

THE BEAUTY OF RETIRING GRACE

A Borrowed Editorial

It would seem that the number of preachers who have grace to properly retire from a field in which their services are no longer required is comparatively small. It is as essential that a preacher should "go out like a lamb" as it is desirable that he should "come in like a lion." But there is something in the makeup of many preachers (we shall not attempt to say whether it is carnality or just raw, unmoral human nature) that makes it difficult for them to believe that people can truly love God without being especially fond of them; or to think it possible for some one else to succeed with a church in which their own success has been small.

We do not deny that there is also something in laymen which makes it easy to notice faults in the retiring pastor that they never observed in the "days of his strength," and we do not deny that there is something especially trying in the seeming indifference of those whom the pastor has poured out his soul to bless. But we are saying that there is need of "retiring grace" on the part of the preacher who is passing on to another field, whether he is passing on by his own election or on account of the failure of others to elect him.

The caliber of the preacher is at no time more definitely revealed than at the time when he is professionally "passing on." If he is a small man he is likely to wear a woe-begone countenance in the presence of his friends in order to excite their sympathy. Or he may go to the other extreme and take the attitude of an escaping prisoner and by his words and attitude cast a shadow upon the very people whom he but recently called his "beloved people." The little preacher will tolerate factions which are favorable to himself, and in some instances may even encourage divisions among the people he can no longer shepherdize. The small preacher may allow his own interest to lag weeks in advance of his actual departure, and he may even find it possible to recall unfavorable recollections or to spread passing rumors concerning his successor who is not yet on the field. In fact, a retiring pastor who is small and whose grace is at a low ebb may cut the possibilities of his successor's usefulness square in two.

But we know there is retiring grace for the passing preacher, for we have seen some who possessed it. Even when they were "voted out" their opposers had to agree that they were "good losers." And when they were moving of their own accord they moved so gracefully that their last days with their church were rich with accumulated benedictions. They gave special care to speak favorably of their successor and left him lists of addresses and informational notes that were of great service to him in taking up the work of his new parish. These men kept their own heart interest until the very last duty was performed, and turned their faces toward their new fields with the sunshine of an unselfish service still lighting their way.

Every preacher will need retiring grace at least once in his life, and most of us will need it several times. And seeing that it is so precious a grace; is it not worth the offering of at least one earnest prayer that we may possess it?—Author Unknown.

MAN

Nay, if you consider it, what is man himself, and his whole territorial life, but an Emblem; a Clothing or visible Garment for that divine life of his, cast hither, like a light particle down from Heaven.—Thomas Carlyle.

CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED

In Romans 6:4-7, we read, "buried with Him . . . that . . . even so we also should walk in newness of life," and "crucified . . . that the body of sin might be destroyed . . . For he that is dead is freed from sin."

It is no new doctrine that there is a crisis of death in the second definite work of grace. A saintly writer who died long ago said in his day, "If there has never been this crisis of death, sanctification is nothing more than vision." Another case of seeing but not receiving: being persuaded that the Christian faith is right and even being converted to the fact of salvation without receiving remission of sins and regeneration.

The reason why the life after the sanctification which so many profess does not work like the Bible sanctification is the fact that in theirs there is no death to carnality; no funeral of the old life. The deadliest deceit palmed off on hungry souls today is that of persuading them to cling to and to profess something which has never happened. It is playing the fool with our own souls to profess entire sanctification when there has never been a death of old-man-sin—a purging of the Adamic nature—and the vacuum made by such being perfectly filled with the Holy Ghost Fire. When the heart is filled with the Spirit, nothing can upset such a life. Some people entertain the idea that this means that nothing will even try to upset such a life. No, we do not mean that, for relatives, neighbors, and demons will do their best to wreck our bark. It will be tossed about in many storms, but we do insist that nothing can upset, much less wreck, such a life.

Numbers of hungry souls long for this life of holiness but as long as that disposition inherited from Adam can keep the soul from coming to the perfect surrender, the whole-hearted consecration that brings crucifixion to the depraved nature, it will be postponed. You may have come to this death often in sentiment, you have wept and felt wilted and thought how serious it is to be dying, but really, there will be no tears at this funeral. It will simply mean that self ceases to exist, that you give up everything and truly die. You will be past excitement, past holding on to somebody's hand and looking for pity. You will be so perfectly submitted to death that nothing else matters.

We sing, "Let me die, let me die," but skirt the cemetery: we look toward the place of crucifixion but religiously keep at a safe distance from the cross and the open grave. There is usually more or less striving, groaning, wondering, and confusion as the seeker battles along with voices suggesting this and that from the outside while carnality begs or threatens from the inside, but those who settle it to go through at any cost finally get past all the pressure from without and within and give up to death. It is just dying—"baptized into his death." When we get away from all material things and into that oneness with Him, into His operating room, it is so easy. The operation is so perfect, His hand so steady, the whole procedure so satisfying, so restful, so complete, so spiritual, so far away from the turmoil of this old world, that every soul entering this sacred place wonders, "Oh, why did I not come to this long ago! It is even better than all my imagination and hopes had pictured. The rest of faith, the purity—Oh, the purity! And this is sanctification—holiness."

We are so slow and stupid in realizing what sanctification is. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." When this death is once fully realized (but this death is the fog which confuses many) we shall enter into sanctifica-

tion as naturally as we walk into any other loved light.

The climax hinges and always will hinge on this, "Are you willing to have the funeral of your inner self now? Do you agree with your Sanctifier that this is the "old man's" last day on earth? The moment of agreement depends upon you; the crucifixion upon Him. Submission to death is your part; electrocution is His. You submit to the cross; He drives the nails. When you are fully consecrated and yielded to the Divine Baptizer it all becomes sacred, right, and glorious.

All of us can remember watching seemingly earnest seekers struggling to get something. Later on we found them contented in worldiness. We wondered why they did not get through when they were seemingly so earnest, but God saw them flirting with the world later on. He saw that they had never settled it to have Him and all that it means to have Him forever. What are you doing about it? —R. G. Finch.

"I WAS A STRANGER"

While I was in London, a Protestant church was not far away, so I went in at the hour for morning worship and found a seat by myself. The service was fairly good. The preacher spoke about a great missionary to Africa, his life and example. Then when the service was over a lonely young missionary on his way to that same Africa stood first on one foot and then on the other, gazing at each person who passed in the hope that some one might give at least a friendly greeting, but the only smile I received in that church was from a man who was passing the collection basket when he noticed a ten-shilling note drop from my hand. When every one was gone I went, too.

Later a friend told me that she had gone to that same church for two years, even teaching a Bible class part of the time, and the people had not been much more friendly to her.

This happened in London, to be sure, but it has had its counterpart in America as well.

During these days when men's souls are vexed, and their pocketbooks light, it may be that more of them will drop in to our church services, perhaps for want of a better place to go, or because of some vague sense of need. Perhaps they have not entered a church for years and feel ill at ease as they enter a place to which they are so little accustomed.

When the Holy Spirit puts it into the heart of a stranger to come to our church, what an opportunity it is for us to make a contact for our Savior! Some of us have had our incomes reduced, and some may not be able to give much to support the work of our church, but an earnest handshake, a friendly word and a warm smile costs us nothing and cannot be bought with gold. The less we have to give, the more we should give that which we can—a warm welcome to every individual who drops in at our church. Let us not lose one opportunity to make a friendly contact for Jesus Christ.—Selected.

The late Honorable William Jennings Bryan was expected to toast the admiral of the Japanese navy with champagne. The resourceful Mr. Bryan lifted a glass of water to the health of the sea-going warrior. The party was shocked with such an insult to the honor guest, but the Commoner said in a gracious manner: "You won your victories on water, and I drink to your health in water; whenever you win any victories on champagne, I shall drink your health in champagne."—The Voice.