

The Pulpit.

MEMORIAL SERMON.

BY REV. B. MINARD.

Delivered in the Free Baptist Church, Houlton, Me., March 7, upon the life and character of the late Rev. Geo. E. Lowden, a former Pastor of that Church.

Ecc. 12:13. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

The writings of Solomon, though comprising only a small portion of Holy Writ, are replete with rich and varied lessons to all subsequent ages. With all the boasted improvements, discoveries, and civilization of the 19th century, the race has not, as yet, outgrown Solomon's conclusion of the whole matter, which he reached nearly three thousand years ago.

The text is the grand inference of the whole book. To fear God and keep his commandments is the only antidote to the following of creature idols, self righteousness, convivial mirth, sensual indulgences, or the eager grasping after the riches of the world. "This is the whole duty of man" is better rendered "This is the whole man." Not only the whole duty, but the whole honor and interest and happiness of men are wrapped up in fearing God and keeping his commandments. Our text presents the full ideal of man as originally contemplated, and realized by Jesus Christ in making the law honorable as our example, and, by aid of the Holy Spirit, the true life of every man of God.

The true estimate of a man is secured by studying his principles and purposes and the character of his ideal rather than his deeds. Men of brilliant achievements are more the creatures of fortunes and conditions of society than of any unique or peculiar fitness for important positions. Many a man, who has passed through life unnoticed or died while young, in consequence of fortuitous circumstances, would have been celebrated. We do not suppose that Washington and Lincoln and Grant or Abraham and Moses and Elijah were the only men of their day naturally capable of filling their respective positions. No doubt God had in reserve many others just as competent as these illustrious men. In this light will we study the life and character of our departed brother who died in the beginning of his life work.

The truth of the text was early impressed upon the mind of Bro. Lowden by the holy example and pious instructions of a godly mother. Intellectual and moral qualities, as well as physical peculiarities and diseases, are matters of inheritance. That character within certain limits is hereditary is more than hinted at in God's Word, see Ex. 20:5, Ps. 103:17, 2 Tim. 1:5. No one possesses the power to mould the destiny of a child like a mother. This power is well nigh supernatural for good or evil. Her faithfulness or unfaithfulness can, as a rule, be read in the character of her son. She stands at the centre of a mighty influence that may shake the empires of time and agitate the cycles of eternity. The Wesleys, Richard Baxter, Pres. Edwards and Pres. Garfield were blessed with holy mothers; Nero's mother was a murderess, and the mother of Lord Byron was proud, ill-natured and violent.

Bro. Lowden inherited a moral constitution that predestined him in a great degree to a life of piety and the work of the ministry. His mother, taking advantage of this happy natural tendency, early instilled into his mind religious principles, so that, though she died while he was only thirteen years of age, when he became a man every fibre of his being was strengthened by a living faith.

The truth of the text early developed in Bro. Lowden high self-respect and an elevated standard of honor and also a proper estimation of his early years. As the moss-covered ruins of an old castle tell of its former grandeur, so the powers of man's mind though fallen tell of his former greatness and predict the possible glory of his future. Man bearing the image of God, and possessing capabilities to comprehend the works and character of God, and faith to appropriate the realities of God to the soul and to anticipate a destiny which even the imagination cannot fancy, ought to respect himself and stand above the follies and miseries of the world. For a man to cherish high and manly respect is in fact to respect others be they kings or peasants. To think meanly of oneself is to think meanly of others and to draw others down to the level of his own meanness. Self-respect springs from an absorption, either consciously or unconsciously, of the truth that to "fear God and keep his commandments is the whole man," and not from narrowness and bigotry. This leads to a holy reliance upon God and faith in the greatness of humanity. Every young man should feel above anything that belittles and degrades his

manhood or in any way defaces his character. Paul says to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth" or "Let no man have occasion to despise thy youth." Then again, youth to maturity, is what spring is to autumn, a period of preparation and a season of prophecy.

Bro. Lowden was a young man of self-respect and of a high sense of honor which sprang not from pride, but from the noble impulses of a true manhood. While affable and courteous to all, his intimate friends were selected with care. No clouds shadow his reputation, no unsavory odors gather about his name. Though this church was his first pastorate, yet while pursuing his studies he supplied many pulpits in his native province, and in this state and elsewhere, and everywhere he was cordially received and highly esteemed not only for his work's sake but for what he was himself. Dedicating himself to Christ, body, soul and spirit, at nineteen years of age, he immediately commenced the preparation of himself for the ministry. For the accomplishment of this purpose he bent all the energies of his enthusiastic nature, and during his course took good rank as a scholar and excelled as a writer and speaker.

The truth of the text was manifested in Bro. Lowden's aspirations to be an example, a type of true Christian manhood, and in his intense convictions of truth. No man can help being an example to some one. As objects attract and control each other in the material world, so mind operates on mind, and heart acts upon heart, consequently every man to a greater or less extent is a guide. This influence is not optional, but a fiat of the Eternal, and as fixed as the law of gravitation. Our words echo and re-echo in the minds of others and our actions are photographed upon the walls of the inner chamber of their hearts. We are either moulding and evolving angels of light or fiends incarnate out of those with whom we come in contact. The man who would inspire others Godward must have the kingdom of God in his soul. Every new moral excellence a man acquires or develops enables him to hold fuller communion with God and to exhibit more of His love and glory in the world.

Bro. Lowden was a man of deep and abiding faith in God and his example, in business, socially and religiously, was regulated by an enlightened conscience, and exercised a potent influence for good. His conversion was a wonderful answer to prayer. His brother, Rev. John M. Lowden of Portland, was then a student in Bates' Theological seminary, and one day feeling much burdened for the salvation of George, as he familiarly called him, presented him as a subject of prayer in the student's prayer meeting. The students fervently prayed that he might be converted and that immediately. Though miles and miles away and knowing nothing of this circle of prayer he felt a strange and indescribable sensation in his soul that terminated in a terrible conviction of sin. He had been the subject of deep religious impressions from early childhood, but now he felt that it was his last call and then and there surrendered himself to God. Thenceforth he cherished unshaking confidence in God to answer the prayer of faith. A few weeks prior to his death while on his sick bed, the night the physician pronounced his little daughter fatally ill, he passed through a great struggle. The next day in conversation with his brother, he said, "John, is there any stronger proof of Deity and the connection of Deity with man, than that I could last night, though contrary to every feeling of a father's heart, pray it out and leave the matter with Him who sees the end from the beginning and cast all my care upon Him, knowing that he careth for me, and lie down and get a better night's rest than I have had for days." This same confidence and trust sustained him through all the days following the bitter and sad bereavement. His grasp of truth was clear and strong. Of all the doctrines in the theological course none was so precious to him as the atonement. Around that his whole thought seemed to circle. His one great desire for life was to proclaim the plan of redemption to a perishing world. The Sunday afternoon before his death, after making all necessary preparations relative to his funeral, he looked out of the window and said: "What a beautiful day! How I should like to go to-day!" Then looking at his wife with great earnestness he said, "O how I should like to preach the gospel this afternoon!" The evening before his departure to the better land he took his brother by the hand and said, "Well, John, I am pretty near through. The intense desire to preach has well nigh left me. All is bright, so bright! What a Saviour—what an atonement! Able to save to the uttermost!" During his protracted illness he spoke again

and again in the strongest terms of this wondrous redemption. The time of final farewell came at last, as come it will to all. At 1:30 o'clock in the morning, Feb. 17th, without a struggle one of the most promising young men in the Free Baptist ministry fell asleep in Jesus.

Rev. Geo. E. Lowden was born in Centerville, Nova Scotia, March 9th, 1854; baptized by Dr. Bowen on the first Sunday in June, 1873, having been converted the winter previous, and united with the Free Baptist Church, Lewiston, graduated from Bates' College in the class of '81 and from Bates' Theological Seminary in the class of '84. He married Miss Addie, youngest daughter of Deacon Seth Archibald, Mechanic Falls, May 24, 1883. In the following June at Richmond in the session of the Bowdoin Quarterly Meeting he was ordained, and settled as pastor of the Free Baptist Church in Houlton, August 1st of the same year. Owing to failing health and in hope of finding a less vigorous and more genial climate, he resigned his pastoral duties at the close of the year. But no change of climate or skill of physicians could stop the progress of disease. As pastor he was painstaking, and faithful in reproving the erring, strengthening the weak, comforting the sorrowing and inspiring the faithful to greater diligence. His public efforts evinced liberal culture, wide research, high intellectual ability and marked originality. When strength and health permitted his delivery was impressive and magnetic. Above all he sought the daily guidance of the Holy Spirit. His ideal was based upon the best American and English writers and speakers, especially the pulpits most eminent for leading souls to Christ.

The door of your church through which he came so frequently, his face beaming like a star, is now closed upon him forever, but another door, the one of pearl, is swung wide open for his entrance, and, to-day, he sits among the white robed, crowned, an overcomer through the blood of the Lamb and by the word of his testimony. This is a day of grief to us all, particularly to you who were baptized by him and welcomed to the church. In the march of time personally he may fade, in a measure, out of your memory, still, God grant that his faithful preaching and godly example may enter into the warp and woof of your being.

May the God of grace comfort the widow, the father, the brothers and sisters in this hour of great affliction.

In conclusion let me speak a word to you who turned a deaf ear to Bro. Lowden's earnest appeals and tender pleading. Will you be entreated this morning to give your hearts to Christ? God, in his providence, has placed this new made grave across your pathway. Will you step over it to your ruin? O be persuaded to "turn unto the Lord who will have mercy upon you; and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." Amen.

CHILD CONVERTS.

When the history of redemption in this age shall be written, one of its most brilliant and satisfactory chapters will be devoted to the conversion of children. The Church of Christ has outlived the prevailing usages which, within the memory of those who are now only in middle life, keep young children out of "the communion of saints." Robert Murray McChesney sadly ended his beautiful memoir of little James Laing—entitled "Another Lily Gathered"—with these words: "Let us seek the present conversion to Christ of our little children. Jesus has reason to complain of us that he can do no mighty works in our Sabbath-schools because of our unbelief." That was thirty-six years ago. But we are living in a new era, when the largest accessions to all of the evangelical Churches are coming from children and youth to our Sabbath schools and families.

Yet, when we glance at the history of conversions in past centuries, it seems strange that there could ever have been the least doubt or indifference or hesitation on the subject. Jeremiah and John the Baptist were sanctified unto the Lord from the womb. King Josiah feared the Lord when he was but eight years old. Children sang "Hosannah to the Son of David" in the Temple, and Christ vindicates them out of the Holy Scriptures, saying: "Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" The world will never forget his "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Polycarp, the disciple of John, and the martyr, who died for Jesus at the age of ninety-five was converted when he was but nine years old, and served his Lord and Master eighty-six years. Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century, wrote that many of both sexes "had been made disciples to Christ from their infancy, and continued uncon-

rupted all their lives." Richard Baxter could not remember the time when he did not love God and all that was good. Matthew Henry was converted before he was eleven years old; Mrs. Isabella Graham at ten; President Edwards probably at seven; Dr. Watts at nine.

President Edwards, in his narrative of the Great Revival, gives a lengthy account of a child who was converted when but four years old, and he speaks of a number of "others whose ages ranged from nine and ten to fourteen years." Before that, it was "looked on as a strange thing when any had been savingly wrought upon and remarkably changed in their childhood." Within the last twenty or thirty years, however, the conversion of multitudes of young children has been one of the most remarkable features of revivals of religion. With ordinary cautions as to personal intelligence and evidence of a change of heart and with the watch and care which the lambs of the flock should have, there is no reason to doubt the reality and the value and the growth of early piety in Christian homes, Sabbath-schools and churches.

These facts indicate the necessity and the means for aiming directly at the conversion of the children. The child of Christian parents has, of course, the same corrupt nature and the same evil heart as the child of Christless parents. But in everything else he has, or should have, greater advantages for becoming a disciple of Jesus when very young. The means of grace are there, the Word of God, the family altar, Christian precepts and examples, and that Christian influence which fills the house, like Mary's ointment, with holy fragrance. Besides these general and indirect influences, there are often those personal and positive agencies which find their best expression in a gentle mother's prayers and anxieties, and in a conscientious father's care, or it may be in the warm piety of elder brothers and sisters. "The promise is unto you and to your children," and the way to inherit the promised blessing of the family covenant is to use the means for transmitting them down to children and children's children. —Dr. J. M. Farris.

SOME IMPORTANT "DON'T'S"

Don't grieve the Holy Spirit if you want to be holy. He is given to every believer—the seal and pledge of sonship, the Teacher and Comforter of all the true children of God.

Don't suppose that holiness of life can be attained except as we know the Lord Jesus and walk in the light. Fellowship with God was the secret of Enoch and Abram, of Moses and Daniel, of John and Paul, and it is the secret of all spiritual joy and victory now. God's secrets never grow old; his plans and purposes never change.

Don't talk about yourself, either to believers or to unconverted people; it is waste of time. If you want believers to know where you are in divine things, tell them what you know of the Lord Jesus.

Don't allow anything to come in between your soul and Christ, not even his people. Never take your views of your practices from other Christians. Have divine authority for all you do and say, or you will have many a bitter disappointment.

Don't "suffer loss" by setting your affections on earthly things—not even the lawful ones. They all fade as we use them. Glory in eternal realities—the word of God, the things of God, the gift of God, the unsearchable riches—and "may the God of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

Don't expect that of necessity you will die. "We shall not all sleep." Believers, "lift up your heads; your redemption draweth nigh," Luke xxi. 18.

Don't expect all things to remain as they are; they cannot. This is neither enthusiasm nor speculation. We have a sure word of prophecy. We are to blame if we fail to discern the signs of the times.

Don't be alarmed at the thought of the Lord's return being near; if you are a child of God, rejoice. "This same Jesus will so come," etc., Acts i. 2.

Don't shut your eyes to the solemnity of the times in which we are actually living. We must be near the end of the dispensation. Many of the most learned and spiritual men quite agree to this. Many are praying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Amen and Amen. —Footsteps of Truth.

If you cannot pray over a thing, and cannot ask God to bless you in it, don't do that thing. A secret that you would keep from God is a secret that you should keep from your own heart.

One earnest gaze upon Christ is worth a thousand scrutinies of self. The man who beholds the cross, and beholding it weeps, cannot be really blind nor perilously self-ignorant. —Dean Vaughan.

CHRISTIANITY A UNIVERSAL RELIGION.

The elements of character which came into the church after the vision of Peter at Joppa was fulfilled, were richer and nobler than those which were in it before. Jerusalem could never become the centre of a universal church. No city ever did become that. Rome, which approached it in the days of Leo and of Gregory, left the whole eastern church outside her spell. The wide-minded Jew, who by a miracle of grace, exercised upon his intellect as much as upon his spirit, laid the foundation of the chief Gentile churches, saw plainly as he moved amongst them that "there were diversities of gifts... diversities of administrations... diversities of operation;" the wisdom of God was "manifest," and wisdom was "justified of her children" in ways as various as the ways of God. "The first" believers "knew him not perfectly," "no more should the later" believers "find him out." There was more in Jesus than the Jewish heart could hold; there was medicine in the gospel for diseases not known in Judea. There was virtue in the gospel to energize races upon whose movements the world's future history depended; and so, besides the earlier record of our Lord's life, there grew into shape and order another declaration of the "things most surely believed" by Christians, in full harmony with the sister records, turning its light not upon the little groups of proselytes, but full upon the face of the "whole family," whose Redeemer it traces backwards through Adam to God, the very genealogy being thus steeped in the spirit of the great parable which St. Luke records: "I will arise and go to my Father." —Prebendary Edmonds.

UNWOUND CLOCKS.

In a hotel was a number of clocks, at least one for every room; but as they each told a different story, they were never depended on, and if you did believe them you were sure to be deceived. The fact was all these timepieces were out of order, or had not been wound up. Nothing could be learned from them; they were ornamental apologies for clocks, and nothing more. Even so the example of professing Christians is of small service to the world, if the real power of godliness is absent. Religion, when it ceases to be useful, and is only set up for decorative purposes, is an utterly vain thing. If we are not wound up by the Divine Hand, we cannot go, and if we are not going we are useless; we contradict each other and we teach the world nothing worth its knowing. It is a great pity when, for the lack of the inward, the outward becomes a total failure. When force has departed from the mainspring, the face and hands of mere profession are a wretched mockery. —The Sword and Trowel.

FUNERAL SERMONS.

Ministers are sometimes at a loss how to speak well of the departed. We are told in English history of a curious expedient employed by a preacher to speak only well of the dead. A certain Madame Creswell, a notorious woman of King Charles the second's reign, died a prisoner in Bridewell. She desired by will to have a sermon preached at her funeral, for which the preacher was to have ten pounds; but upon this express condition, that he was to say nothing but what was well of her. After a sermon on the general subject of morality, the preacher concluded by saying: "By the will of the deceased, it is expected that I should mention her, and say nothing but what was well of her. All that I shall say of her, therefore, is this: She was born well; she lived well, and she died well; for she was born with the name of Creswell, she lived in Clerkenwell, and she died in Bridewell." His wit brought him out far better than many another preacher who has been compelled to fulfil the same hard conditions.

LITTLE THINGS.

A holy life is made up of a number of small things. Little words, not eloquent speeches or sermons; little deeds, not miracles or battles, nor one great heroic act of mighty martyrdom, make up the true Christian life. The little, constant sunbeam, not the lightning; the waters of Siloam "that go softly" in the meek mission of refreshment, not the "waters of the river, great and many," rushing down in noisy torrents, are the true symbols of a holy life. The avoidance of little evils, little sins, little inconsistencies, little follies, indiscretions, and imprudences, little foibles, indulgences of the flesh; the avoidance of such little things as these goes far to make up, at least, the negative of a holy life. —Dr. Horatius Bonar.

Spurgeon says: "Cultivate forbearance till your heart yields a find crop of it. Pray for a short memory as to all unkindness."

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