

ASSOCIATIONAL SERMON.

The Faithful Preacher, the True Friend.

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GAL. iv. 15.—"Am I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"

Some changes are inglorious as well as disastrous. Such is the change of those to whom reference is made by the Apostle in the text. This view of Paul by the Galatians, proves that sin is binding, as well as blighting on human affections. In their happier condition, had it been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes, and given them to him. But, alas, what a changelion he to whom they had often listened—whom they followed and loved—with whom they had prayed and rejoiced, is now regarded as their enemy, because he has told them the truth. The change, however, was not in the Apostle, as they supposed, but in themselves. The servant of the Lord had given them pain and they wished to "cut his acquaintance."

How apt we are to think those our enemies who, out of love for us, speak plainly of our injustice to Christ and His cause; and no man can be unjust to Christ without being unjust to himself. It requires no little grace to overcome this, and to regard the man who tells us of our faults, or the faults of our families, as our friend. We are fond of flattery, and shrink from anything that produces pain, or necessitates repentance. For this reason many become offended with their pastors, as though it were not out of love to the cause of their Master, and to the souls of men, that they speak the truth. Solomon has uncovered the fact that "faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

The writer of this epistle was not fault-finding in his ministry, but truthful, for in all his writings, running like a sweet undertone, may be heard the spirit of Christian love and forbearance. He says, "Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. He knew that Christians were not perfect, and he taught that according to this fact they should be dealt with. He understood the deception of the human heart, and was too straightforward to leave the truth untold when circumstances required it. He loved his great and glorious Deliverer too much to keep back his claims. He loved His Kingdom too ardently to daub the walls of it with untempered mortar. He was too firmly attached to those who compose that Kingdom to cry, "Peace, peace, when there was no peace."

It is the life-long duty of the minister of the gospel to "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." The example of the twelve disciples is still worthy of imitation; their resolution was to "give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." Can we do this if clogged with secular matters; or, perhaps, with that which is worse—indolence?

Let us consider that which we have to tell—the Truth. That which was written by men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; speaking to us of God, affirming that he is a Spirit, self-existent, eternal, present everywhere, acting and reigning, God supreme in all places; that there is no searching of his understanding—glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders; that His tender mercies are over all his works; and that His grace flows out to humanity unmerited and unsolicited.

The truth, which speaks to us of Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God; that you and I by contemplating His character may see and understand the character of God, and by seeing his purity we may, distressed with our sin, hasten to Him who can wash us in the blood of the Lamb, and make us whiter than snow. That which we have to tell speaks to us of man, showing that he was created in the image of God; that he fell into sin, and thereby drew upon himself the wrath of Jehovah, with torrents of darkness and woe. That man imparted to his offspring a de-

praved nature, a nature which, if left to itself will forever force a passage away from heaven's light—pardon, comfort and rest—into outer darkness.

It is ours to tell the truth as to what man is, what he ought to be, and how he may be what he ought to be; how to live, and how to go hence in peace; how to meet God here, and how to meet Him in Judgment; how he may participate in all that Christ does, and has, and is; how he may die with Him, rise with Him, and with Him be seated in the heavenly places.

It becomes the duty of those who would tell the truth to speak of redemption, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That there is salvation in no other, "For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified."

Telling the truth includes the "new birth," of which the Holy Spirit is the author, and of which our Lord declared, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God;" then, as the outflow from regeneration, comes faith, repentance, love and obedience.

The truth tells what the Christian may suffer as well as enjoy in the service of Jesus, through faith. In fact it casts light upon every important question, and what the truth leaves in mystery we may well afford to, until we shall know more when glorified with Him. There are strains of the songs of the free coming to our ears from the Bible, and we at times long to join their company; but the wail of despair coming from the world of the lost is equally real. One strain of the latter is all you would wish to hear:—"Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

The king of day shines upon the cesspool as well as upon the silvery lake; upon fading, dying things as well as those clothed with verdure, beauty and strength. So the truth, like the sun, nay, like ten thousand mighty suns, shines upon the low and degraded of society, as well as upon the polished, the refined, the educated; upon the little boy in his play at school, and upon the king who sways a sceptre on the throne. The truth comes affirming that we will be there what we are here, and the voice of our Lord, as heard on Patmos, is still fresh: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

It has been called a "Temple," as such let it stand as it was given by the divine architect. His Temple of Truth cannot be explored in a life-time; with places holy and most holy, with pillars and arches, with galleries and domes reaching further and rising higher than human thought has yet been able to follow; while every stone and pillar, every wall and ceiling, every door and arch, has been conceived by infinite wisdom, and executed by matchless skill. Every part of it is precious and significant to him who has entered its holy courts. Standing without you may see no glory, but standing within every ray of light reveals a harmony of unspeakable splendor. I envy not the man who dares to remove one stone, or add one fresco to this grand Cathedral. I honor not the church which enlarges it by wooden courts and painted statues. Let it stand as the inspired workmen built it—mar not its proportions, murmur not at its height, despise not its age; but enter and worship, not the temple, but the God of the temple; and you will find it radiant with spiritual light, and vocal with the music of paradise." It is this which it becomes our duty as well as privilege to tell, and we sum it up in the short little word—the "Truth."

II. We proceed to the manner of telling it: The more correctly the truth comes before the mind, the more favorable will be the impression made. A clear apprehension of the truth will bring the soul in its helplessness to the feet of the author of truth. The first essential in telling the truth is straightforwardness. With this there is no indirect coming to the point; no limp-

ing up to sin as though we did not know what duty was, or what sin was. There will be no morbid sympathy with the offender. God-fearing men have no time in this short life for laying deep plans, so as to impress the offender that we would not for the world hurt his feelings. Sin is horrible, detestable in God's sight, and when once it is made clear that a thing is not scriptural, a Christian has nothing to do with suffering or toleration of it. If we dare not tell our friends of their sins, we had better give up their friendship.

Am I not right, brethren, that in the present age there is an idea floating in the mind, that if the minister of the Gospel cannot approve he must be silent, or, at least, make no objections? Why, some are ready to say, "If you take objections against that man we will lose his support." If he withholds because you told him the truth, you and the church are better without him or his money.

One of the most unwholesome things for Christianity in the world is cowardly untruthfulness. Anything, but not timidity in God's work. When God gives us employment in his vineyard, let us be firm, steady and uncompromisingly true, with the rich as well as the poor. Let men be rude or unpolished if they will, but let Christians, especially Christian ministers, in all they say and do, be straightforward; not using flattery, nor speaking smoothly to a man's face, while all the time there is a consciousness that wrong is covered up in the heart.

We have all felt to a greater or less degree that many of the polished and wealthy of society are untouched by the glorious truth. Does not this failure arise from a want of straightforwardness and Christian sincerity? They may be pampered, but it is to their hurt, and if a man be hurt spiritually, it is one of those things he never gets over.

A good illustration of what we ought to be may be seen in John the Baptist. See him before Herod, unmoved, undaunted, surrounded by rank and fashion, and all the rules of polite life; but these had not power to subdue him into silence. He is God's ambassador, he hates sin, he must speak, he cannot help it, and he lifts up his manly voice:—"It is not lawful for thee to have her." I dare say it was whispered in his ear, "Now you have won the admiration of the king, be careful how you speak on this matter. If you are gentle with him, you will no doubt have some position of ease given you, and no longer will you suffer from prison life, or the lonely wilderness home."

John could die, but he could not allow the man to go on in sin unrepented. He is thinking not of some ease or present at the hand of the king, but of the guilty man's soul, and of the loss he will sustain if he lose it. The habit of looking at ourselves instead of at the immortal interests connected with man, is destructive to success. To be successful we must forget ourselves—lose sight of ourselves. Those who can do this will never be lost sight of by Omniscience, however humble may be the sphere in which they labor; to them comes the promise with all its sweetness, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." But this straightforwardness must be such as will lead to the declaration of the whole counsel of God. This God requires. It is simply mockery to constantly iterate the invitation, "Come to Christ," or to repeat, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," without at the same time telling who Jesus is, and explaining what is meant by believing on Him, or having faith in Him. But to do this involves doctrine; and here we are met by the popular outcry against doctrinal preaching. "Preach Christ," they say, "and leave doctrine alone." This is absurd; it lays upon the man of God a task for which he is unequal. Let him offer the least explanation about Christ, and it is based upon some doctrine, as to his person. If we undertake to explain His crucifixion and death, we have a doctrine, glorious for the hope which it sheds upon our lost and ruined world, "That the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." And if we speak of man as lost, it involves the doctrine of our depravity—a fact which none of us deny. Beneath this clamour itself, is the doctrine, that it is no matter what a man believes, if he is only resting on Christ. The word of God was given to be believed, and if I disbelieve portions of it now, I should be alarmed lest I should soon disbelieve more, because infidelity comes upon the heart gradually. One of the best evidences that the soul is resting on Christ is that the whole truth which God has given meets with a hearty reception, whether it condemns or acquits us. The doctrine of a holy life also needs to be propagated, for by it the ungodly are silenced, religion recommended, and Christians made happy. Not that we attain perfection here, for God's word enjoins growth in grace, and this, I understand, to cover the history of man in this life.

But a second essential in telling the truth is Love. Christ is the pattern for every Christian, especially for those whom he has sent into the world with his commission to preach the Gospel resting upon them. He had no sympathy with sin; but he had deep and lasting interest in the condition in which he found humanity. This he manifested by his tears over Jerusalem, and at the grave of Lazarus, as well as by His

oft repeated entreaties. On forms of helplessness, disease and woe, He gazed with infinite tenderness, and stretched forth His hand, or lifted up His voice, and relieved the burden of their distresses. There is a surly way of speaking truth which does not say much for the one who utters it. Unless we have love in our hearts for others, as well as for that which is good, we may rebuke sin and not feel that it is a bitter thing to rebuke a brother; but when from a loving, loyal heart sharp things come they come not in vain; they will make impressions, and though men may forget in after years from whence they came, yet the day of Judgment will not forget.

It is a necessity that we entertain heartfelt sympathy with the different conditions in which men, in order to do them good. Paul could say, "I am become all things to all men, if by all means I might save some." "But speak the truth in love." "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, etc." O then let us get our hearts permeated at the feet of Immanuel with His love, that we may be able to go and tell others of our adorable Redeemer, with such pathos, earnestness and feeling, as will by the blessing of God lead them to love and unconditionally submit themselves to the "King eternal, immortal, invisible and all-wise." The Apostle said, "That by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." "For out of much affliction and anguish I wrote unto you with many tears,"—"not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you." Yet, let us remember that as deep love may exist and tears be absent, it requires more than tears to satisfy men that we care for their souls. There must be manly Christian labor and conversation with them, making them feel that we have that of which we speak, and they ought to have it too.

Let the servant of the Lord contemplate the world in its darkness, its distance from God, as well as what man is here without an interest in Christ; and what he will be eternally, unless pardoned and cleansed "by the washing of regeneration and renewed by the Holy Ghost,"—let him keep this in view, and with the good news of salvation for the lost on his heart, and he will be found pressing his way to those who need the remedy; and from a heart overflowing with love for others, he will pour out his story, or rather his Master's story, "That God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life."

Let us look and look again, until in its true light we see that sin has brought poverty to our race; that it has robbed us of spiritual wealth; but that the secret of amassing imperishable riches, and of treasuring them up in heaven comes through faith in Him, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." For it is still true—"That down in the human heart, Crushed by the tempter, Feelings lie buried that grace can restore; Touched by a loving heart, Wakened by kindness Chords that are broken will vibrate again."

III. Consider the advantages of telling the truth. The harmony of truth makes it attractive; but how shall this harmony be discovered unless it be proclaimed? The word of God is charming the world in all its deformity and hatred of God. It is told of the Syrians that they had the power of charming by song those who passed that way. When Ulysses sailed past that Isle, to prevent himself and crew from being charmed by it, he filled their ears with wax, and bound himself to the mast with thongs. But when Orpheus had to pass that way, he began music, which so far surpassed the sorcerer's song on the shore that he not only passed safely, but with disdain. The truth is so harmonious and attractive, that nothing has such over-powering influence on the human intellect as it, when clearly presented and made sharp and mighty by the Spirit of the Lord. Those who effectually hear it need no wax in their ears, and no thongs by which to save themselves from the bewitching song of sin. The poet uttered a great truth, who said, "Thou dear Redeemer, dying Lamb, We love to hear of Thee, No music's like thy charming name, Nor half so sweet can be."

The message is enlightening. By it man learns that it is not safe to fill a drunkard's grave—not safe to blaspheme; the holy name of Jesus—not safe to leave our vows unpaid—not safe to be covetous—not safe to be a moralist only—not safe to be almost a Christian. And, on the other hand, it teaches that a man may die homeless, and yet have a mansion in the skies, or he may die alone, and yet holy hands be there to soothe and bless; that he may die "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." Yes, it illuminates by teaching man that to be unholily long enough is to be unholily longer, and that those who are filthy-long enough will be filthy longer. The advantage is seen in that this truth is what the world needs,

not only to know what they must do to be saved, but how to grow better after they are saved, and by the use of what means they shall be able to represent Christ to an ungodly world most correctly.

My hearers, the Bible bears translating into life, and men have but to absorb it into their souls to have spiritual health. Then let its truths beat upon the inner shores of our spiritual existence and we shall find joy for sorrow, strength for weakness, light for darkness, and life for death. It is food for the child of God. Jesus taught that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The boughs of truth bend around us, laden with bread for hungry souls. Those who live on this food live well.

Truth, too, is a fountain of living waters, where those who can say, "As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God," may stoop down and "drink and never die." O! the advantage of telling the world such news, that every want of our race may be fully, freely and eternally met. God has winnowed His word, but has left just what we want in any and every condition of human life. The living may live by it; and the dying may pillow their head upon its sacred promises.

Then there is the advantage of honoring God; those who honor Him He will honor. The psalmist, "Well done thou good and faithful servant," will not come from man, but from our great loving Father, Saviour, God. This honor can never come to those who seek to please men. God is honored by those who make a hearty declaration of the whole counsel of God, whether men believe the report or not. We cannot force men to believe, we may over-persuade. Some men need much persuasion, others need none, because they are so constituted that if you are urgent and argumentative they comply, and that before the work of regeneration by the Spirit of the Lord has been performed; and if a man is brought into the church unprepared, the danger is that he will rest satisfied and die unsaved. My brethren, let us have the consciousness of duty performed, for who wants to be at war with conscience; and let us love the praise of God more than the praise of men.

But I would not pass over the disadvantage of having men become our enemies. This often brings the inconvenience, as well as unprofitableness of short pastorates, and that which in this day of the world's need is equally to be dreaded, the spending of weeks or months and no field of labor, without encroaching on some brother's portion. But is it not better to be without a church than without the love and approval of the Lord our God. Difficulties in modern churches do not arise so much from the fact that the truth has been faithfully told, as from the fact that it has been only partially told, or told too late. If the high claims of truth were kept from the beginning of a pastorate before the people, the utterance of truth in the love of it would never make enemies, or at least seldom make them. The church that has the claims of God lovingly presented is the one which will in the end prosper.

It is the Bible, my hearers, that is impressing the world of its lost condition; and that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour. It is becoming a fixed thought that the Bible is the best book in the family, in society, and in business. This is most correctly understood where the servant of the Lord stands forth fearless of result and points to the word of God as the only rule of faith and practice. In short the full proclamation of God's truth gives light to those who sit in darkness, strength for those in weakness, comfort for the sad, pardon for the guilty, relief for the oppressed, and life for the dead. The word of God is the medicine that the world most needs; Christ bids us go with it, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Teach the world that that with which they are burdened is worse than disease, it is already spiritual death; that all are covered with wounds and bruises and putrifying sores; but that there is a divine healer in Christ the Lord; that there is Eternal Life in Jesus Christ the Son of God. Then let us tell it, for it suits kings, warriors, statesmen, paupers, profligates, good, bad, industrious, indolent, all need to hear it and believe it before the benefits become theirs. "But how shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?"

Brethren, do we feel the worth of that which we have to tell? Then let us tell it to the old and young, to the sick and well, the weak and strong, tell it in the darkness and in the light; tell it while living, and when dying. Whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, tell it to the hardened and profane, to the hungry and thirsty; to the unsatisfied, penitent, heartbroken, the formalist, the infidel. Tell it to the prodigal, to the penurious, to the idlers in the great vineyard of God, as well as to the "faithful in Christ Jesus." Tell it to the horse racing