

Your Choice.

BY OSCAR E. SMITH

Why choose the evil, when the good, More lovely, more divinely fair. With heavenly graces eye imbued. Awaits the searcher everywhere? Why go the downward ways of sin? Mid vain regrets and wild despair; Why quell the good each soul may win, Why lose all hopes of heaven here? Peace like a river flows serene Beside the path the righteous tread; Joy, as the sunshine, glides each scene And falls with blessing on his head Yet where the evil-minded go Sharp thorns of selfishness prevail, And want and misery and woe The wretched sinner shall a sail. O, mortal, wake! too soon thy soul All changes for good shall see no more, While evil deeds, with vengeance roll To scourge the guilty o'er and o'er. Arouse ye, seek the narrow way By all the wise for ages trod; Seek paths of pleasantness that lay Through fields of virtue up to God. —New York Observer.

The Art of Listening.

No one doubts the importance and the difficulty of the art of public speaking. Those who give their lives to it are compelled by the circumstances to make a most careful study of it, and many ministers make it a rule to read every year at least one book on the subject. But it is not quite so clear that everyone is equally convinced of the importance of the art of public listening, and yet from the neglect of this art many meetings that might be full of life and interest, are "flat, stale and unprofitable." It is, therefore, exceedingly desirable, as we look forward to our winter's work, that, all our congregations should be alive to the contribution that the listeners, as well as the preachers, have to make to the success of that work for which our churches exist. A large number of us are looking wistfully for a revival of good preaching, and the signs for such a revival are hopeful. But is it not true that there is also great need of a revival of good listening? Never was there greater need than there is now of attending to the words of Jesus when he said, "Take heed, therefore, how ye hear." Perhaps no better method of learning how to listen can be found than by first casting an eye upon the mistakes that listeners make, and nowhere can these mistakes be better seen than in the Scriptures. Six may be chosen as samples of the many types that are there found.

There is the careless hearer. This is the man described in the parable of the man sowing seed on the wayside. His heart is not open at all, and we learn afterwards he knows nothing of what he heard. It is almost appalling when we think how much listening of this kind there is. There are men and women by the scores whose minds are about as open as an asphalt pavement. These are not good listeners.

Another kind of hearer is the criticizing hearer. This is the class to which Festus belonged. He heard the greatest of preachers, and yet he fell so superior to Paul, that he could never think of learning anything from him. Such listeners are very numerous and they never can learn much because they "know it all" before. It is not a sign of great intellect to criticize, although most people who indulge in it flatter themselves that it is. On the other hand, the fixed habit of criticism becomes a positive bane, for it harms and cramps the mind as few habits do. And one of the worst religious injuries that a man can do his children is to tear the sermon to pieces in their presence, when the family gathers at the dinner table after the morning service.

A third kind of bad hearing is that of the sentimental hearer. This hearer is like the ground that hath little depth, and in which the seed very quickly sprang up, being soon warmed by the spring sun, because the rock was so near the surface. There are many such. Their feelings have been stirred, but the deep fountains of their personality have never been opened, and so when the time of testing comes, no effect of their hearing is left.

There is also the sensational hearer. There are sensational preachers, but there are also sensational hearers. These are described by the Apostle Paul as "having itching ears," and their great purpose is not to get something that will help, but something that will excite. They do not ask whether a thing is true, but whether it is new.

There is, again, the preoccupied hearer. This is the man who admits the seed into the heart, but is so filled with other things that he does not give to divine truth that hospitality that it deserves and demands. The result is not difficult to understand for where the cares, or the pleasures, or the riches of this world, either separately or in company, occupy the

mind and heart, no large harvest of divine grace need be looked for. This is a very elementary truth, and the difficulty is not to feel its force, but to regulate the life by it.

There is still another type of bad listener—the procrastinating hearer. In all our congregations there are perhaps every Sunday listeners of this kind. Their conscience has been touched, their judgement has been convinced, their feelings have been stirred, and their wills have received a powerful impulse, but, like Felix, they say, "Go thy way for this time." If all the worshippers in our churches this winter were to act upon what they see to be the truth, the looked for revival would not be long in coming.

We therefore plead for a revival of the art of good listening.—The West minister.

Forgiveness.

Peter once came to the Lord and said, "Lord how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?" Doubtless he thought he was exceedingly charitable, for the Rabbis said that they might forgive an enemy three times, but not the fourth. "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven." This means, there should be no limit to our forgiveness.

And then follows the forcible parable of the wicked servant. He had been forgiven a debt of ten thousand talents—about ten million dollars—and was unwilling to forgive a fellow-servant a small debt of one hundred pence—about twenty-five dollars. "And his Lord was wrath, and delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due unto him." No wonder the apostles exclaimed, "Increased our faith."

Dr. Duff was once reading to a band of Hindu youth from the sermon on the mount, "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you," and one of them exclaimed, "How beautiful! How divine! This is truth. Love your enemies; love your enemies." And for weeks he repeated these Heaven-born words. At last the Spirit revealed to him God's forgiveness. He embraced it, and abandoned his false gods and became a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

Luther was once very bitter against Calvin and maligned him most grievously. Calvin only replied, "Well let Luther take me and call me devil a thousand times, yet I will love him and acknowledge him as a precious servant of God."

A Christian girl in South America was seized by a savage enemy of her father, who cut off both her hands, and said, "I have had my revenge." Many years passed away, and one day there came to her father's door a poor man asking alms. The girl recognized him as the one who had so cruelly treated her. She ordered the servant to give him food, and sat down and watched him with pity. When through with his meal, she dropped the covering that had hid her handless wrists from view and held them up, exclaiming in tender love, "I have had my revenge." That was the very spirit of Christ, which led him to pray on the Cross in the very presence of His enemies, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

That was the spirit of the Christian martyr, who prayed in the midst of his sufferings at the hands of his cruel murderers, "Lord lay not this sin to their charge." That is the spirit that God desires to give to everyone of his children. This is the mark of the highest Christian life. This brings the greatest happiness to its possessor, and greatest blessing to loved ones and to the world. It may not always be possible to win the enemy but it is always possible to have personal victory. We are only commanded, "As much as in you lies, live peaceably with all men."—Christian Intelligencer.

The World's Great Need.

The world's great need today is to see Jesus. It needs to see Him in His power to save from sin. It needs to see Him in the greatness of His love and in the perpetuity of His human sympathy. How can the Church best bring the world to see Jesus in all these particulars? The Church needs to search diligently for a satisfactory answer to this question. It is a question which cannot be lightly set aside. The Church was established to meet and answer this question. How can the world be made to see Jesus and, seeing Him, be saved by Him? There is but one answer that can be given to the question, and that is, through the transfiguration of Church members. In this transfiguration the world will see Jesus as He wants to see the world Himself at the present time.

This is the way He intended the world to see and be attracted to Himself, until such time as He shall be revealed in the fullness of His glory.

The secret of St. Paul's wonderful influence in the world down through all the centuries is to be found in the fact that he became a transfigured, or transformed, man. In his transfiguration the glory of God burst on the world as it has not in any other during all the years that have passed since he laid down his life for Christ's sake. He drew men to Christ, not because of any personal attraction, but because men saw Christ in him the hope of glory. His transfiguration began at his conversion, and ended on earth, at his martyrdom. Moreover, Paul did not think his case a peculiar one. Whereto he had attained he thought it possible for all believers to attain. And so he wrote: "But we all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." In this transfiguration of the Church's members lies her power to draw the world upward into the righteousness of God.—The Rev. A. J. Hens.

Pass On, Pass On.

"In nine cases out of ten, the better course is, if a man cheats you cease to deal with him; if he is abusive, quit his company; and if he slanders you, take care to live so that nobody will believe him. No matter who he is or how he misuses you, the wisest way is to let him alone; for there is nothing better than this cool, calm, quiet way of dealing with the wrongs we meet with. Lies unchased will die; fires unfanned will burn out; and quarrels neglected become as dull as the crater of an extinct volcano."

If you resist evil, and claim your rights, and fight to have justice done you may keep yourself in a perpetual broil, lose much, and gain nothing by the operation. Pass on, and get out of the dust; leave lies, quarrels, and jangles behind you. Most people, when they hear you talked about, would like to know what you think about the stories. If you stop to bandy words and fight battles, they will conclude you think it a serious matter. If you go about your business they will conclude that if you do not notice it, there is no reason why they should. Let your soul rest secure in innocence, and not in hypocrisy, in real trust in God, and not in affected indifference to the opinions of men, and you can walk calmly and safely through a world of turbulence and strife, not surprised at trials, not disconcerted at wrongs, but full of faith, and hope, and love, and joy, and peace. And though fiery trials may assail you, and you may feel the strike and sting of lying tongues, yet if you fly to God for rest and refuge, he will protect, defend, deliver, and save.—Selected.

Silence About Ourselves.

Think as little as possible about any good in yourself; turn your eyes resolutely from any view of your requirements, your influence, your plans your success, your following—above all speak as little as possible about yourself. The inordinateness of our self-love makes speech about ourselves like the putting of a lighted torch to the dry wood which has been laid in order for burning. Nothing but duty should open our lips upon this dangerous theme, except it be in humble confession of our sinfulness before God.

Again, be specially on the watch against those little tricks by which a vain man seeks to bring round the conversation to himself, and gain the praise or notice which his thirsty ears drink in so greedily. Even if praise comes unsought, it is well, while men are uttering it, to guard yourself by thinking of some secret cause for humbling yourself inwardly to God, thinking unto what these pleasant accents would be changed if all that is known to God, and even to yourself, stood revealed to you.

Place yourself often beneath the Cross of Calvary; see that light of love and sorrow; hear those words of wonder; look at the Eternal Son humbling himself there for you, and ask yourself, as you gaze fixedly on him, whether he whose only hope is in that Cross of absolute self-sacrifice and self-abasement, can dare to cherish in himself one self-complacent action. Let the Master's words ring ever in your ears, "How can ye believe who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" Bishop Wilberforce.

It is easier to go a mile to hear a sermon, than to spend one-quarter of an hour in meeting one's own selfishness. Philip Henry

A Homiletic Hint.

The autobiography of the recently deceased Bishop Whipple has this helpful hint for young ministers. He profited by it, and others in this day may find it suggestive. He says:

Like most young clergymen I was over-confident of my theological attainments and the soundness of my philosophy. Rev. Dr. George Leeds, my neighbor in Grace church, Utica, had asked me to preach for him. I selected the sermon which I considered my best. The following day I met Judge Beardsley, who had known me from childhood, and, lying his hand upon my shoulder, as I supposed to commend my eloquence of the preceding day, he said: "Henry, no matter how long you live, never preach that sermon again. I know more philosophy than you have learned. You must not try to preach to the Judge, but to the tempted, sinful man. Tell him of the love of Jesus Christ, and you will help him."

My aunt, Mrs. George Whipple, a niece of Daniel Webster, told me that when Mr. Webster was visiting in the country he attended the church morning and evening. A fellow Senator said to him: "Mr. Webster, I am surprised that you go twice on Sunday to hear a plain country preacher, when you pay little attention to far abler sermons in Washington."

"In Washington," Mr. Webster, replied, "They preach to Daniel Webster, the statesman, but this man has been telling Daniel Webster, the sinner, of Jesus of Nazareth, and it has been helping him."

These taught me that God's message in Jesus Christ is to the heart.—Christian Observer.

Personal Visitation.

Pastoral visitation, if we may judge from what we see and hear, is going largely out of fashion in very many congregations. If this is the case it is no wonder that there is a laxity of attendance upon Church services and a decline in Church life. If the pastor does not keep in touch with his people in their homes and make his influence felt among young and old, through association with them outside of the pulpit, he will lose to a large degree, his power over them as a preacher, and miss many an opportunity for attaching them personally to him, for prompting them to duty and for keeping them in line with Christian agencies. Even if he is not able to pray with them and to religiously talk with them upon every visitation, yet his social calls are not without their effect, and often do more good in gaining a hold upon their hearts and consciences than he is aware of at the time. The more they know and love him, the greater power has his preaching over them, and the more they like to come and hear him. It is not enough to visit them when sick or to attend the funerals of their dead; a knowledge of their wants is necessary, that he may adequately instruct and benefit them, and this is best secured through personal intercourse in the home.—The Presbyterian.

Among the many good stories told of the new Bishop of London is the following:

"One day, in his beloved East End, he noticed a dirty little urchin playing beside the gutter. 'Hallo, my little man,' said the Bishop, who is a great lover of children, 'what are you doing there?' 'Making a kerfreedal,' was the reply. 'A cathedral,' exclaimed his lordship, 'but where's the Bishop?' Dr. Ingrams sense of humor, always keen, was quite overcome, when the small boy answered, 'Please, sir, I ain't got dirt enough to make a Bishop!'"

Easing The Chest.

It is the cold on the chest that scares people and makes them sick and sore. The cough that accompanies the chest cold is racking. When the cold is a hard one and the cough correspondingly severe, every coughing spell strains the whole system. We feel sure that if we could only stop coughing for a day or so we could get over the cold, but we try everything we know of or can hear of in the shape of medicine. We take big doses of quinine until the head buzzes and roars; we try to sweat it out; we take big draughts of whiskey, but the thing that has its grip on the chest hangs on, and won't be shaken loose.

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It Pays to Be Kind.

A Texas farm paper says: "Recently a daryman concluded to test the value of noise and confusion among his cows. He took a hired man and a dog and entered the cow lot and began to raise a great commotion that scared the cows, but none were bitten by the dog or struck with the sticks, the two men carried. Then the dog was turned out, the sticks laid away and the cows milked; but the full significance of the affair was brought out by the Babcock test, which showed a falling off of 40 per. cent. of butter fat. The test was entirely satisfactory; there was no confusion in that cow lot with the owner's sanction."—New York Witness.

Prayer has divided seas, rolled up flowing rivers, made fiery rocks gush forth into fountains, quenched flames of fire, muzzled lions, disarmed vipers marshaled the stars against the wicked, stopped the course of the moon, arrested the sun in its rapid course, burst open iron gates, recalled souls from eternity, conquered the strongest devils, commanded legions of angels down from heaven. Prayer has bridled and chained the raging passions of men, and routed and destroyed vast armies of proud, daring atheists. Prayer has brought one man from the bottom of the sea, delivered others from the fiery furnace, and carried another in a chariot of fire to heaven.—Ryland.

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