

The Pulpit.

A WORD FOR THE HOUR.

BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

It is not, after all, a thing to be wondered at that men should reject the great truths of revelation. These truths are spiritual, and the carnal mind has no capacity for receiving them; they are holy, and are never likely to please ungodly hearts; and, besides, they are humbling to the creature, and give all glory to God, and hence proud flesh is at drawn daggers with them. If the unregenerate world received the gospel with favor, it would cast great doubt upon the divine nature of the doctrine; but when the un-renewed heart rejects it with disdain, it does, in its own blind way, acknowledge that the teaching is not of man, neither by man. If the gospel were of the world, the world would love its own; but because it is of God, therefore the world rejects it. Have we not been too much staggered by the fact that the direction of modern thought is against evangelical truth? Was not ancient thought the same? Is not that text always true, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways," saith the Lord?

The fact is, that it is a miracle of grace when any man receives the truth in the love and power of it. No man so receives it as the bare result of reason and argument. As with Peter, so it is with all to whom the Lord is made known: the man is blessed, for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto him. Here and there men have avowed the gospel of grace as their chosen creed, and yet have never realized the life which should ever grow out of it; but these are comparatively few; the bulk of mankind, in forsaking Jesus as the life, also leave him as the way and the truth. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who know not the power of God and the wisdom of God therein. It is not a wonder that men are unbelievers, the marvel is that any man should believe. Wherever we see even a grain of faith, we may exclaim, "This is the finger of God." Nothing is a clearer testimony to the omnipotence of the Spirit of God than the life, and work, and triumph of faith in any man, seeing that by nature man cannot discern the truth, and is full of hatred to it, even when it is in a measure perceived. The gospel cannot even be preserved among men, much less gain large influence over them, except by a continuous display of almighty energy. Only those believe its report to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed.

Cast, therefore, upon the power of the Holy Ghost, it becomes us to recognize his glorious might, to render him the homage due unto his name, and to act in practical dependence upon him. Our reliance is not upon the truth itself; for light alone cannot cause the blind to see. Much less may we depend upon attractive speech, cogent argument, or profound learning. These are legitimate forces, but they must not be exalted into the place of the divine Spirit. The call was none the better for being made of gold; the highest mental powers will be mere idols if we trust in them. As to attempting to spread the Redeemer's kingdom by amusements, by the arts and sciences, by music and sensuous display, let this be far from us. The Holy Ghost must be met on his own ground; and we fear that very much of the work which is done by the church at this present moment is not upon a plane sufficiently elevated to be recognized by the Holy Ghost. It is not ours to judge; but is it not so? If all the power to create faith must come of the Holy Spirit, those who would propagate truth must be careful to go to work in his way. If a boat is to be propelled by wind, it must be provided with sails, and these must be so arranged as to catch the breeze; this is a parable of how work done for the Lord Jesus must be so arranged as leave room and opportunity for the Holy Ghost. Is it so in our varied ministries, in the pulpit, the school, the mission-hall, etc.? Do we allow of the Holy Spirit's free action, or do we repress the holy energies which would break loose here and there if they were not restrained?

Our religion is either supernatural or it is an imposture; and it must be spread by supernatural means or not at all. Every advance that is made by Christianity, other than that which comes distinctly from the Holy Ghost, is a step backward. The enlightened reader of church history will not need to look long before he will perceive that this is the case. Human wisdom has marred the vessel of truth upon the wheel, or it has broken it after it has come forth from the furnace. Its meddlings are always mischievous; it is the enemy of faith and the foe of stability. When the Lord Jesus is made of God unto wisdom, and when the Spirit of the

Lord transforms us into little children, then we become truly wise and "cultured" in a real sense; but all else in the things of God is mere puffing up, which leads only to increased pride and vanity. We are all apt to make that "much haste" which is ill-speed unless experience has weaned us therefrom. If we wrought only in the Spirit and by the Spirit, we might seem to do less, but we should actually do more. Let us henceforth work as Moses and Aaron did: let us arm ourselves with the rod of God. If we go forth as mere men, we may do man's work and reap man's failure; but if we desire to see the truth of God prosper, we must do all in the name of the Lord, looking for divine power to rest upon us, that we may be workers together with God.

An abiding source of consolation in these evil days is to be found in the fact that the Holy Spirit is working in the same manner as ever. He produces in ten thousand cases the same results as in the best periods of history. A conversion to-day bears all the marks which authenticated a conversion five hundred years ago; there is the same repentance, self-loathing and fear of wrath; followed by the same faith, and hope, and deliverance from the dominion of evil. It matters not how much the wise men of this world deride the gospel of our Lord Jesus, it still arouses the careless, guides the despondent, renews the guilty, and sanctifies the believing. We see for ourselves, daily, that the arm of the Lord is not shortened that he cannot save. Among men brought up in the malarious atmosphere of skepticism, the Eternal Spirit yet works his will, even though the concessions of philosophical theology and the arguments of literary culture have left them hardened in unbelief. The wooden swords of human force are broken, but the true Jerusalem blade still cuts through bone and marrow. The gospel is not declared in vain whenever it is simply stated and allowed to work its own way, unencumbered with human help.

To our great delight we find the Holy Spirit bearing witness to the same truths as ever. In listening to the experiences of the newly regenerated, we never find a heart impressed and led to repentance by a novel invention, but always by the old truth. In simple, unsophisticated language, those who are convinced of sin speak of it in the same terms as their fathers used before them. Faith in the Lord Jesus fixes itself still upon the atoning blood and the substitutionary sacrifice, just as it used to do a hundred years ago. If John Newton were to write another Cardiphonia, he would find gracious hearts feeding on the self-same verities as in his own day, and their voices of need or of satisfaction would be precisely the same. We find persons still troubled about predestination and election, even though these old-fashioned truths have long ago been ignored by the mass of public teachers. These doctrines have in ages past stirred up the nests of many and driven them out of themselves to Jesus, and, despite all the derision poured on them, they arouse the thoughtful still. We meet with troubled consciences which find instant and stable peace upon hearing of the great sacrifice for sin, and that notwithstanding that this essential gospel verity is in so many places caricatured and ridiculed. The fact is, that the Holy Ghost has not changed the views of things, nor has he set his seal to modern thought, nor withdrawn it from the doctrine of the cross. From day to day we see "the signs following," which are the divine attestation of revealed truth. Sinners are reclaimed, the despairing are relieved, saints are fed, and heroism is evoked, by the preaching of that one gospel which Jesus taught and Paul proclaimed.

While this is the case, what means this clamor for advanced thought? Can there be an advance upon a revelation which is complete? Is there anything better than Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever? Are there surer words of testimony than those given to prophets and apostles, or than that which God hath given us by his own Son? See what dearth and death follow the giving up of the simple teachings of Scripture! See how the earnest ministry of reconciliation is owned of God's Spirit! No man having drunk the old wine straightway desireth new, for he saith, "The old is better."

In patience let us possess our souls, resting not in talent and learning and influence for the progress of the gospel, but in the Holy Spirit alone. He can raise up leaders of eminence if other Pauls are needed. He can find learned pens if other Augustines are required. He never fails, nor even pauses, for lack of instruments. The character of the age is no impediment to his working. He has seen a thousand philosophies rise and fall, but his light shines on forever,

and in that light the nations shall yet walk, rejoicing in the truth. Wherefore, the banner is set up, and no man hangeth down either hand or head.—*Sword and Trowel.*

REVIVALS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES.

At this season of the year revival efforts are being made throughout the Church, and an increased degree of responsibility rests upon each member. The command of Christ, "Feed my lambs," is as binding to-day as at the time of its announcement. Prompt obedience should be the order of the day, and brings the only acquittal.

1. Be sure the professed converts are truly converted. Entirely too much superficial work is done. A change of purpose is often substituted for a change of heart. Profession without possession is mere pretense, and empty hypocrisy. "Repent and be converted," was the apostolic injunction, and neither the plan of salvation, nor the means of procuring it have been modified. Thorough evangelical conversion, accompanied with an unmistakable evidence of the same stamped on the consciousness of our being, is the end of the law for regeneration. Short of this no one should rest content with it.

2. The next important concern is to keep them saved. Often an extraordinary effort is made to bring souls to Christ, and then but little interest is manifested in their welfare. Perhaps they are men and women, and we forget that adults and even aged people may be babes in Jesus Christ. It is not age, but the length of time they have been saved, and the degree of progress they have made that determines the amount of care they need. We, as religious guardians over the children in God's family, should manifest an interest in their welfare akin to that of a mother in her babe.

3. "Go into my vineyard and work," is the Master's direction. The command must be obeyed or the position lost. One of the most effective ways to backslide is to be inactive in the presence of duty. Young converts are often excused on the ground that they are too weak, or lack qualifications, but we should remember that strength and qualification are largely the result of action.

Indolence dwarfs, action develops. In view of these facts give them something to do at once. To wait a while is a mistake. The ardor of the first love abates, and then it is a difficult matter to take up the cross, and in many instances they fail. Prompt action will perpetuate and develop their religious experience, qualifying them for usefulness, thus avoiding semi-religious, dead-headism, and backsliding.

A brother once said in his experience that he desired a place to work in the vineyard, if it should be in a fence corner. It may be necessary to keep the nooks and corners clean, but the limited desire manifested an indolent disposition. Keep young converts out of the fence corners; they afford too many inducements for laziness and temptation.

It is said that nature's laws abhor a vacuum. Extreme heat in local districts rarefies the atmosphere and denser portions of air from adjacent localities rush in, producing cyclones and tornadoes. It is equally true that the laws of our being abhor a vacuum. When God cleanses the sinner's heart evil dispositions and actions are removed, the heart has been evacuated, and must be filled with good motives, and the saved man must begin to act for God, pure motives and deeds filling the heart to the exclusion of evil, or the cyclones or tornadoes of sin will rush in and the last state of the man will be worse than the first. Let us perpetuate our concern for their welfare for all time to come, remembering that we are our brother's keeper.—*Rev. F. W. Bailett.*

TWO CHEERFUL GIVERS.

"God loveth a cheerful giver."—2 Cor. ix. 7.

An aged widow who earned a scanty livelihood by means of her needle, came home from church one Sunday morning in a very indignant frame of mind after hearing the preacher say that in the whole congregation there was no one so poor but they might show their love to the Saviour by giving something to the extension of his kingdom in the world. It had never occurred to her that she ought to give anything for the advancement of the kingdom of God. That, she thought, was the business of rich folks, but how could the Lord require of such a poor woman as herself to give of what she so much needed?

"The pastor may say what he likes," he does not know how poor I am," she repeated to herself. During the watches of the night this sermon came back to her mind and again caused her extreme irritation. Her thoughts accused and excused her by turns, until it occurred to her to lay the whole matter before the Lord. Then it seemed to her that she heard this answer: "If

thou canst not do as others do, give as a little child." From that moment she determined to act on this advice. A little child gives a penny, so when she bought a loaf of bread, a little coffee, or some other necessary provision and received a cent or two in change, she put them aside "for the Lord Jesus." She accomplished this small sacrifice with simplicity and a cheerful heart, and God loves those who give thus. The old woman soon experienced it. Formerly she was always in trouble, but from that time she had no more cause for anxiety. Until then she was obliged, whenever the term came for the payment of her rent, to borrow money to meet it. Now she had always the wherewith to pay. The blessing of God rested so visibly on her work, that, instead of being in constant anxiety about her daily bread, her heart overflowed with contentment and gratitude, and it was with an ever-increasing pleasure that she added one penny so the other. After a short time she was able to bring three dollars to her pastor. Three months later she brought the same amount again. In short, in the space of one year she gave, out of her extreme poverty, twenty-one dollars to the Lord Jesus, whom she served with the faith and simplicity of a child.

The other giver was a rich merchant, whom the spirit of God had taught to understand that giving to the Lord, out of his abundance, and so to speak, the crumbs from his table, was not giving really. "I will not offer sacrifices unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing," he exclaimed with David, and from that moment he watched carefully over his expenditure. As soon as he was on the point of indulging in some needless expense, he wrote down the amount in his account-book, but put this money into a box; sometimes it was a piece of silver, sometimes a piece of gold, sometimes small coin. He made these sacrifices in all simplicity, and could say, "The love of Christ constrained me." Nobody, except his wife, was aware of this. When his box became full, he made a parcel of its contents, and sent it sometimes to a needy family, sometimes to the wife of a working man, who was nursing her sick husband, sometimes to the treasurer of a missionary society. Those who received these parcels did not know whence they came, but the angels knew it, and these gifts will surely be found inscribed in the book of which St. John speaks when he says: "And the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

It all the poor disciples of the Lord acted as did this widow, and the rich ones, as that merchant, would not all the treasures of the Christian church be like that "river of God," which we read of in the sixty-fifth Psalm and which "is full of water"? Will not those who read this account of facts, listen to the voice of the Lord, saying to them: "Go thou and do likewise?"—*Translated from a Swiss Journal.*

PULPIT DON'TS.

Don't preach more than thirty minutes.

Don't think to be immortal by being eternal.

Don't try to be eloquent; only try to be simple.

Don't preach your own doubts or the doubts of others. Your people have doubts enough of their own, and can always pick up more.

Don't raise the devil in the pulpit unless you are very sure you can lay him.

Don't preach science; not even the science of theology. Your pulpit is not a lecture platform, nor your church a classroom.

Don't try to be someone else. There is only one person worth imitating; and the way to imitate is by living in Him.

Don't substitute gush for good sense, rhapsody for reason, and asseration for argument. The Americans are a strong people, and they need a meat diet.

Don't mistake noise in a sermon for eloquence, or noise in a prayer for devotion.

Don't use the long prayer to tell your congregation the news of the week, or the Lord the latest discoveries in theology.

Don't gesture with malice aforethought.

Don't try to save the truth; the truth can take care of itself; save men.

Don't turn your pulpit into a stump. If you want to help your party, find a stump outside.

Don't ask the centre pews what you may preach; ask the New Testament.

Don't try to be prudent; only try to be brave. Even Paul begged his friends to pray for him that he might speak boldly as he ought to speak.

Don't imagine that you are the Board of Deacons, the Board of Trustees, the Church Meeting, and the Society; you are only the pastor.

Don't forget that it always takes two to perpetuate a scandal; one to listen as well as one to speak.

Don't forget that it takes two to make a quarrel, and—

Don't be one of the two.—*Christian Union.*

A SHORT SERMON—HOW TO BUILD A CHURCH.

TEXT—"Rise and build." I. Encourage your minister.

How? 1. Attend every church service and each prayer-meeting.

2. Avoid criticism; find no fault; pray much.

3. Co-operate in revival services; call on him socially.

4. Sympathize with him; pay him promptly.

II. Encourage your fellow-members. How?

1. Speak lovingly and hopefully to them.

2. Avoid all contentions; pour oil upon troubles.

3. Know no party; utter no complaint.

4. Distrust no one; be a loving disciple.

III. Encourage the community.

1. By always speaking well of church and community.

2. By never retailing the infirmities of your brethren.

3. By inviting and inducing them to come to church.

4. By showing yourself pleased when they attend service.

Application: Follow these rules strictly, and there will result—1. Personal growth in grace; 2. Increase in good fellowship; 3. A revival of God's work.

DENYING CHRIST.

What Christian would deny Christ? Peter said he would not; but he did. Oh! how many of us practically deny him. Bishop Heber once said: "It is a fatal mistake to suppose that there can be no apostasy from Christ where we are not absolutely called on to deny his name, or to burn incense to an idol. We deny our Lord whenever, like Demas, we, through love of this present world, forsake the course of duty which Christ has plainly pointed out to us. We deny our Lord whenever we lend the sanction of our countenance, our praises, or even our silence, to measures or opinions which may be popular and fashionable, but which we ourselves believe to be sinful in themselves, or tending to sin. We deny our Lord whenever we forsake a good man in affliction, and refuse to give countenance, encouragement and support to those who, for God's sake and for the faithful discharge of their duty, are exposed to persecutions and slander."

THE HUMBLE EXALTED.

God chooses the humblest instruments. He passes by the tempests, and waters the fields and gardens with his imperceptible dew. He passes by the great elephant, and bestows the hues of sapphire and amethyst upon the tiny humming-bird. He passes by the lofty pine and huge elm tree, and lavishes blossoms and perfume on the violet. All history teaches the same truth. Moses was the son of a poor Levite; Gideon was a threshing boy; David was a shepherd-boy; Amos was a herdsman; the apostles were ignorant and unlearned; Zwingli was a shepherd; Melancthon, the great theologian of the Reformation, was an armorer; Luther was the child of a poor miner; Fuller was a farm servant; Carey, the originator of the plan of translating the Bible into the language of the millions of Hindustan, was a shoemaker; Morrison, who translated the Bible into the Chinese language was a last-maker; Dr. Milne was a herd-boy; Adam Clarke was the son of Irish cottagers; John Foster was a weaver; Jay, of Bath, was a herdsman.—*Selected.*

A clergyman told us lately of a poor invalid, almost entirely paralyzed, who is in very truth, though by the world unseen, doing immortal work. He can use his lips, and he holds a brush in his mouth, and thus paints texts from the Word of Life that go abroad with their message of healing, winged by the yearning love of the artist who must do something for God. When the fruit sown in weakness shall be garnered in power, the Lord who is very pitiful will assuredly reveal blessings from these feeble efforts to abide for all eternity. "I wish I could do more," we say sometimes, half fretfully, forgetting that if all other power be denied we can at least tender to God a patient heart. Yet it is wonderful what power for service he mercifully leaves even with the least among us. We have in our mind the room of a private house which may be said to be truly consecrated to the Lord, and where strong men, perhaps above joining regular "classes" for Bible instruction, throng regularly to be told by a weak woman of the way of eternal life. The Master has need even of the feeblest.

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