

## A POOR MAN'S PLEA.

"I sought the Lord, and me He heard,  
And saved me out of all my fears,  
Jack Williams listened to that Word—  
His captain read it—with cold sneers.

"Ah, yes! it was an easy thing,  
He suffered in an undertone,  
For him to seek and find, a king  
So rich and grand upon his throne.

"But had he been a man like me,  
So meekly sad, so poorly fed,  
With wife and children o'er the sea  
Pining each day for lack of bread,

"He would have found a thorny way  
For his proud, haughty feet to tread,  
He would have found it hard to pray,  
And heavenward turn his weary head."

But to his heart these words were,  
"This poor man cried, the Lord heard  
him, and saved him." That checked his wild  
curses.  
His fingers clutched his torn hat's brim.

The reader spoke, "When tending flocks  
Was David saved, a shepherd lad,  
While 'mid the lonely crags and rocks,  
When he no gold or kingdom had."

"This poor man cried 'I like that last,'  
The reader said, with smile of joy,  
"For I found God before the mast,  
A poor and ignorant sailor boy."

Jack Williams thought, with trembling lip,  
Of long years wasted, while he said,  
"When I am captain of a ship,  
When mine at home are clothed and fed,

"I'll seek my God." "This poor man  
cried,"  
He thought that o'er—it made him feel  
He needed God while tossed and tried,  
"Was God would aid him at the wheel."

Safe home from India comes the bark—  
The prayer is heard, God's help is won,  
And, happy as the merry lark,  
The sailor greets his wife and son.

## JOY IN HEAVEN OVER ONE SOUL.

It has come to us with some freshness of late, how dear souls are to God. We are in the habit of measuring the Divine love for sinners by the sacrifice which came to its crest on the cross. No doubt that is the true measure of the Divine love and the place rightly to estimate the value of a human soul in God's sight. Nevertheless when we read that there is "joy in Heaven over one soul that repenteth," we get a new apprehension of how dear souls must be to God. We have known some pastors (and have had the experience ourselves not seldom) after a meeting in which special care and effort had been made to bring men to decision, to turn away discouraged and cast down because only one soul came forward to confess Christ as Saviour and Lord. But if the repentance of that one soul was the occasion of joy in Heaven, not among the angels, but "in presence of" the angels—joy in the very heart of God made manifest even in presence of angels—how ought we to rejoice over the conversion of souls—even over one soul.

We remember that Jesus got his disciples one by one; that he preached his most famous discourses to congregations of one; namely, to Nathaniel, to Nicodemus, and to the woman of Samaria. It was to one leper that he spoke a saving word; to one sinful woman that he declared forgiveness and life. One by one he gathered them. It was for one soul—the leper—that Philip was taken away from the great crowds in Samaria and sent down, by the way of the desert, to preach Jesus. Let us not underrate the value of one soul. Surely when we were converted we were but one. That was a great day to us; a great joy to our loved ones, who had been longing and watching and praying for us. It was a great joy to God, who had given his Son to die for us, as really and as wholly as if we had been the only soul which had sinned and fallen away from him. Saul of Tarsus was but one soul; and yet he was dear enough to God to warrant our Lord Jesus coming from Heaven to the earth, in person, to win him to himself.

The tendency in our day is to seek after great things and large, immediate and aggregated results. We want to report accessions by hundreds and thousands, and are impatient of what has been called "hand-picking" for souls. It is true that the first great gatherings were by the hundreds; but after that, we judge, the work of saving men went on more after the fashion of winning them one by one.

If once we get an appreciation of the value of a single soul and remember that the conversion of one soul will set all Heaven on fire with gladness, then, we think, there will be more individual workers for souls among the churches, and less disposition to depend on special seasons and special efforts. The pastor will not be relied on so much as the only authorized winner of souls; special seasons will not be waited for so long as the only means of winning men and women to Christ; and great combinations of religious forces will not be regarded as so essentially necessary for the success of the gospel with the unsaved. If we will, each one of us, ministers and laymen, every day call to mind

that by winning one soul to Christ we may cause him and the Father great joy, we will not wait for great combinations, and special seasons, but will go at once, and in dead earnest, to work to win a soul, and thus help fulfil our Saviour's joy.

We have great admiration for the old pastor's application of the worth of one soul, to whom a committee of the church went with a recommendation that he resign his charge, on the ground that, during the twenty years of his ministry among them, there was certain knowledge of but one soul who had been converted under his preaching. "Has there been one?" asked the good man, with surprised delight. "Yes, one," was the reply. "Then glory be to God! I will pluck up heart and courage. I will not resign, but by the grace of God give myself, with renewed consecration, for another twenty years of service." Carey was in India twenty years before his heart, and the whole Church of God was thrilled by the news of the conversion of one heathen soul to Christ. What a vast army that one soul was the prophetic forerunner of.

What if throughout the whole Church each real Christian, filled with a sense of the value of one soul, and stimulated with the thought of the joy in Heaven over the conversion of that one soul, should give himself to the heavenly task of winning just one soul to Christ during the remaining months of this year? Who can measure the joy that such an aggregate of saved souls would give occasion for, both in Heaven and on earth? For there is also always great joy on earth as there was in Samaria, when sinners believed Philip's preaching Jesus Christ.

Shall we not each one of us accept the delightful task and privileged responsibility of putting at least one cup of joy to our Saviour's lips before we give ourselves up to vacation, rest and recuperation?—Independent.

## BEGIN WORK AT HOME.

It is alike the dictate of nature and of revelation that Christian influence and Christian effort should begin at home. Beams of spiritual light should radiate throughout all the circles of earthly relationship, but they should be warmest and brightest at those points which are nearest to the centre of affection and personal influence. It is a mistaken charity which goes groping, torch in hand, through the dark places of the earth in order to dispel the gloom, while it neglects to kindle the fire or light the lamps in the dwelling. "Beginning at Jerusalem" was the Saviour's commission to his disciples, and the spirit of that command falls upon every Christian to-day. Begin in your own family to preach the Gospel and bring your brother or sister or child or intimate friend to Jesus. If you do your work faithfully in this sphere, the Lord will open new doors to usefulness, and widen the circle of your influence for good.

There is reason to doubt the practical piety of those who are indifferent to the state of religion in their own hearts, in their own families, in their own churches, in their own neighborhoods. We cannot do much for China—let us do all that we can—but we may do a great work for our own town, for our own church, for our own immediate relatives. Would any one prove his zeal for the Master, let him go to that young man, his townsman or neighbor, who is in trouble in these days of scanty employment, and help or encourage him. Then let him tell of the friend who never forsakes those who trust in him, and lead the young man to Jesus as Andrew led Peter.

Let the father call his children about him upon the Sabbath, and tell them how Jesus loves the lambs of the flock and delights to lead them in green pastures and beside the still waters, and pray with them and read to them the story of their Saviour, dwelling with simple commentary upon those tender passages which will awaken their sympathy and love to Christ. Some of us can remember such parental teachings from those who are now "forever with the Lord;" and we are able to affirm that no memories are so precious, and no words were ever more potent. The parent who does this will never regret the relinquishment of his own ease or sleep that his little ones may be led to the Saviour and become his disciples.

Go to the sick room and comfort the distressed relatives, and pray with your afflicted and suffering friend, and soothe his pain by your words of sympathy and Christian love. Speak to that brother or companion, whom a false pride has kept you from addressing, about the way of salvation, and perhaps you will open a heart which was full of bursting and longed for an outlet. These earthly relationships afford peculiar opportunities for the discharge of religious duties, and yet no opportunities are so much neglected. The Christian often speaks more freely in the general exhorta-

tion at a meeting for prayer than he does to the members of his own family circle. He is more ready with words of counsel and urgent remonstrance to the abandoned and degraded than to his own children, who are treading the first steps in the same downward track. There is need of change, of reform in this matter. God has constituted the varied relationships of human life for the purpose of promoting the moral and religious good of man. All the ways in which men are necessarily thrown together in the pursuit of the things of this life may, without interfering with this design, be made opportunities to influence each other for eternal good. Every man is surrounded by an atmosphere of influence, in which whosever breathes inhales health or poison; so that we cannot, even if we would, cease from influencing, for good or evil, those with whom we come in contact. Every opportunity and power should be conscientiously employed for good. But how many families, meeting daily, possessing common interests, extending mutual influence, have little thought of the opportunities thus given to lead each other to Jesus and salvation.

We cannot look to strangers and the sons of strangers to build up our spiritual Zion, we must begin our work where we have the greatest influence. Christian parents must bring their children to Jesus; brothers and sisters must lead one another to the Saviour; friends must labor and pray for the souls of those whom they most tenderly love. If every member of the church will do his duty faithfully by religious conversation and example in his own family; if he will impress the instructions and exhortations and warnings of the gospel upon those who are within the private circle of his influence; if he will feel his obligations in this matter and faithfully discharge them, not leaving the work to others, not resting satisfied with anything short of the salvation of those who are near and dear to him, a work of revival and blessing will begin which will not stop within narrow limits, but spread in its beneficent and sanctifying effects through large and extended districts, even as the work begun at Jerusalem has so encircled the globe.—Observer.

## CHURCH-GOING IN OLD TIMES.

A correspondent of a western paper who lived in Massachusetts in his boyhood writes as follows of going to church in the old days:

"The country church was a square building, with no porch or steeple, opening directly from the space on which it fronted. It was unadorned without and unpainted within, except the pulpit and the front of the gallery, seen from below. The pulpit itself was a box-like inclosure, in which the minister shut himself, after climbing eight or ten steps. The pulpit seat was a plank bench along the wall, long enough to seat three persons. Suspended over the pulpit was a huge dome-like structure, called the sounding-board. This was often the subject of my Sunday meditation: How could the minister get out if this should fall and imprison him in his pulpit? There was no porch nor any protection at the doors, these opening directly from the open air on the aisles. The house was divided into square pews with seats on their four sides; except the space taken up by the doors, so that some of the hearers sat with their faces, some with their sides, and some with their backs to the speaker. Usually two or more families occupied each of the pews.

"At that time, to a certain extent, church and state were united. Every taxpayer was obliged to pay a yearly tax for the support of the gospel. This tax was assessed the same way and collected by the same officer as any other town tax, as school or highway. This money thus collected, it is no objection to make by the taxpayers, was for the benefit of the first chapel established in the town, whatever its denomination. As most of the first churches were Congregational, that denomination was practically the state church. If there was any other church in the town, the taxpayer could designate in prescribed legal way, that he desired his tax to go to the benefit of that church, whatever denomination, and to that church his payment went. But he must pay the tax for the support of the gospel, whether he was Jew or infidel, Chinese or saloon-keeper. All this was abolished in 1833 by the Massachusetts legislature. There was only one church in our town, and consequently all the tax went to that church. All the business now given to the trustees of our churches was done in town meeting. The town was the trustee. It voted and paid the minister's salary. Our minister had \$400 a year, and some parsonages, among them thirty cords of wood. He usually picked out the richest girl in town and married her, and had the homestead, and when his father-in-law died he

usually left him a cider-mill and a distillery. With the church the town settled and dismissed the minister's salary. Among its other functions it annually appointed a seating committee, whose duty it was to reseat the congregation in the church. The duty was usually performed by putting families of like age and dignity together, grouping the older about the center and near the pulpit, the younger and less honorable further away. This seating applied only to heads of families. All the other members of the families, except young children under ten or twelve years, were to sit in the gallery. The gallery was on three sides of the house, and a row of square pews along the walls, with the addition of two or three rows of seats facing the center. The gallery was reached by stairs at each front corner, and up one pair went the unmarried girls and up the other the boys, between whom, after giving place to the choir, the gallery was equally divided.

"The house had three doors, one in front and one on each side. If one entered the front door the girls took the right and the boys the left, so that here brother and sister, beau and belle, lover and sweetheart, must pass, unless it was a settled case, when the pair might go to the parents' pew. A ludicrous incident occurred a little earlier. A groom had brought his new bride from another parish where the same custom obtained. But they entered at the side door, and she, according to custom, turned to the right, while he stood in stupid astonishment as he saw her ascend the first stairs she came to, which led to the pulpit. As those who were married during the year could have no place until the next re-seating, one pew in the gallery was left vacant for them, and, as this was usually filled up during the year, it is scarcely necessary to add that with such an arrangement we had an abundance of noise and disorder."

## THE MOTIVE TO HOLINESS.

President Robinson, on a recent Sabbath, preached from the text, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," he discoursed on the "Holiness of God," in its relation of requirement to the creatures whom God has made. Unfolding what holiness in God is, it was set forth with discriminating clearness that there is an essential difference and an essential distinction between Holiness and Righteousness, certainly as these exist in Jehovah. Righteousness indeed is elemental in holiness. Yet as pertaining to man, it consists simply in right doing, in the payment of just debts, in the discharge of just obligations. All this may be done, and has often been done, upon a plane of action where God is not. Men have existed in all ages of the world, in every latitude and in every meridian, who, according to such conception of righteousness, have illustrated and exemplified it,—often illustriously so. And yet such a righteousness as this is not holiness.

Holiness in God, it was urged, is sinlessness,—is sustained and uncorrupted purity. The too common human idea of purity being narrow, one-sided, angular, makes it lie in one line of exemption and of abstention from sin. It may be purity according to this conception of it which is far enough removed from what is rounded, full-orbed and complete,—such purity as exists in God. That essentially is sinlessness,—such an utter absence of moral evil that Jesus Christ, while in our humanity even, could utter the confident challenge, "Who of you convinceth me of sin?" The prince, or the god of this world, "found nothing" in Christ,—nothing that was responsive to the appeals of evil, however sinister, and however insidious and insinuating. He walked through this world, from his birth to his baptism, from his baptism to his cross, unscathed, unspotted, absolutely sinless, and thence and therefore holy.

The preacher proceeded from this view of the holiness of God to an impressive application of his subject, and in strictest line with the teaching of his text, "Be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord." The holiness of God being seen in his moral rather than in his natural attributes, we attain unto it when, and as, in its practical possession, we become like God. We must, as the indispensable condition of attainment here become assimilated to him,—be of one mind, of one heart, of one intent and of one aim with his. The first resultant of such oneness is, that we come to be at peace with the Divine Being, and stand in relations to him of blessed harmony. President Robinson in this connection made expressive reference to the "nonsense" of those ideas of evolution as inculcating that holiness in man can be a thing of growth and development apart from God, and from God in Jesus Christ as the fountain-head,—and the causative centre of all that is vital and profound in moral purity.

It was clearly urged by the preacher before reaching his closing remarks, that the primary punish-

ment of sin lies in the necessary penalty which comes from the transgression of God's laws,—a penalty as certain and as inevitable in the moral as it is in the material realm of our human being. He did not assume that this is all of punishment, but this is enough, and is a punishment which is not, and never can be shunned, nor avoided. "Evil shall slay the wicked." This is God's changeless statute, which no wit nor wisdom of man can abrogate nor alter.

A tender and appealing conclusion of this remarkable discourse was reached by the commendation of the motives to a personal holiness,—for all to come under the persuasive power of the Gospel of the Crucified One, which, by its calls and by its invitations to men to become holy, in lifting them to the plane of God himself, at the same time helps them, as obedient, to rise to the harmonies and to the hopes of Heaven.—The Watchman.

## DEFINITE AIM IN PREACHING.

There is a great amount of unjust criticism heard against the pulpit. The ministry of to-day is, no doubt, equal to the ministry of any age. There will always be strong and weak men in this profession, as there are strong and weak men in other callings. Brilliant, gifted men are not made to order, and Christian ministers are but human. Admitting all this, however, does not change the fact that there are serious defects in not a little of the preaching of the day.

One of the most objectionable features is, as it seems to us, the evident aimlessness of the ordinary sermon. We mean aimless of what a gospel sermon should include. Every sermon is defective that does not have for its object the betterment of souls. No matter how well chosen its theme may be, or how clear its argument, the pulpit is not the place to prove one's ability to discuss questions. This will naturally come in as a part of the legitimate work of the preacher, but it is not the end of preaching.

Every minister should go to his pulpit with a clear purpose as to the result he wishes to secure by the presentation of the sermon he is to give his congregation. If he has sought the aid of the Spirit in the preparation of the words, why should he not expect its aid in carrying the truth home to the hearts of his hearers? Surely this is an essential thing. It is the word blessed by the Spirit that becomes a power. If the Lord has given aid in the work of the study, why may he not expect aid in setting home the truth and leading men to a present decision.

We heard the remark not long since from an aged Christian, whose spiritual life has always been marked, that she failed to see any definite purpose in the preaching of a certain minister under whose preaching she had been sitting for a few weeks. The remark, coming as it did with an expression of evident sadness, impressed us. In a few days we had an opportunity to inquire of one who knew much of the success of this minister's work. The reply was, "He is a fine man, a man of ability, but somehow he is not successful as a worker. He has seen few revivals, and his churches fail to maintain their spirituality. Really I can not tell where the trouble lies." In thought we said, the sister was doubtless correct. The minister that does not have a definite aim to save men will not be likely to see salvation.

Is this not a too common fault. Are we not as preachers guilty of aimless labor, sometimes, when we should have the most serious purpose. If, with our knowledge of the words of Christ, we speak to men from the pulpit with no clear purpose to lead them to the Saviour, is it strange that they stay away? It is no slight thing to carry the message of life to lost men.—Free Baptist.

## The Infidel's Sermon to a Preacher.

Never shall I forget the remark of a learned legal friend who was at one time somewhat skeptical in his views. Said he to me: "Did I believe, as you do, that the masses of our race are perishing in sin, I could have no rest. I would fly to tell them of salvation. I would labor day and night. I would speak with all the pathos I could summon. I would warn and exhortate and entreat my fellow-men to turn to Christ and receive salvation at his hands. I am astonished at the manner in which the majority of your ministers tell your message. Why, you do not act as if you believe your own words. You have not the earnestness in preaching that we lawyers have in pleading. If we were as tame as you are, we would never carry a single suit."

A decade of years has passed away since that remark was made. I bless God it was addressed to me. It put a fire into my bones which I hope will burn as long as I live. God preached a stirring sermon to me that day by the mouth of that infidel lawyer.—Peter Stryker.

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