

ASSOCIATIONAL SERMON.

The Power of a Consistent Life.

SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE P. E. ISLAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION AT CAVENDISH, MONDAY, JULY 23RD, 1877.

BY J. I. D.

Published by request of the Association.

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the Epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."—2 Cor. iii. 3.

In his first letter to the Corinthian church, Paul had spoken in a tone of unsparing severity. He had vindicated his own apostleship, reproved the strife of parties and commanded them, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to expel from their number the one who was leading a scandalous life. He had also exposed, with all his wonderful powers of argument, the erroneous views that were gaining ground among them, and with all the authority of his apostolic office rebuked them for the abuses that were becoming prevalent in their midst. But although duty impelled him to be severe, the father's heart was full of the tenderest affection for his children in the gospel. In his second Epistle he tells them, that it was out of much affliction, and anguish of heart, with many tears, that he wrote unto them.

In his second letter, however, when he had proved them, and found them obedient in all things, his language assumes a kinder tone, and he speaks to them with a greater degree of approval. They had heeded his instructions, reformed the abuses, and excluded the one who by his conduct had brought such scandal upon the cause of Christ. True, they were far from perfect and still needed instruction, but to the church as a whole he could point as an Epistle of Christ.

He tells them in the opening verse of this chapter, in coming to them or in going from them to others, he needed no letters of commendation. They had experienced in their own hearts the saving power of the gospel and tested its reforming power in their lives. They needed no better proof of his apostleship, or of the truth of his message. On the other hand, when he went from them to others, he could point to this Corinthian church as the highest evidence of the justness of his claims and of the excellence of his message: that this band of believing men and women, saved from the luxury and licentiousness of ancient Corinth, furnished the most convincing testimony of the power and truth of the religion of Christ. As the fruit chiefly of his own ministry, he could say to them, Ye are our Epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men.

He proceeds still further to explain, that they were manifestly Christ's letter to the world, and that he was merely the instrument employed in bringing the truths of the gospel to bear upon their hearts, and that this truth had been engraved there by the Spirit of the living God. When the law of God is written in the heart it will mould and regulate the life. It is the heart, as used in scripture, that gives character to the whole man.

From the passage before us we gather that a Christian church should be an open letter of Christ to the world. True, it is only from the Bible that men can get a perfect conception of divine truth. At the same time, however, it is not only true that Christians are the world's Bible, but that in a certain sense God intended they should be. The command which Christ gives to every true believer is, 'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' If a church should be an Epistle of Christ, so also should each individual member.

We start then with the truth that every Christian should be an Epistle of Christ to the world. Let us first inquire the object of an Epistle. If, for example, we examine briefly the leading letter of Paul to the saints at Rome, we will find that its object is to teach men the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. But before men will receive them they must believe that they are true. It may be easily seen that the inspired Apostle never seeks by labored arguments to prove the verity of the religion of Christ, but seizing upon those facts, in the world, that men must acknowledge

to be true, he proceeds thereon to erect the temple of truth. He takes it for granted that the truth must commend itself to every man's conscience; that there is something in the heart of man that responds to the gospel and compels him to acknowledge its truth. In like manner the life of every consistent God-fearing man makes a direct appeal to the consciences of men. Even infidels and skeptics, in spite of their prejudice and hatred, are forced to reverence both the men and their principles. There is a power in consistent piety that compels respect. An infidel, being asked why he stopped his mill when a pious deacon was passing Sunday mornings on his way to church, replied, "The deacon professes just what the rest of you do, but he lives such a life that it makes me feel bad to run my mill while he is passing." There is that often in the hearts of wicked men that gives the lie to all their violent assertions. When under conviction for sin, or in sickness and trouble it often happens that the very men whom they once hated and slandered are the ones from whom they are most anxious to receive counsel and with whom to bow in prayer.

But an Epistle does more than commend itself to the hearts of men. It teaches truth. The same prominent truths which are taught, for example, in the Epistle to the Romans, are taught by the life of every consistent Christian. The sinful and guilty condition of man, his inability to keep the law, or to gain heaven by his own good works, and the fact that men are justified freely through faith in the blood of Christ, are taught by the life and experience of every one who leaves the ranks of sin and ranges himself on the side of Christ, as truly as in the five first chapters of this Epistle. Hence the experience of one who has just found peace often produces a deeper impression on his old companions than the most powerful sermon, and none are more successful in guiding the inquirer to Christ than one who is rejoicing in a new found hope. So also a Christian life teaches that the true believer will hate and avoid sin; that there will be an unceasing conflict between the flesh and the spirit, and that our salvation depends upon the infinite love and immutable purposes of God.

From the beginning of the twelfth chapter of Romans to the end there are principles brought out and enforced sufficient for the guidance and regulation of Christian conduct in every possible circumstance in life. In enlightened countries that religion which does not produce moral and upright conduct will not for any length of time find general acceptance with men. However bad men may be themselves, they are generally quick to discover anything wrong in the conduct of others. To make men believe that we have experienced the doctrines taught in the first of this Epistle our lives must be regulated by the principles laid down in the last. Every Christian in so far as he embodies and expresses the principles of the gospel becomes an incarnation of what is most praiseworthy in human conduct. It is in this way that every believer may become an Epistle of Christ.

We have seen that the object of an Epistle of Christ is to teach men the truths of the gospel, and that each true believer is a letter of Christ to the world. It is evident then the nearer the Christian lives to Christ, and the more completely his conduct is regulated by the precepts of religion, the more distinctly and powerfully will he speak to the hearts of men. To exert an influence for good, to preach Christ by our conduct, the life must be

SPIRITUALLY CONSISTENT.

The cause of Christ is often injured by the behaviour of worldly minded professors, who seem to delight in shocking, by their conduct, the feelings of their more scrupulous brethren, and in showing the world how far they can go with them in their business maxims and amusements. Instead of recommending the religion of Christ to the world as they sometimes suppose, they generally succeed in making the irreligious believe that they are no better than themselves. On the other hand we need to avoid that slavish, legal Christianity that fears to smile, condemns every form of amusement, and speaks only in sighs and reproofs. This is only a caricature of the joyous religion of Jesus. Other things being

equal, it is the happy, cheerful Christian who accomplishes the most for the Master.

We have inserted the word 'spiritually' before 'consistent,' because we mean more than a careful regulation of the outward conduct. The religion of the Bible is more than a "not doing wrong;" it is a positive and active doing right. In the final judgment, as described by Christ in Matt. xxv., men will be condemned not merely for "doing wrong," but because they have neglected to do right. The man who never rebukes sin, upholds the truth, nor labors for the good of others, however moral and upright his conduct in other respects, is not the type of Christian held up to us in the New Testament. The irreligious may be satisfied to be let alone, but in their heart of hearts they do not respect those who allow them to go on in sin without an effort to save them. Nor should we regulate our conduct altogether with a view to the effect it will produce upon the world. Men soon pierce through this outward guise. To live right we need to be right with God, to have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. A man who regulates his life altogether by external precepts is like a stranger threading his way through a great city. He is obliged to look constantly for the names of the streets, and to inquire his way from those he meets. He proceeds with doubt and uncertainty, and is constantly in danger of going astray. On the other hand, a man with the love of Christ in his heart, is like one brought up in the city from his childhood. He passes through the winding streets and is scarcely conscious that he is picking his way. God's promise to his people is, "I will put my laws into their minds and write them in their hearts." For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.' If our hearts were always warm with the love of Christ, and we were constantly seeking to know and do his will we should not wander far from the path of rectitude.

Having seen that a life to be consistent in the highest sense must have the laws of God written in the heart, must be controlled by love to Christ, let us consider briefly the power of such a life for good.

The life speaks more powerfully than words, or to use a common expression, Actions speak louder than words. We have already remarked that truth commends itself to the consciences of men, and that in general, they feel guilty for not living better lives than they are leading. They may not be able to realize this at all times, but whenever the truth is placed before them, the consciousness of something lost is awakened. This fact is revealed in every instance of true repentance. Take for example the repentance of the prodigal son, who is a type of fallen man. When he came to himself he began to think at once of what he had lost by his profligacy and sin. Happily he was led to seek reconciliation to an injured father, and restoration to the parental roof. So also, go to the poor degraded outcast, tell him in kindness and love, of the character he has destroyed, of the friends he has injured, of the family he has disgraced and beggared, of the children he is leading in the paths of sin, and especially of the immortal soul he is destroying by his conduct; tell him too how differently it might have been had he served God, and how often will the burning tears of remorse show you that he has in his mind the ideal of a better life than the one he has lived, and acknowledges that he is guilty for not attaining to it.

But with this consciousness of guilt there comes also a sense of moral weakness—a proneness to evil which requires divine help to overcome. In this condition the sinner might be led to despair if the gospel were not full of encouragement. The inspired apostle in speaking of his conversion, says, "For this cause I obtained mercy that in one first Christ Jesus might show forth all his long suffering, for a pattern to those who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Thus every true believer at his conversion becomes, to some extent a pattern to others, encouraging them to hope in the same Saviour. Nothing carries with it such weight as a practical illustration, a living verification of truth. Christ came not only to teach

truth, but he was truth incarnate. He could say as no other could, "I am the truth." Every believer, in so far as Christ liveth in him, makes known the truth to men.

Deeds are superior to words in many respects. There is a feeling common among men, that the high and holy precepts of religion are altogether impracticable, but when they see them exemplified in the lives of others they are all convinced that this is not so, and may be led to endeavor with God's help to practise these precepts themselves. Words often tire and fail to convey the meaning intended, while acts seldom weary, and are not so easily misunderstood.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Jottings from P. E. Island.

Dear Editor,—

Having just completed my proposed tour through P. E. Island in behalf of the \$100,000 additional Endowment for our College, I hasten to give your readers a brief statement in reference thereto:—

The work of God in the Western part of the Island, of which I informed you in my last, has been carried forward gloriously. Forty-two had been baptized at the last account. After Bro. McDonald's return to Charlottetown, Bro. D. H. Simpson, of Montague, went to the assistance of Bro. Sweet, and probably baptized quite a number last Lord's day. The gracious work is extending to surrounding settlements, and the probability is that this will be a year of blessing and enlargement to the little Baptist churches of P. E. Island.

After leaving Bedeque, I proceeded to Tryon, where I found a generous and intelligent people. The good influence of the recent revival there seemed evident in the whole-hearted manner in which they responded to the claims of the College. Bro. Chipman's labors have been much blessed at Tryon.

At North River I enjoyed the co-operation of Bro. C. Burgess, who is serving acceptably and successfully the Baptist church there and also that of St. Peter's Road. Both of these churches responded to my appeal in a generous manner. At North River, Dea. Mackinlay headed the list with \$100, and others did well; but some, from whom we might reasonably expect aid, declined to help. I was pleased with my visit to West River. Here I enjoyed the co-operation of Rev. M. Ross, the pastor, who is much respected by his people. The congregation who came to hear me was one of the largest I addressed during my visit through the Island, and this interesting field seems white, "ready for the harvest."

I have no language to express the hearty and generous reception given me at Charlottetown. The Baptist church there is not large, but the cause is rapidly rising, and a bright future seems opening to the brethren there. Rev. D. McDonald, the pastor, is greatly beloved by his people, and his labors have been crowned with abundant blessing. The friends of the College there responded nobly as the accompanying statement indicates.

At Alexandra, Uigg and Belfast, I found Bro. J. I. DeWolf, the pastor, doing a good work and highly esteemed by his people for his work's sake. I was pleased and satisfied with the result of my visit to these places, financially.

It did not seem possible for me to go to Belfast, and learning that the brethren there were taxed to their utmost to build up a place of worship, I thought it best that they should be excused from giving just now to the Endowment. My visit to the hospitable home of my venerable brother, Rev. Samuel McLeod, of Uigg, I will not soon forget. He is ripening for Heaven, and enjoys the affection and confidence of the people for whose spiritual welfare he has long laboured.

Montague and Brudenell did nobly. I found Bro. McGregor supplying Montague in the absence of the pastor, Rev. D. H. Simpson. At Brudenell I enjoyed a most delightful visit at the home of Rev. John Shaw. Bro. S. enjoys a good degree of physical vigor for his years. He was about to leave home for Cape Breton to spend a few weeks in mission-

ary labours. It must be a source of gratification to this aged minister to see the cause for which he has so long and faithfully labored prospering. These two places, Montague and Brudenell, present one of the most inviting and hopeful fields of labor on the Island.

Dundas and Grand River have been enjoying the labours of Rev. T. A. Kidson, and a good work of grace has been enjoyed during the year. Bro. K. gave me every assistance in his power, and the financial results of my visit to those places were upon the whole satisfactory. My dear Bro. Kidson's health, I regret to say, compels him to suspend his labours for a time, and he is about leaving to seek resuscitation.

At Dundas I met Rev. J. A. Gordon, the beloved and successful pastor of the church at East Point, who rendered me valuable assistance in the prosecution of my work. He accompanied me in my visit to Grand River, Souris and East Point. I spent the Sabbath at East Point and Souris, and enjoyed in a high degree the solemn and encouraging services. Bro. Gordon baptized an interesting young man at East Point on Sabbath morning last, and a most healthy and hopeful state of things religiously exists. Other baptisms are soon to follow. Bro. Gordon's efforts at Souris, I believe, will be attended with a blessing. A church I doubt not will be organized there soon; and in that stirring little town, the Eastern Terminus of the P. E. Island railway, a prosperous and well organized Baptist interest will soon be found.

I cherish pleasant reminiscences of this visit. Everywhere the hospitality of the people was all that could be desired, and the friendly co-operation of the pastors and others truly refreshing.

The accompanying statement indicates financial results. Considering the hardness of the times, the weak and scattered condition of our churches and the many burdens they are bearing, in the erection of church edifices and parsonages, in the support of the pastors, and I think all will say Prince Edward Island has done nobly.

Yours truly,

ISA. WALLACE.

Charlottetown, Aug. 21, 1877.

The following is a memo. of notes and subscriptions obtained for the New Endowment for Acadia College in P. E. Island and deposited in the hands of Jas. Desbrisay, Esq., of Charlottetown, also a statement of cash received in each locality, which I have paid over to the Treasurer, A. DeW. Barrs, M. D., Esq.

The names of the subscribers with the amount given by each individual accompanying the memo. handed to Mr. Desbrisay.

Table with columns: Notes & Subs., Cash, Total. Lists contributions from Cavendish, Tryon, Summerside, West River, St. Peter's Road, Bedeque, Dundas, Grand River, Montague and Brudenell, Uigg, East Point, North River, Alexandra, Souris, Charlottetown, Knutsford.

Bro. Alex. Scott, of East Point, handed me \$9.00 on old pledges. I. W.

For the Christian Messenger.

Notes concerning one of our Coloured Churches.

Since our Bro. Rhuland was deputed to the oversight of the Preston brethren by the Central Association when held in Bridgewater, he has faithfully sought to do them good, and is constantly, as far as time and opportunity will permit, trying to encourage them in the right and good way. He is loved and looked to among them as their counsellor and friend, and it is his constant care that the little flock, although poor in things temporal, should be found rich in faith and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. He is sometimes cast down, and almost tempted to resign the work on account of physical weakness and other pressing duties, and is very anxious that some good brother should be aided by the missionary board so that all his time and energy might be spent among our coloured brethren in Preston and the surrounding churches.

Last Lord's day was to Bro. Rhuland