you possibly can on tiptoe, and, having done that, trying day by day to reach a little higher. This is certainly the way to grow mentally and spiritually,–"reaching forth to that which is before." If the old should become just a little stale, add fresh endeavors to it, and the whole mass will be leavened anew. Try it and you will soon discover the virtue of breaking up fresh ground, invading new provinces of the enemy, and scaling fresh heights to set the banner of the Lord thereon.

This is, of course, a secondary expedient to those of which we have already spoken, but still it is a very useful one, and may greatly benefit you. In a country town, say of two thousand inhabitants, you will, after a time, feel, "Well, now, I have done about all I can in this place." What then? There is a hamlet some four miles off: set about opening a room there. If one hamlet is occupied, make an excursion to another, and spy out the land, and set the relief of its spiritual destitution before you as an ambition. When the first place is supplied, think of a second. It is your duty, it will also be your safeguard. Everybody knows what interest there is in fresh work. A gardener will become weary of his toil unless he is allowed to introduce new flowers into the hothouse, or to cut the beds upon the lawn in a novel shape; all monotonous work is unnatural and wearying to the mind, therefore it is wisdom to give variety to your labor.

Far more weighty is the advice, *keep close to God, and keep close to your fellow men whom you are seeking to bless.* Abide under the shadow of the Almighty, dwell where Jesus manifests himself, and live in the power of the Holy Ghost. Your very life lies in this. Whitefield mentions a lad who was so vividly conscious of the presence of God that he would generally walk the roads with his hat off. How I wish we were always in such a mood. It would be no trouble to maintain earnestness then.

Take care, also, to be on most familiar terms with those whose souls are committed to your care. Stand in the stream and fish. Many preachers are utterly ignorant as to

how the bulk of the people are living; they are at home among books, but quite at sea among men. What would you think of a botanist who seldom saw real flowers, or an astronomer who never spent a night with the stars? Would they be worthy of the name of men of science? Neither can a minister of the gospel be anything but a mere empiric unless he mingles with men, and studies character for himself. "Studies from the life,"–gentlemen, we must have plenty of these if we are to paint to the life in our sermons. Read men as well as books, and love men rather than opinions, or you will be inanimate preachers.

Get into close quarters with those who are in an anxious state. Watch their difficulties, their throes and pangs of conscience. It will help to make you earnest when you see their eagerness to find peace. On the other hand, when you see how little earnest the bulk of men remain, it may help to make you more zealous for their arousing. Rejoice with those who are finding the Savior: this is a grand means of revival for your own soul. When you are enabled to bring a mourner to Jesus you will feel quite young again. It will be as oil to your bones to hear a weeping penitent exclaim, "I see it all now! I believe, and my burden is gone: I am saved." Sometimes the rapture of newborn souls will electrify you into apostolic intensity. Who could not preach after having seen souls converted? Be on the spot when grace at last captures the lost sheep, that by sharing in the Great Shepherd's rejoicings you may renew your youth. Be in at the death with sinners, and you will be repaid for the weary chase after them which it may be you have followed for months and years. Grasp them with firm hold of love, and say, "Yes, by the grace of God, I have really won these souls;" and your enthusiasm will flame forth.

If you have to labor in a large town I should recommend you to familiarize yourself, wherever your place of worship may be, with the poverty, ignorance, and drunkenness of the place. Go if you can with a City missionary into the poorest quarter, and you will see that which will astonish you, and the actual sight of the disease will make you eager to reveal the remedy. There is enough of evil to be seen even in the best

streets of our great cities, but there is an unutterable depth of horror in the condition of the slums. As a doctor walks the hospitals, so ought you to traverse the lanes and courts to behold the mischief which sin has wrought. It is enough to make a man weep tears of blood to gaze upon the desolation which sin has made in the earth. One day with a devouted missionary would be a fine termination to your College course, and a fit preparation for work in your own sphere. See the masses living in their sins, defiled with drinking and Sabbath-breaking, rioting and blaspheming; and see them dying sodden and hardened, or terrified and despairing: surely this will rekindle expiring zeal if anything can do it. The world is full of grinding poverty and crushing sorrow; shame and death are the portion of thousands, and it needs a great gospel to meet the dire necessities of men's souls. Verily it is so. Do you doubt it? Go and see for yourselves. Thus will you learn to preach a great salvation, and magnify the great Savior, not with your mouth only, but with your heart; and thus will you be married to your work beyond all possibility of deserting it.

Death-beds are grand schools for us. They are intended to act as tonics to brace us to our work. I have come down from the bedchambers of the dying, and thought that everybody was mad, and myself most of all. I have grudged the earnestness which men devouted to earthly things, and half said to myself,–Why was that man driving along so hastily? Why was that woman walking out in such finery? Since they were all to die so soon. I thought nothing worth their doing but preparing to meet their God. To be often where men die will help us to teach them both to die and to live. M'Cheyne was wont to visit his sick or dying hearers on the Saturday afternoon, for, as he told Dr. James Hamilton, "Before preaching he liked to look over the verge."

I pray you, moreover, measure your work in the light of God. Are you God's servant or not? If you are, how can your heart be cold? Are you sent by a dying Savior to proclaim his love and win the reward of his wounds, or are you not? If you are, how can you flag? Is the Spirit of God upon you? Has the Lord anointed you to preach glad tidings to the poor? If

he has not, do not pretend to it. If be has, go in this thy might, and the Lord shall be thy strength. Yours is not a trade, or a profession. Assuredly if you measure it by the tradesman's measure it is the poorest business on the face of the earth. Consider it as a profession: who would not prefer any other, so far as golden gains or worldly honors are concerned? But if it be a divine calling, and you a miracle-worker, dwelling in the supernatural, and working not for time but for eternity, then you belong to a nobler guild, and to a higher fraternity than any that spring of earth and deal with time. Look at it aright, and you will own that it is a grand thing to be as poor as your Lord, if, like him, you may make many rich; you will feel that it is a glorious thing to be as unknown and despised as were your Lord's first followers, because you are making him known, whom to know is life eternal. You will be satisfied to be anything or to be nothing, and the thought of self will not enter your mind, or only cross it to be scouted as a meanness not to be tolerated by a consecrated man. There is the point. Measure your work as it should be measured, and I am not afraid that your earnestness will be diminished. Gaze upon it by the light of the judgment day, and in view of the eternal rewards of faithfulness.

Oh, brethren, the present joy of having saved a soul is overwhelmingly delightful; you have felt it, I trust, and know it now. To save a soul from going down to perdition brings to us a little heaven below, but what must it be at the day of judgment to meet spirits redeemed by Christ, who learned the news of their redemption from our lips! We look forward to a blissful heaven in communion with our Master, but we shall also know the added joy of meeting those loved ones whom we led to Jesus by our ministry. Let us endure every cross, and despise all shame, for the joy which Jesus sets before us of winning men for him.

One more thought may help to keep up our earnestness. Consider the great evil which will certainly come upon us and upon our hearers if we be negligent in our work. "They shall perish"–is not that a dreadful sentence? It is to me quite as awful as that which follows it,–"but their blood will I require

at the watchman's hand." How shall we describe the doom of an unfaithful minister? And every unearnest minister is unfaithful. I would infinitely prefer to be consigned to Tophet as a murderer of men's bodies than as a destroyer of men's souls; neither do I know of any condition in which a man can perish so fatally, so infinitely, as in that of the man who preaches a gospel which he does not believe, and assumes the office of pastor over a people whose good he does not intensely desire. Let us pray to be found faithful always, and ever. God grant that the Holy Spirit may make and keep us so.

14

THE BLIND EYE AND THE DEAF EAR

Having often said in this room that a minister ought to have one blind eye and one deaf ear, I have excited the curiosity of several brethren, who have requested an explanation; for it appears to them, as it does also to me, that the keener eyes and ears we have the better. Well, gentlemen, since the text is somewhat mysterious, you shall have the exegesis of it.

A part of my meaning is expressed in plain language by Solomon, in the book of Ecclesiastes (7:21): "Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee." The margin says, "Give not thy heart to all words that are spoken" do not take them to heart or let them weigh with you, do not notice them, or act as if you heard them. You cannot stop people's tongues, and therefore the best thing is to stop your own ears and never mind what is spoken. There is a world of idle chit-chat abroad, and he who takes note of it will have enough to do. He will find that even those who live with him are not always singing his praises, and that when he has displeased his most faithful servants they have, in the heat of the moment, spoken fierce words which it would be better for him not to have heard. Who has not, under temporary irritation, said that of another which he has afterwards regretted? It is the part of the generous to treat passionate words as if they had never been uttered. When a man is in an angry mood it is wise to walk away from him, and leave off strife before it be meddled with; and if we are compelled to hear hasty language, we must endeavor to obliterate it from the memory, and say with David, "But I, as a deaf man, heard not. I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs."

Tacitus describes a wise man as saying to one that

railed at him, "You are lord of your tongue, but I am also master of my ears"—you may say what you please, but I will only hear what I choose. We cannot shut our ears as we do our eyes, for we have no ear lids, and yet, as we read of him that "stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood," it is, no doubt, possible to seal the portal of the ear so that nothing contraband shall enter. We would say of the general gossip of the village, and of the unadvised words of angry friends—do not hear them, or if you must hear them, do not lay them to heart, for you also have talked idly and angrily in your day, and would even now be in an awkward position if you were called to account for every word that you have spoken, even about your dearest friend. Thus Solomon argued as he closed the passage which we have quoted, "For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others."

In enlarging upon my text, let me say first, when you commence your ministry make up your mind to begin with a clean sheet; *be deaf and blind to the longstanding differences which may survive in the church.* As soon as you enter upon your pastorate you may be waited upon by persons who are anxious to secure your adhesion to their side in a family quarrel or church dispute; be deaf and blind to these people, and assure them that bygones must be bygones with you, and that as you have not inherited your predecessor's cupboard you do not mean to eat his cold meat. If any flagrant injustice has been done, be diligent to set it right, but if it be a mere feud, bid the quarrelsome party cease from it, and tell him once for all that you will have nothing to do with it. The answer of Gallio will almost suit you: "If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: but if it be a question of words and names, and vain janglings, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters."

When I came to New Park Street Chapel as a young man from the country, and was chosen pastor, I was speedily interviewed by a good man who had left the church, having, as he said, been "treated shamefully." He mentioned the names of half-a-dozen persons, all prominent members of the church, who had behaved in a very unchristian manner to him, he,

poor innocent sufferer, having been a model of patience and holiness. I learned his character at once from what he said about others (a mode of judging which has never misled me), and I made up my mind how to act. I told him that the church had been in a sadly unsettled state, and that the only way out of the snarl was for every one to forget the past and begin again. He said that the lapse of years did not alter facts, and I replied that it would alter a man's view of them if in that time he had become a wiser and a better man. However, I added, that all the past had gone away with my predecessors, that he must follow them to their new spheres, and settle matters with them, for I would not touch the affair with a pair of tongs. He waxed somewhat warm, but I allowed him to radiate until he was cool again, and we shook hands and parted. He was a good man, but constructed upon an uncomfortable principle, so that he came across the path of others in a very awkward manner at times, and if I had gone into his narrative and examined his case, there would have been no end to the strife. I am quite certain that, for my own success, and for the prosperity of the church, I took the wisest course by applying my blind eye to all disputes which dated previously to my advent.

It is the extreme of unwisdom for a young man fresh from college, or from another charge, to suffer himself to be earwigged by a clique, and to be bribed by kindness and flattery to become a partisan, and so to ruin himself with one-half of his people. Know nothing of parties and cliques, but be the pastor of all the flock, and care for all alike. Blessed are the peacemakers, and one sure way of peacemaking is to let the fire of contention alone. Neither fan it, nor stir it, nor add fuel to it, but let it go out of itself. Begin your ministry with one blind eye and one deaf ear.

I should recommend the use of the same faculty, or want of faculty, with regard to finance in the matter of your own salary. There are some occasions, especially in raising a new church, when you may have no deacon who is qualified to manage that department, and, therefore, you may feel called upon to undertake it yourselves. In such a case you are not to be censured, you ought even to be commended. Many a time

also the work would come to an end altogether if the preacher did not act as his own deacon, and find supplies both temporal and spiritual by his own exertions. To these exceptional cases I have nothing to say but that I admire the struggling worker and deeply sympathize with him, for he is overweighted, and is apt to be a less successful soldier for his Lord because he is entangled with the affairs of this life.

In churches which are well established, and afford a decent maintenance, the minister will do well to supervise all things, but interfere with nothing. If deacons cannot be trusted they ought not to be deacons at all, but if they are worthy of their office they are worthy of our confidence. I know that instances occur in which they are sadly incompetent and yet must be borne with, and in such a state of things the pastor must open the eye which otherwise would have remained blind. Rather than the management of church funds should become a scandal we must resolutely interfere, but if there is no urgent call for us to do so we had better believe in the division of labor, and let deacons do their own work. We have the same right as other officers to deal with financial matters if we please, but it will be our wisdom as much as possible to let them alone, if others will manage them for us. When the purse is bare, the wife sickly, and the children numerous, the preacher must speak if the church does not properly provide for him; but to be constantly bringing before the people requests for an increase of income is not wise.

When a minister is poorly remunerated, and he feels that he is worth more, and that the church could give him more, he ought kindly, boldly, and firmly to communicate with the deacons first, and if they do not take it up he should then mention it to the brethren in a sensible, business-like way, not as craving a charity, but as putting it to their sense of honor, that "the laborer is worthy of his hire." Let him say outright what he thinks, for there is nothing to be ashamed of, but there would be much more cause for shame if he dishonored himself and the cause of God by plunging into debt: let him therefore speak to the point in a proper spirit to the proper persons, and there end the matter, and not resort to secret complaining.

Faith in God should tone down our concern about temporalities, and enable us to practice what we preach, namely "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink; or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Some who have pretended to live by faith have had a very shrewd way of drawing out donations by turns of the indirect corkscrew, but you will either ask plainly, like men, or you will leave it to the Christian feeling of your people, and turn to the items and modes of church finance a blind eye and a deaf ear.

The blind eye and the deaf ear will come in exceedingly well in connection with the gossips of the place. Every church, and, for the matter of that, every village and family, is plagued with certain Mrs. Grundys, who drink tea and talk vitriol. They are never quiet, but buzz around to the great annoyance of those who are devout and practical. No one needs to look far for perpetual motion, he has only to watch their tongues. At tea-meetings, Dorcas meetings, and other gatherings, they practice vivisection upon the characters of their neighbors, and of course they are eager to try their knives upon the minister, the minister's wife, the minister's children, the minister's wife's bonnet, the dress of the minister's daughter, and how many new ribbons she has worn for the last six months, and so on ad infinitum.

There are also certain persons who are never so happy as when they are "grieved to the heart" to have to tell the minister that Mr. A. is a snake in the grass, that he is quite mistaken in thinking so well of Messrs. B. and C., and that they have heard quite "promiscously" that Mr. D. and his wife are badly matched. Then follows a long string about Mrs. E., who says that she and Mrs. F. overheard Mrs. G. say to Mrs. H. that Mrs. J. should say that Mr. K. and Miss L. were going to move from the chapel and hear Mr. M., and all because of what old N. said to young O. about that Miss P. Never listen to such people. Do as Nelson did when he put his blind eye to the telescope and declared that he did not see the signal, and therefore would go on with the battle. Let the creatures buzz, and do not even hear them, unless indeed they buzz so

much concerning one person that the matter threatens to be serious; then it will be well to bring them to book and talk in sober earnestness to them. Assure them that you are obliged to have facts definitely before you, that your memory is not very tenacious, that you have many things to think of, that you are always afraid of making any mistake in such matters, and that if they would be good enough to write down what they have to say the case would be more fully before you, and you could give more time to its consideration. Mrs. Grundy will not do that; she has a great objection to making clear and definite statements; she prefers talking at random.

I heartily wish that by any process we could put down gossip, but I suppose that it will never be done so long as the human race continues what it is, for James tells us that "every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." What can't be cured must be endured, and the best way of enduring it is not to listen to it. Over one of our old castles a former owner has inscribed these lines–

> They say.
> What do they say?
> Let them say.

Thin-skinned persons should learn this motto by heart. The talk of the village is never worthy of notice, and you should never take any interest in it except to mourn over the malice and heartlessness of which it is too often the indicator.

Mayow in his *Plain Preaching* very forcibly says, "If you were to see a woman killing a farmer's ducks and geese, for the sake of having one of the feathers, you would see a person acting as we do when we speak evil of anyone, for the sake of the pleasure we feel in evil speaking. For the pleasure we feel is not worth a single feather, and the pain we give is often greater than a man feels at the loss of his property." Insert a remark of this kind now and then in a sermon, when there is

no special gossip abroad, and it may be of some benefit to the more sensible: I quite despair of the rest.

Above all, never join in tale-bearing yourself, and beg your wife to abstain from it also. Some men are too talkative by half, and remind me of the young man who was sent to Socrates to learn oratory. On being introduced to the philosopher he talked so incessantly that Socrates asked for double fees. "Why charge me double?" said the young fellow. "Because," said the orator, "I must teach you two sciences: the one how to hold your tongue and the other how to speak." The first science is the more difficult, but aim at proficiency in it, or you will suffer greatly, and create trouble without end.

Avoid with your whole soul that spirit of suspicion which sours some men's lives, and to *all things from which you might harshly draw an unkind inference turn a blind eye and a deaf ear.* Suspicion makes a man a torment to himself and a spy towards others. Once begin to suspect, and causes for distrust will multiply around you, and your very suspiciousness will create the major part of them. Many a friend has been transformed into an enemy by being suspected. Do not, therefore, look about you with the eyes of mistrust, nor listen as an eavesdropper with the quick ear of fear. To go about the congregation ferreting out disaffection, like a gamekeeper after rabbits, is a mean employment, and is generally rewarded most sorrowfully. Lord Bacon wisely advises "the provident stay of enquiry of that which we would be loth to find." When nothing is to be discovered which will help us to love others we had better cease from the enquiry, for we may drag to light that which may be the commencement of years of contention.

I am not, of course, referring to cases requiring discipline which must be thoroughly investigated and boldly dealt with, but I have upon my mind mere personal matters where the main sufferer is yourself; here it is always best not to know, nor to wish to know, what is being said about you, either by friends or foes. Those who praise us are probably as much mistaken as those who abuse us, and the one may be

regarded as a set off to the other, if indeed it be worthwhile taking any account at all of man's judgment. If we have the approbation of our God, certified by a placid conscience, we can afford to be indifferent to the opinions of our fellow men, whether they commend or condemn. If we cannot reach this point we are babes and not men.

Some are childishly anxious to know their friend's opinion of them, and if it contain the smallest element of dissent or censure, they regard him as an enemy forthwith. Surely we are not popes, and do not wish our hearers to regard us as infallible! We have known men who have become quite enraged at a perfectly fair and reasonable remark, and regard an honest friend as an opponent who delighted to find fault; this misrepresentation on the one side has soon produced heat on the other, and strife has ensued. How much better is gentle forbearance! You must be able to bear criticism, or you are not fit to be at the head of a congregation; and you must let the critic go without reckoning him among your deadly foes, or you will prove yourself a mere weakling. It is wisest always to show double kindness where you have been severely handled by one who thought it his duty to do so, for he is probably an honest man and worth winning. He who in your early days hardly thinks you fit for the pastorate may yet become your firmest defender if he sees that you grow in grace, and advance in qualification for the work; do not, therefore, regard him as a foe for truthfully expressing his doubts; does not your own heart confess that his fears were not altogether groundless? Turn your deaf ear to what you judge to be his harsh criticism, and endeavor to preach better.

Persons from love of change, from pique, from advance in their tastes, and other causes, may become uneasy under our ministry, and it is well for us to know nothing about it. Perceiving the danger, we must not betray our discovery, but bestir ourselves to improve our sermons, hoping that the good people will be better fed and forget their dissatisfaction. If they are truly gracious persons, the incipient evil will pass away, and no real discontent will arise, or if it does you must not provoke it by suspecting it.

Where I have known that there existed a measure of disaffection to myself, I have not recognized it, unless it has been forced upon me, but have, on the contrary, acted towards the opposing person with all the more courtesy and friendliness, and I have never heard any more of the matter. If I had treated the good man as an opponent, he would have done his best to take the part assigned him, and carry it out to his own credit; but I felt that he was a Christian man, and had a right to dislike me if he thought fit, and that if he did so I ought not to think unkindly of him; and therefore I treated him as one who was a friend to my Lord, if not to me, gave him some work to do which implied confidence in him, made him feel at home, and by degrees won him to be an attached friend as well as a fellow-worker.

The best of people are sometimes out of sorts and say unkind things; *we* should be glad if our friends could quite forget what we said when we were peevish and irritable, and it will be Christlike to act towards others in this matter as we would wish them to do towards us. Never make a brother remember that he once uttered a hard speech in reference to yourself. If you see him in a happier mood, do not mention the former painful occasion: if he be a man of right spirit he will in future be unwilling to vex a pastor who has treated him so generously, and if he be a mere boor it is a pity to hold any argument with him, and therefore the past had better go by default.

It would be better to be deceived a hundred times than to live a life of suspicion. It is intolerable. The miser who traverses his chamber at midnight and hears a burglar in every falling leaf is not more wretched than the minister who believes that plots are hatching against him, and that reports to his disadvantage are being spread. I remember a brother who believed that he was being poisoned, and was persuaded that even the seat he sat upon and the clothes he wore had by some subtle chemistry become saturated with death; his life was a perpetual scare, and such is the existence of a minister when he mistrusts all around him. Nor is suspicion merely a source of disquietude, it is a moral evil, and injures the character of

the man who harbors it. Suspicion in kings creates tyranny, in husbands jealousy, and in ministers bitterness; such bitterness as in spirit dissolves all the ties of the pastoral relation, eating like a corrosive acid into the very soul of the office and making it a curse rather than a blessing.

When once this terrible evil has curdled all the milk of human kindness in a man's bosom, he becomes more fit for the detective police force than for the ministry; like a spider, he begins to cast out his lines, and fashions a web of tremulous threads, all of which lead up to himself and warn him of the least touch of even the tiniest midge. There he sits in the center, a mass of sensation, all nerves and raw wounds, excitable and excited, a self-immolated martyr drawing the blazing logs about him, and apparently anxious to be burned, The most faithful friend is unsafe under such conditions. The most careful avoidance of offence will not secure immunity from mistrust, but will probably be construed into cunning and cowardice. Society is almost as much in danger from a suspecting man as from a mad dog, for he snaps on all sides without reason, and scatters right and left the foam of his madness. It is vain to reason with the victim of this folly, for with perverse ingenuity he turns every argument the wrong way, and makes your plea for confidence another reason for mistrust. It is sad that he cannot see the iniquity of his groundless censure of others, especially of those who have been his best friends and the firmest upholders of the cause of Christ.

> I would not wrong
> Virtue so tried by the least shade of doubt.
> Undue suspicion is more abject baseness
> Even than the guilt suspected.

No one ought to be made an offender for a word; but, when suspicion rules, even silence becomes a crime. Brethren, shun this vice by renouncing the love of self. Judge it to be a small matter what men think or say of you, and care only for their

treatment of your Lord. If you are naturally sensitive do not indulge the weakness, nor allow others to play upon it. Would it not be a great degradation of your office if you were to keep an army of spies in your pay to collect information as to all that your people said of you? And yet it amounts to this if you allow certain busybodies to bring you all the gossip of the place. Drive the creatures away. Abhor those mischief making, tattling handmaidens to strife. Those who will fetch will carry, and no doubt the gossips go from your house and report every observation which falls from your lips, with plenty of garnishing of their own. Remember that, as the receiver is as bad as the thief, so the hearer of scandal is a sharer in the guilt of it. If there were no listening ears there would be no talebearing tongues. While you are a buyer of ill wares the demand will create the supply, and the factories of falsehood will be working full time. No one wishes to become a creator of lies, and yet he who hears slanders with pleasure and believes them with readiness will hatch many a brood into active life.

Solomon says "a whisper separateth chief friends" (Prov.16:28). Insinuations are thrown out, and jealousies aroused, till "mutual coolness ensues, and neither can understand why; each wonders what can possibly be the cause. Thus the firmest, the longest, the warmest, and most confiding attachments, the sources of life's sweetest joys, are broken up perhaps forever." This is work worthy of the arch-fiend himself, but it could never be done if men lived out of the atmosphere of suspicion. As it is, the world is full of sorrow through this cause, a sorrow as sharp as it is superfluous. This is grievous indeed! Campbell eloquently remarks, "The ruins of old friendships are a more melancholy spectacle to me than those of desolated palaces. They exhibit the heart which was once lighted up with joy all damp and deserted, and haunted by those birds of ill omen that nestle in ruins." O suspicion, what desolations thou hast made in the earth!

Learn to disbelieve those who have no faith in their brethren. Suspect those who would lead you to suspect others. A resolute unbelief in all the scandalmongers will do

much to repress their mischievous energies. Matthew Pool in his Cripplegate Lecture says, "Common fame hath lost its reputation long since, and I do not know anything which it hath done in our day to regain it; therefore it ought not to be credited. How few reports there are of any kind which, when they come to be examined, we do not find to be false! For my part, I reckon, if I believe one report in twenty, I make a very liberal allowance. Especially distrust reproaches and evil reports, because these spread fastest, as being grateful to most persons, who suppose their own reputation to be never so well grounded as when it is built upon the ruins of other men's." Because the persons who would render you mistrustful of your friends are a sorry set, and because suspicion is in itself a wretched and tormenting vice, resolve to turn towards the whole business your blind eye and your deaf ear.

Need I say a word or two about the wisdom of *never hearing what was not meant for you.* The eavesdropper is a mean person, very little if anything better than the common informer; and he who says he *overheard* may be considered to have heard over and above what he should have done.

Jeremy Taylor wisely and justly observes, "Never listen at the door or window, for besides that it contains in it a danger and a snare, it is also invading my neighbor's privacy, and a-laying that open, which he therefore encloses that it might not be open." It is a well worn proverb that listeners seldom hear any good of themselves. Listening is a sort of larceny, but the goods stolen are never a pleasure to the thief. Information obtained by clandestine means must, in all but extreme cases, be more injury than benefit to a cause. The magistrate may judge it expedient to obtain evidence by such means, but I cannot imagine a case in which a minister should do so. Ours is a mission of grace and peace; we are not prosecutors who search out condemnatory evidence, but friends whose love would cover a multitude of offences. The peeping eyes of Canaan, the son of Ham, shall never be in our employ; we prefer the pious delicacy of Shem and Japhet, who went backward and covered the shame which the child of evil had published with glee.

To opinions and remarks about yourself turn also as a general rule the blind eye and the deaf ear. Public men must expect public criticism, and as the public cannot be regarded as infallible, public men may expect to be criticized in a way which is neither fair nor pleasant. To all honest and just remarks we are bound to give due measure of heed, but to the bitter verdict of prejudice, the frivolous faultfinding of men of fashion, the stupid utterances of the ignorant, and the fierce denunciations of opponents, we may very safely turn a deaf ear. We cannot expect those to approve of us whom we condemn by our testimony against their favorite sins; their commendation would show that we had missed our mark. We naturally look to be approved by our own people, the members of our churches, and the adherents of our congregations, and when they make observations which show that they are not very great admirers, we may be tempted to discouragement if not to anger: herein lies a snare.

When I was about to leave my village charge for London, one of the old men prayed that I might be "delivered from the bleating of the sheep." For the life of me I could not imagine what he meant, but the riddle is plain now, and I have learned to offer the prayer myself. Too much consideration of what is said by our people, whether it be in praise or in depreciation, is not good for us. If we dwell on high with "that great Shepherd of the sheep" we shall care little for all the confused bleatings around us, but if we become "carnal, and walk as men," we shall have little rest if we listen to this, that, and the other which every poor sheep may bleat about us.

Perhaps it is quite true that you were uncommonly dull last Sabbath morning, but there was no need that Mrs. Clack should come and tell you that Deacon Jones thought so. It is more than probable that having been out in the country all the previous week, your preaching was very like milk and water, but there can be no necessity for your going round among the people to discover whether they noticed it or not. Is it not enough that your conscience is uneasy upon the point? Endeavor to improve for the future, but do not want to hear all that every Jack, Tom, and Mary may have to say about it.

On the other hand, you were on the high horse in your last sermon, and finished with quite a flourish of trumpets, and you feel considerable anxiety to know what impression you produced. Repress your curiosity: it will do you no good to enquire. If the people should happen to agree with your verdict, it will only feed your pitiful vanity, and if they think otherwise, your fishing for their praise will injure you in their esteem. In any case it is all about yourself, and this is a poor theme to be anxious about; play the man, and do not demean yourself by seeking compliments like little children when dressed in new clothes, who say, "See my pretty dress."

Have you not by this time discovered that flattery is as injurious as it is pleasant? It softens the mind and makes you more sensitive to slander. In proportion as praise pleases you censure will pain you. Besides, it is a crime to be taken off from your great object of glorifying the Lord Jesus by petty considerations as to your little self, and, if there were no other reason, this ought to weigh much with you. Pride is a deadly sin, and will grow without your borrowing the parish water-cart to quicken it. Forget expressions which feed your vanity, and if you find yourself relishing the unwholesome morsels confess the sin with deep humiliation.

Payson showed that he was strong in the Lord when he wrote to his mother, "You must not, certainly, my dear mother, say one word which even looks like an intimation that you think me advancing in grace. I cannot bear it. All the people here, whether friends or enemies, conspire to ruin me. Satan and my own heart, of course, will lend a hand; and if you join too, I fear all the cold water which Christ can throw upon my pride will not prevent its breaking out into a destructive flame. As certainly as anybody flatters and caresses me my heavenly Father has to whip me: and an unspeakable mercy it is that he condescends to do it. I can, it is true, easily muster a hundred reasons why I should not be proud, but pride will not mind reason, nor anything else but a good drubbing. Even at this moment I feel it tingling in my fingers' ends, and seeking to guide my pen." Knowing something myself of those secret whippings which our good Father administers to his

servants when he sees them unduly exalted, I heartily add my own solemn warnings against your pampering the flesh by listening to the praises of the kindest friends you have. They are injudicious, and you must beware of them.

A sensible friend who will unsparingly criticize you from week to week will be a far greater blessing to you than a thousand undiscriminating admirers if you have sense enough to bear his treatment, and grace enough to be thankful for it. When I was preaching at the Surrey Gardens, an unknown censor of great ability used to send me a weekly list of my mispronunciations and other slips of speech. He never signed his name, and that was my only cause of complaint against him, for he left me in a debt which I could not acknowledge. I take this opportunity of confessing my obligations to him, for with genial temper, and an evident desire to benefit me, he marked down most relentlessly everything which he supposed me to have said incorrectly. Concerning some of these corrections he was in error himself, but for the most part he was right, and his remarks enabled me to perceive and avoid many mistakes. I looked for his weekly memoranda with much interest, and I trust I am all the better for them. If I had repeated a sentence two or three Sundays before, he would say, "See same expression in such a sermon," mentioning number and page. He remarked on one occasion that I too often quoted the line

Nothing in my hands I bring,

...and, he added, "we are sufficiently informed of the vacuity of your hands." He demanded my authority for calling a man covetous; and so on. Possibly some young men might have been discouraged, if not irritated, by such severe criticisms, but they would have been very foolish, for in resenting such correction they would have been throwing away a valuable aid to progress. No money can purchase outspoken honest judgment, and when we can get it for nothing let us utilize it to the fullest extent. The worst of it is that of those who offer their judgments few are qualified to form them, and we shall be pestered with foolish, impertinent remarks, unless we turn

to them all the blind eye and the deaf ear.

In the case of false reports against yourself, for the most part use the deaf ear. Unfortunately liars are not yet extinct, and, like Richard Baxter and John Bunyan, you may be accused of crimes which your soul abhors. Be not staggered thereby, for this trial has befallen the very best of men, and even your Lord did not escape the envenomed tongue of falsehood. In almost all cases it is the wisest course to let such things die a natural death. A great lie, if unnoticed, is like a big fish out of water, it dashes and plunges and beats itself to death in a short time. To answer it is to supply it with its element, and help it to a longer life. Falsehoods usually carry their own refutation somewhere about them, and sting themselves to death. Some lies especially have a peculiar smell, which betrays their rottenness to every honest nose. If you are disturbed by them the object of their invention is partly answered, but your silent endurance disappoints malice and gives you a partial victory, which God in his care of you will soon turn into a complete deliverance. Your blameless life will be your best defence, and those who have seen it will not allow you to be condemned so readily as your slanderers expect. Only abstain from fighting your own battles, and in nine cases out of ten your accusers will gain nothing by their malevolence but chagrin for themselves and contempt from others.

To prosecute the slanderer is very seldom wise. I remember a beloved servant of Christ who in his youth was very sensitive, and, being falsely accused, proceeded against the person at law. An apology was offered, it withdrew every iota of the charge, and was most ample, but the good man insisted upon its being printed in the newspapers, and the result convinced him of his own unwisdom. Multitudes, who would otherwise have never heard of the libel, asked what it meant, and made comments thereon, generally concluding with the sage remark that he must have done something imprudent to provoke such an accusation. He was heard to say that so long as be lived he would never resort to such a method again, for he felt that the public apology had done him more harm than

the slander itself. Standing as we do in a position which makes us choice targets for the devil and his allies, our best course is to defend our innocence by our silence and leave our reputation with God.

Yet there are exceptions to this general rule. When distinct, definite, public charges are made against a man he is bound to answer them, and answer them in the clearest and most open manner. To decline all investigation is in such a case practically to plead guilty, and whatever may be the mode of putting it, the general public ordinarily regard a refusal to reply as a proof of guilt. Under mere worry and annoyance it is by far the best to be altogether passive, but when the matter assumes more serious proportions, and our accuser defies us to a defence, we are bound to meet his charges with honest statements of fact. In every instance counsel should be sought of the Lord as to how to deal with slanderous tongues, and in the issue innocence will be vindicated and falsehood convicted.

Some ministers have been broken in spirit, driven from their position, and even injured in character by taking notice of village scandal. I know a fine young man, for whom I predicted a career of usefulness, who fell into great trouble because he at first allowed it to be a trouble and then worked hard to make it so. He came to me and complained that he had a great grievance; and so it was a grievance, but from beginning to end it was all about what some half-dozen women had said about his procedure after the death of his wife. It was originally too small a thing to deal with,—a Mrs. Q. had said that she should not wonder if the minister married the servant then living in his house; another represented her as saying that he ought to marry her, and then a third, with a malicious ingenuity, found a deeper meaning in the words, and construed them into a charge. Worst of all, the dear sensitive preacher must needs trace the matter out and accuse a score or two of people of spreading libels against him, and even threaten some of them with legal proceedings. If he could have prayed over it in secret, or even have whistled over it, no harm would have come of the tittle-tattle; but this dear brother could not treat

the slander wisely, for he had not what I earnestly recommend to you, namely, a blind eye and a deaf ear.

Once more, my brethren, the blind eye and the deaf ear will be useful to you *in relation to other churches and their pastors.* I am always delighted when a brother meddling with other people's business burns his fingers. Why did he not attend to his own concerns and not episcopize in another's diocese? I am frequently requested by members of churches to meddle in their home disputes; but unless they come to me with authority, officially appointing me to be umpire I decline. Alexander Cruden gave himself the name of "the Corrector," and I have never envied him the title. It would need a peculiar inspiration to enable a man to settle all the controversies of our churches, and as a rule those who are least qualified are the most eager to attempt it. For the most part interference, however well intentioned, is a failure. Internal dissensions in our churches are very like quarrels between man and wife: when the case comes to such a pass that they must fight it out, the interposing party will be the victim of their common fury. No one but Mr. Verdant Green will interfere in a domestic battle, for the man of course resents it, and the lady, though suffering from many a blow, will say, "You leave my husband alone; be has a right to beat me if he likes." However great the mutual animosity of conjugal combatants, it seems to be forgot in resentment against intruders; and so, amongst the very independent denomination of Baptists, the person outside the church who interferes in any manner is sure to get the worst of it.

Do not consider yourself to be the bishop of all the neighboring churches, but be satisfied with looking after Lystra, or Derbe, or Thessalonica, or whichever church may have been allotted to your care, and leave Philippi and Ephesus in the hands of their own pastors. Do not encourage disaffected persons in finding fault with their minister, or in bringing you news of evils in other congregations. When you meet your brother ministers do not be in a hurry to advise them; they know their duty quite as well as you know yours,

and your judgment upon their course of action is probably founded upon partial information supplied from prejudiced sources.

Do not grieve your neighbors by your meddlesomeness. We have all enough to do at home, and it is prudent to keep out of all disputes which do not belong to us. We are recommended by one of the world's proverbs to wash our dirty linen at home, and I will add another line to it, and advise that we do not call on our neighbors while their linen is in the suds. This is due to our friends, and will best promote peace. "He that passeth by and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears"—he is very apt to be bitten, and few will pity him. Bridges wisely observes that "Our blessed Master has read us a lesson of godly wisdom. He healed the contentions in his own family, but when called to meddle with strife belonging not to him, he gave answer— "Who made me a judge or a divider over you?" Self-constituted judges win but little respect; if they were more fit to censure they would be less inclined to do so. Many a trifling difference within a church has been fanned into a great flame by ministers outside who had no idea of the mischief they were causing: they gave verdicts upon *ex parte* statements, and so egged on opposing persons who felt safe when they could say that the neighboring ministers quite agreed with them. My counsel is that we join the "Know-nothings," and never say a word upon a matter till we have heard both sides; and, moreover, that we do our best to avoid hearing either one side or the other if the matter does not concern us.

Is not this a sufficient explanation of my declaration that I have one blind eye and one deaf ear, and that they are the best eye and ear I have?

15

ON CONVERSION AS OUR AIM

The grand object of the Christian ministry is the glory of God. Whether souls are converted or not, if Jesus Christ be faithfully preached, the minister has not labored in vain, for he is a sweet savor unto God as well in them that perish as in them that are saved. Yet, as a rule, God has sent us to preach in order that through the gospel of Jesus Christ the sons of men may be reconciled to Him. Here and there a preacher of righteousness, like Noah, may labor on and bring none beyond his own family circle into the ark of salvation; and another, like Jeremiah, may weep in vain over an impenitent nation; but, for the most part, the work of preaching is intended to save the hearers. It is ours to sow even in stony places, where no fruit rewards our toil; but still we are bound to look for a harvest, and mourn if it does not appear in due time.

The glory of God being our chief object, we aim at it by seeking the edification of saints and the salvation of sinners. It is a noble work to instruct the people of God, and to build them up in their most holy faith: we may by no means neglect this duty. To this end we must give clear statements of gospel doctrine, of vital experience, and of Christian duty, and never shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God. In too many cases sublime truths are held in abeyance under the pretence that they are not practical; whereas the very fact that they are revealed proves that the Lord thinks them to be of value, and woe unto us if we pretend to be wiser than He. We may say of any and every doctrine of Scripture to give it then a tongue is wise in man. If any one note is dropped from the divine harmony of truth the music may be sadly marred. Your people may fall into grave spiritual diseases through the lack of a

certain form of spiritual nutrishment which can only be supplied by the doctrines which you withhold. In the food which we eat there are ingredients which do not at first appear to be necessary to life; but experience shows that they are requisite to health and strength. Phosphorus will not make flesh, but it is wanted for bone; many earths and salts come under the same description they are necessary in due proportion to the human economy. Even thus certain truths which appear to be little adapted for spiritual nutrishment are, nevertheless, very beneficial in furnishing believers with backbone and muscle, and in repairing the varied organs of Christian manhood. We must preach "the whole truth," that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Our great object of glorifying God is, however, to be mainly achieved by the winning of souls. We *must* see souls born unto God. If we do not, our cry should be that of Rachel "Give me children, or I die." If we do not win souls, we should mourn as the husbandman who sees no harvest, as the fisherman who returns to his cottage with an empty net, or as the huntsman who has in vain roamed over hill and dale. Ours should be Isaiah's language uttered with many a sigh and groan "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" The ambassadors of peace should not cease to weep bitterly until sinners weep for their sins.

If we intensely desire to see our hearers believe on the Lord Jesus, how shall we act in order to be used of God for producing such a result? This is the theme of the present lecture.

Since conversion is a divine work, we must take care that we *depend entirely upon the Spirit of God,* and look to Him for power over men's minds. Often as this remark is repeated, I fear we too little feel its force; for if we were more truly sensible of our need of the Spirit of God, should we not study more in dependence upon His teaching? Should we not pray more importunately to be anointed with His sacred unction? Should we not in preaching give more scope for His operation? Do we not fail in many of our efforts, because we

practically, though not doctrinally, ignore the Holy Ghost? His place as God is on the throne, and in all our enterprises He must be first, midst, and end: we are instruments in His hand, and nothing more.

This being fully admitted, what else should be done if we hope to see conversions? *Assuredly we should be careful to preach most prominently those truths which are likely to lead to this end.* What truths are those? I answer, we should first and foremost preach *Christ, and Him crucified*. Where Jesus is exalted souls are attracted "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The preaching of the cross is to them that are saved the wisdom of God and the power of God. The Christian minister should preach all the truths which cluster around the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and hence he must declare very earnestly and pointedly the evil of sin, which created the need of a Savior. Let him show that sin is a breach of the law, that it necessitates punishment, and that the wrath of God is revealed against it. Let him never treat sin as though it were a trifle, or a misfortune, but let him set it forth as exceeding sinful. Let him go into particulars, not superficially glancing at evil in the gross, but mentioning various sins in detail, especially those most current at the time: such as that all-devouring hydra of drunkenness, which devastates our land; lying, which in the form of slander abounds on all sides; and licentiousness, which must be mentioned with holy delicacy, and yet needs to be denounced unsparingly. We must especially reprove those evils into which our hearers have fallen, or are likely to fall. Explain the ten commandments and obey the divine injunction: "show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." Open up the spirituality of the law as our Lord did, and show how it is broken by evil thoughts, intents, and imaginations. By this means many sinners will be pricked in their hearts.

Old Robbie Flockhart used to say, "It is of no use trying to sew with the silken thread of the gospel unless we pierce a way for it with the sharp needle of the law." The law goes first, like the needle, and draws the gospel thread

after it: therefore preach concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. Let such language as that of the fifty-first Psalm be often explained: show that God requireth truth in the inward parts, and that purging with sacrificial blood is absolutely needful. Aim at the heart. Probe the wound and touch the very quick of the soul. Spare not the sterner themes, for men must be wounded before they can be healed, and slain before they can be made alive. No man will ever put on the robe of Christ's righteousness till he is stripped of his fig leaves, nor will he wash in the fount of mercy till he perceives his filthiness. Therefore, my brethren, we must not cease to declare the law, its demands, its threatenings, and the sinner's multiplied breaches of it.

Teach the depravity of human nature. Show men that sin is not an accident, but the genuine outcome of their corrupt hearts. Preach the doctrine of the natural depravity of man. It is an unfashionable truth; for nowadays ministers are to be found who are very fine upon "the dignity of human nature." The "lapsed state of man" that is the phrase is sometimes alluded to, but the corruption of our nature, and kindred themes are carefully avoided: Ethiopians are informed that they may whiten their skins, and it is hoped that leopards will remove their spots. Brethren, you will not fall into this delusion, or, if you do, you may expect few conversions. To prophesy smooth things, and to extenuate the evil of our lost estate, is not the way to lead men to Jesus.

Brethren, *the necessity for the Holy Ghost's divine operations* will follow as a matter of course upon the former teaching, for dire necessity demands divine interposition. Men must be told that they are dead, and that only the Holy Spirit can quicken them; that the Spirit works according to His own good pleasure, and that no man can claim his visitations or deserve his aid. This is thought to be very discouraging teaching, and so it is, but men need to be discouraged when they are seeking salvation in a wrong manner. To put them out of conceit of their own abilities is a great help toward bringing them to look out of self to another, even the Lord Jesus. The doctrine of election and other great truths which declare

salvation to be all of grace, and to be, not the right of the creature, but the gift of the Sovereign Lord, are all calculated to hide pride from man, and so to prepare him to receive the mercy of God.

We must also set before our hearers the justice of God and *the certainty that every transgression will be punished.* Often must we

> Before them place in dread array,
> The pomp of that tremendous day
> When Christ with clouds shall come.

Sound in their ears the doctrine of the second advent, not as a curiosity of prophecy, but as a solemn practical fact. It is idle to set forth our Lord in all the tinkling bravery of an earthly kingdom, after the manner of brethren who believe in a revived Judaism; we need to preach the Lord as coming to judge the world in righteousness, to summon the nations to His bar, and to separate them as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats, Paul preached of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, and made Felix tremble: these themes are equally powerful now. We rob the gospel of its power if we leave out its threatenings of punishment. It is to be feared that the novel opinions upon annihilation and restoration which have afflicted the Church in these last days have caused many ministers to be slow to speak concerning the last judgment and its issues, and consequently the terrors of the Lord have had small influence upon either preachers or hearers. If this be so it cannot be too much regretted, for one great means of conversion is thus left unused.

Beloved brethren, we must be most of all clear upon the great soul-saving doctrine of the *atonement;* we must preach a real bona fide substitutionary sacrifice, and proclaim pardon as its result. Cloudy views as to atoning blood are mischievous to the last degree; souls are held in unnecessary bondage, and saints are robbed of the calm confidence of faith, because they are not definitely told 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." We must preach substitution straightforwardly and unmistakeably, for if any doctrine be plainly taught in Scripture it is this,— "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." "He, His own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree." This truth gives rest to the conscience by showing how God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth. This is the great net of gospel fishermen: the fish are drawn or driven in the right direction by other truths, but this is the net itself.

If men are to be saved, we must in plainest terms preach *justification by faith*, as the method by which the atonement becomes effectual in the soul's experience. If we are saved by the substitutionary work of Christ, no merit of ours is wanted, and all men have to do is by a simple faith to accept what Christ has already done. It is delightful to dwell on the grand truth that "This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." O glorious sight—the Christ sitting down in the place of honor because His work is done. Well may the soul rest in a work so evidently complete.

Justification by faith must never be obscured, and yet all are not clear upon it. I once heard a sermon upon "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," of which the English was, "Be good, very good, and though you will have to suffer in consequence, God will reward you in the end." The preacher, no doubt, believed in justification by faith, but he very distinctly preached the opposite doctrine. Many do this when addressing children, and I notice that they generally speak to the little ones about *loving* Jesus, and not upon believing in Him. This must leave a mischievous impression upon youthful minds and take them off from the true way of peace.

Preach earnestly the love of God in Christ Jesus, and magnify the abounding mercy of the Lord; but always preach it in connection with His justice. Do not extol the single attribute of love in the method too generally followed, but regard love in the high theological sense, in which, like a golden circle, it holds within itself all the divine attributes: for God were not love if He were not just, and did not hate every unholy

thing. Never exalt one attribute at the expense of another. Let boundless mercy be seen in calm consistency with stern justice and unlimited sovereignty. The true character of God is fitted to awe, impress, and humble the sinner: be careful not to misrepresent your Lord.

All these truths and others which complete the evangelical system are calculated to lead men to faith; therefore make them the staple of your teaching.

Secondly, if we are intensely anxious to have souls saved we must not only preach the truths which are likely to lead up to this end, but we must *use modes of handling those truths which are likely to conduce thereto.* Do you enquire, what are they? First, you must do a great deal by way of *instruction*. Sinners are not saved *in* darkness but *from* it; "that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." Men must be taught concerning themselves, their sin, and their fall; their Savior, redemption, regeneration, and so on. Many awakened souls would gladly accept God's way of salvation if they did but know it; they are akin to those of whom the apostle said, "And now brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it." If you will instruct them God will save them: is it not written, "the entrance of thy word giveth light"? If the Holy Spirit blesses your teaching, they will see how wrong they have been, and they will be led to repentance and faith. I do not believe in that preaching which lies mainly in shouting, "Believe! believe! believe!" In common justice you are bound to tell the poor people what they are to believe. There must be instruction, otherwise the exhortation to believe is manifestly ridiculous, and must in practice be abortive.

I fear that some of our orthodox brethren have been prejudiced against the free invitations of the gospel by hearing the raw, undigested harangues of revivalist speakers whose heads are loosely put together. The best way to preach sinners to Christ is to preach Christ to sinners. Exhortations, entreaties, and beseechings, if not accompanied with sound instruction, are like firing off powder without shot. You may shout, and weep, and plead, but you cannot lead men to believe what they have not heard, nor to receive a truth which has never been set

before them. "Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge."

While giving instructions it is wise to *appeal to the understanding.* True religion is as logical as if it were not emotional. I am not an admirer of the peculiar views of Mr, Finney, but I have no doubt that he was useful to many; and his power lay in his use of clear arguments. Many who knew his fame were greatly disappointed at first hearing him, because he used few beauties of speech and was as calm and dry as a book of Euclid; but he was exactly adapted to a certain order of minds, and they were convinced and convicted by his forcible reasoning. Should not persons of an argumentative cast of mind be provided for? We are to be all things to all men, and to these men we must become argumentative and push them into a corner with plain deductions and necessary inferences. Of carnal reasoning we would have none, but of fair, honest pondering, considering, judging, and arguing the more the better.

The class requiring logical argument is small compared with the number of those who need to be pleaded with, by way of *emotional persuasion*. They require not so much reasoning as heart-argument which is logic set on fire. You must argue with them as a mother pleads with her boy that he will not grieve her, or as a fond sister entreats a brother to return to their father's home and seek reconciliation: argument must be quickened into persuasion by the living warmth of love. Cold logic has its force, but when made red hot with affection the power of tender argument is inconceivable. The power which one mind can gain over others is enormous, but it is often best developed when the leading mind has ceased to have power over itself. When passionate zeal has carried the man himself away his speech becomes an irresistible torrent, sweeping all before it. A man known to be godly and devout, and felt to be large-hearted and self-sacrificing, has a power in his very person, and his advice and recommendation carry weight because of his character; but when he comes to plead and to persuade, even to tears, his influence is wonderful, and God the Holy Spirit yokes it into His service. Brethren, we must *plead.*

Entreaties and beseechings must blend with our instructions. Any and every appeal which will reach the conscience and move men to fly to Jesus we must perpetually employ, if by any means we may save some.

I have sometimes heard ministers blamed for speaking of themselves when they are pleading, but the censure need not be much regarded while we have such a precedent as the example of Paul. To a congregation who love you it is quite allowable to mention your grief that many of them are unsaved, and your vehement desire, and incessant prayer for their conversion. You are doing right when you mention your own experience of the goodness of God in Christ Jesus, and plead with men to come and taste the same. We must not be abstractions or mere officials to our people; but we must plead with them as real flesh and blood, if we would see them converted. When you can quote yourself as a living instance of what grace has done, the plea is too powerful to be withheld through fear of being charged with egotism.

Sometimes, too, we must change our tone. Instead of instructing, reasoning and persuading, we must come to threatening, and declare the wrath of God upon impenitent souls. We must lift the curtain and let them see the future. Show them their danger, and warn them to escape from the wrath to come. This done, we must return to invitation, and set before the awakened mind the rich provisions of infinite grace which are freely presented to the sons of men. In our Master's name we must give the invitation, crying, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Do not be deterred from this, my brethren, by those ultra-Calvinistic theologians who say, "You may instruct and warn the ungodly, but you must not invite or entreat them." And why not? "Because they are dead sinners, and it is therefore absurd to invite them, since they cannot come." Wherefore then may we warn or instruct them? The argument is so strong, if be strong at all, that it sweeps away all modes of appeal to sinners, and they alone are logical who, after they have preached to the saints, sit down and say, "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." On what ground

are we to address the ungodly at all? If we are only to bid them do such things as they are capable of doing without the Spirit of God, we are reduced to mere moralists. If it be absurd to bid the dead sinner believe and live, it is equally vain to bid him consider his state, and reflect upon his future doom. Indeed, it would be idle altogether were it not that true preaching is an act of faith, and is owned by the Holy Spirit as the means of working spiritual miracles.

If we were by ourselves, and did not expect divine interpositions, we should be wise to keep within the bounds of reason, and persuade men to do only what we see in them the ability to do. We should then bid the living live, urge the seeing to see, and persuade the willing to will. The task would be so easy that it might even seem to be superfluous; certainly no special call of the Holy Ghost would be needed for so very simple an undertaking. But, brethren, where is the mighty power and the victory of faith if our ministry is this and nothing more? Who among the sons of men would think it a great vocation to be sent into a synagogue to say to a perfectly vigorous man, "Rise up and walk," or to the possessor of sound limbs, "Stretch out thine hand." He is a poor Ezekiel whose greatest achievement is to cry, "Ye living souls, live."

Let the two methods be set side by side as to practical result, and it will be seen that those who never exhort sinners are seldom winners of souls to any great extent, but they maintain their churches by converts from other systems, I have even heard them say, "Oh, yes, the Methodists and Revivalists are beating the hedges, but we shall catch many of the birds." If I harbored such a mean thought I should be ashamed to express it. A system which cannot touch the outside world, but must leave arousing and converting work to others, whom it judges to be unsound, writes its own condemnation.

Again, brethren, if we wish to see souls saved, we must be wise as to *the times* when we address the unconverted. Very little common sense is spent over this matter. Under certain ministries there is a set time for speaking to sinners, and this

comes as regularly as the hour of noon. A few crumbs of the feast are thrown to the dogs under the table at the close of the discourse, and they treat your crumbs as you treat them, namely, with courteous indifference. Why should the warning word be always at the hinder end of the discourse when hearers are most likely to be weary? Why give men notice to buckle on their harness so as to be prepared to repel our attack? When their interest is excited, and they are least upon the defensive, then let fly a shaft at the careless, and it will frequently be more effectual than a whole flight of arrows shot against them at a time when they are thoroughly encased in armor of proof. Surprise is a great element in gaining attention and fixing a remark upon the memory, and times for addressing the careless should be chosen with an eye to that fact. It may be very well as a rule to seek the edification of the saints in the morning discourse, but it would be wise to vary it, and let the unconverted sometimes have the chief labor of your preparation and the best service of the day.

Do not close a single sermon without addressing the ungodly, but at the same time set yourself seasons for a determined and continuous assault upon them, and proceed with all your soul to the conflict. On such occasions aim distinctly at immediate conversions; labor to remove prejudices, to resolve doubts, to conquer objections, and to drive the sinner out of his hiding-places at once. Summon the church members to special prayer, beseech them to speak personally both with the concerned and the unconcerned, and be yourself doubly upon the watch to address individuals. We have found that our February meetings at the Tabernacle have yielded remarkable results: the whole month being dedicated to special effort. Winter is usually the preacher's harvest, because the people can come together better in the long evenings, and are debarred from out-of-door exercises and amusements. Be well prepared for the appropriate season when "kings go forth to battle."

Among the important elements in the promotion of conversion are your own tone, temper, and spirit in preaching. If you preach the truth in a dull, monotonous style, God may

bless it, but in all probability he will not; at any rate the tendency of such a style is not to promote attention, but to hinder it. It is not often that sinners are awakened by ministers who are themselves asleep. A hard, unfeeling mode of speech is also to be avoided; want of tenderness is a sad lack, and repels rather than attracts. The spirit of Elijah may startle, and where it is exceedingly intense it may go far to prepare for the reception of the gospel; but for actual conversion more of John is needed, love is the winning force. We must love men to Jesus. Great hearts are the main qualifications for great preachers, and we must cultivate our affections to that end. At the same time our manner must not degenerate into the soft and saccharine cant which some men affect who are forever dearing everybody, and fawning upon people as if they hoped to soft-sawder them into godliness. Manly persons are disgusted, and suspect hypocrisy when they hear a preacher talking molasses. Let us be bold and outspoken, and never address our hearers as if we were asking a favor of them, or as if they would oblige the Redeemer by allowing Him to save them. We are bound to be lowly, but our office as ambassadors should prevent our being servile.

Happy shall we be if we preach believingly, always expecting the Lord to bless his own word. This will give us a quiet confidence which will forbid petulance, rashness, and weariness. If we ourselves doubt the power of the gospel, how can we preach it with authority? Feel that you are a favored man in being allowed to proclaim the good news, and rejoice that your mission is fraught with eternal benefit to those before you. Let the people see how glad and confident the gospel has made you, and it will go far to make them long to partake in its blessed influences.

Preach very solemnly, for it is a weighty business, but let your matter be lively and pleasing, for this will prevent solemnity from souring into dreariness. Be so thoroughly solemn that all your faculties are aroused and consecrated, and then a dash of humour will only add intenser gravity to the discourse, even as a flash of lightning makes midnight darkness all the more impressive. Preach to one point, concentrating

all your energies upon the object aimed at. There must be no riding of hobbies, no introduction of elegancies of speech, no suspicion of personal display, or you will fail. Sinners are quick-witted people, and soon detect even the smallest effort to glorify self. Forgo everything for the sake of those you long to save. Be a fool for Christ's sake if this will win them, or be a scholar, if that will be more likely to impress them. Spare neither labor in the study, prayer in the closet, nor zeal in the pulpit. If men do not judge their souls to be worth a thought, compel them to see that their minister is of a very different opinion.

Mean conversions, expect them, and prepare for them. Resolve that your hearers shall either yield to your Lord or be without excuse, and that this shall be the immediate result of the sermon now in hand. Do not let the Christians around you wonder when souls are saved, but urge them to believe in the undiminished power of the glad tidings, and teach them to marvel if no saving result follows the delivery of the testimony of Jesus. Do not permit sinners to hear sermons as a matter of course, or allow them to play with the edged tools of Scripture as if they were mere toys; but again and again remind them that every true gospel sermon leaves them worse if it does not make them better. Their unbelief is a daily, hourly sin; never let them infer from your teaching that they are to be pitied for continuing to make God a liar by rejecting His Son

Impressed with a sense of their danger, give the ungodly no rest in their sins; knock again and again at the door of their hearts, and knock as for life and death. Your solicitude, your earnestness, your anxiety, your travailing in birth for them God will bless to their arousing. God works mightily by this instrumentality. But our agony for souls must be real and not feigned, and therefore our hearts must be wrought into true sympathy with God. Low piety means little spiritual power. Extremely pointed addresses may be delivered by men whose hearts are out of order with the Lord, but their result must be small. There is a something in the very tone of the man who has been with Jesus which has more power to touch the heart than the most perfect oratory: remember this and maintain an

unbroken walk with God. You will need much night-work in secret if you are to gather many of your Lord's lost sheep. Only by prayer and fasting can you gain power to cast out the worst of devils. Let men say what they will about sovereignty, God connects special success with special states of heart, and if these are lacking he will not do many mighty works.

In addition to earnest preaching it will be wise to use other means. If you wish to see results from your sermons you must be accessible to enquirers. A meeting after every service may not be desirable, but frequent opportunities for coming into direct contact with your people should be sought after, and by some means created. It is shocking to think that there are ministers who have no method whatever for meeting the anxious, and if they do see here and there one, it is because of the courage of the seeker, and not because of the earnestness of the pastor. From the very first you should appoint frequent and regular seasons for seeing all who are seeking after Christ, and you should continually invite such to come and speak with you.

In addition to this, hold numerous enquirers' meetings, at which the addresses shall be all intended to assist the troubled and guide the perplexed, and with these intermingle fervent prayers for the individuals present, and short testimonials from recent converts and others. As an open confession of Christ is continually mentioned in connection with saving faith, it is your wisdom to make it easy for believers who are as yet following Jesus by night to come forward and avow their allegiance to him. There must be no persuading to make a profession, but there should be every opportunity for so doing, and no stumbling-block placed in the way of hopeful minds. As for those who are not so far advanced as to warrant any thought of baptism, you may be of the utmost benefit to them by personal interaction, and therefore you should seek it. Doubts may be cleared away, errors rectified, and terrors dispelled by a few moments' conversation; I have known instances in which a life-long misery has been ended by a simple explanation which might have been given years before. Seek out the wandering sheep one by one, and when

you find all your thoughts needed for a single individual, do not grudge your labor, for your Lord in His parable represents the good shepherd as bringing home His lost sheep, not in a flock, but one at a time upon His shoulders, and rejoicing so to do.

With all that you can do your desires will not be fulfillled, for soulwinning is a pursuit which grows upon a man; the more he is rewarded with conversions the more eager he becomes to see greater numbers born unto God. Hence you will soon discover that *you need help if many are to be brought in.* The net soon becomes too heavy for one pair of hands to drag ashore when it is filled with fishes; and your fellow-helpers must be beckoned to your assistance. Great things are done by the Holy Spirit when a whole church is aroused to sacred energy: then there are hundreds of testimonies instead of one, and these strengthen each other; then advocates for Christ succeed each other and work into each other's hands, while supplication ascends to heaven with the force of united importunity; thus sinners are encompassed with a cordon of earnest entreaties, and heaven itself is called into the field.

It would seem hard in some congregations for a sinner to be saved, for whatever good he may receive from the pulpit is frozen out of him by the arctic atmosphere with which he is surrounded: and on the other hand some churches make it hard for men to remain unconverted, for with holy zeal they persecute the careless into anxiety. It should be our ambition, in the power of the Holy Ghost, to work the entire church into a fine missionary condition, to make it like a Leyden jar charged to the full with divine electricity, so that whatever comes into contact with it shall feel its power. What can one man do alone? What can he not do with an army of enthusiasts around him? Contemplate at the outset the possibility of having a church of soul-winners. Do not succumb to the usual idea that we can only gather a few useful workers, and that the rest of the community must inevitably be a dead weight: it may possibly so happen, but do not set out with that notion or it will be verified. The usual need not be the universal; better things are possible than anything yet attained; set your aim

high and spare no effort to reach it. Labor to gather a church alive for Jesus, every member energetic to the full, and the whole in incessant activity for the salvation of men.

To this end there must be the best of preaching to feed the host into strength, continual prayer to bring down the power from on high, and the most heroic example on your own part to fire their zeal: then under the divine blessing a common-sense management of the entire force cannot fail to produce the most desirable issues. Who among you can grasp this idea and embody it in actual fact?

To call in another brother every now and then to take the lead in evangelistic services will be found very wise and useful; for there are some fish that never will be taken in your net, but will surely fall to the lot of another fisherman. Fresh voices penetrate where the accustomed sound has lost effect, and they tend also to beget a deeper interest in those already attentive. Sound and prudent evangelists may lend help even to the most efficient pastor, and gather in fruit which he has failed to reach: at any rate it makes a break in the continuity of ordinary services, and renders them less likely to become monotonous.

Never suffer jealousy to hinder you in this. Suppose another lamp should outshine yours, what will it matter so long as it brings light to those whose welfare you are seeking? Say with Moses, "Would God all the Lord's servants were prophets." He who is free from selfish jealousy will find that no occasion will suggest it; his people may be well aware that their pastor is excelled by others in talent, but they will be ready to assert that he is surpassed by none in love to their souls. It is not needful for a loving son to believe that his father is the most learned, man in the parish; he loves him for his own sake, and not because he is superior to others. Call in every now and then a warm-hearted neighbor, utilize the talent in the church itself, and procure the services of some eminent soul-winner, and this may, in God's hands, break up the hard soil for you, and bring you brighter days.

Finally, beloved brethren, by any means, by all means, labor to glorify God by conversions, and rest not till your

heart’s desire is fulfillled.