

THE FAITHFUL PREACHER.

I imagine myself in the pulpit, and in fancy I look around the congregation. It presents a varied appearance; human nature is exhibited under many forms. There are young and old, rich and poor, learned and illiterate. I am naturally led to inquire, What are these beings who are seated before me? For what purpose are they come? And what must I say to them? Every one of these has a mighty interest which requires his attention. If I cast a glance into futurity, I see, at the distance of a century, each of these creatures in a state of unspeakable happiness or misery. Long before that time has elapsed I myself shall be in another world, where, in all probability, I shall see some of the beings who are assembled to listen to the words that shall fall from my lips. Nay, more than this: those very words must have an influence upon their future destiny. I am placed here to distribute the elements of life. To some, perhaps, they will become the means of death; for I know that such fearful transmutations often take place. Since, then, I sustain so near a relationship to these spirits, does it not become an overwhelming inquiry with me, How shall I fulfil the responsibilities arising out of that relation? I stand in a most awful place, where the destinies of immortal souls seem to hang upon my conduct. I might have occupied one of these seats, and thus have been freed from this burden. But since I have taken it upon me, should it not create a deep seriousness of spirit, a thrilling anxiety as to the result of my efforts, a yearning desire that shall swallow up every other, and make me feel as if I had no interest, and even no existence, apart from that of these immortal spirits? I feel within me a tendency to treat the whole affair with indifference, and to pass it over as one among a series of acts which form the common routine of human existence. I am come to preach a sermon; the people are come to hear one; and that is all. But instantly I check the indulgence of such reflections as these. A multitude of spirit-stirring inquiries instantly present themselves. Are eternity, and heaven, and hell, objects that should be viewed with indifference? Does not the fearful doom of perhaps a majority of those before me at all interest me? Can I think of the miseries of a lost soul, (and, O terrible thought! there is reason to fear that some of those who hear me this night will be numbered among the lost,) and feel no emotions of pity? Do not the bowels even of common humanity yearn over the unconverted, who are now exposed to evils almost too appalling to contemplate? My soul feels the awful justice of sentiments like these; they enter the spirit with the majesty of truth; and I am convinced that to dismiss them would be a profanation of the place in which I stand, and a violation of the character which I sustain. But oh, what is the character of that preaching whose tone shall be in harmony with these sentiments? I endeavour to place myself out of myself, and picture the man I should be this night.

In imagination I leave the pulpit, and seat myself among the audience. I observe the preacher enter the sacred place, and watch each step and mark every movement of his countenance. He moves as if he were upon some great business. There is a seriousness about his demeanour which the spectators feel. His entrance produces a change in the emotions which pervade the assembly. If emotions and ideas could take a visible form, those of a worldly character would be seen to vanish, and thoughts and feelings of deep solemnity to take their place. I see him seated in the pulpit. He does not look like an ordinary man. There is a solemn, an unearthly anxiety in his look. All the powers of his mind appear concentrated upon one object, far different from the whole range of sublunary cares. He has been in a higher state of existence. He has come from a moral elevation which humanity seldom reaches. His spirit reflects the light of heaven. He glances at the assembly; but, although that glance is momentary, yet it speaks volumes, which those who mark can easily understand. His hearers feel that their best interests are dear to him. They sympathize with the travail of his soul. He opens the sacred volume, and all listen as if God himself were speaking. He announces the subject of discourse, in which all must feel interested. In commencing he is deeply serious, although far from being loud and boisterous. The thoughts and feelings which have been confined to his breast at first escape in gentle accents. He addresses the understanding of his audience, knowing that

they require to be informed before they can be excited,—that the way to the heart is through the understanding. His descriptions are clear. His pictures are vivid. His aim is direct. His hearers cannot mistake him. They feel the tendency of his thoughts, and they eagerly anticipate the object at which he is aiming. There is no dry detail; no eccentric starting from the line which his peculiar and solemn circumstances have marked out for him. As he proceeds along, he seems to gather a mysterious energy, arising not from the wire-drawn theory, or splendid creation of fancy, but from the clear plain statements of truth. The light which he at first scattered now begins to diffuse heat. He soon becomes an altered man. The powers of the world to come are seen to take possession of his spirit. He draws the curtain which conceals the invisible. Earth and all its busy scenes vanish. Heaven and hell are revealed. Every countenance reflects the light of the one or the gloom of the other. There is not a careless or inattentive man in the place; all are compelled to look in the direction in which he points. He now feels that he has got access to the immortal souls with whom he is surrounded, and he does not fail to improve the precious moment. He urges with divine energy the things which belong to their eternal peace. He presses with resistless eagerness the inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" He appeals to the conscience in a tone which it dares not refuse to answer. The affections and passions are raised at his command. Love, and fear, and hope start from their slumbers, and the whole moral being becomes intensely awake.

Such is the man that I ought to be. "Who is sufficient for these things."—Rev. John Hessel.

Love to Men.

A deceitful heart often persuades men, that they love God, because they are not conscious of hating him. They love to behold his works—they admire the stateliness and order of his creation—there is to them something grand and majestic in the very being of Jehovah, and hence they often conclude that love him, when in the Scripture sense they are utterly destitute of this feeling. Their carnal minds are enmity against God, for they are not subject to the law of God—that is, there is a perpetual warfare between their own wills and inclinations, and the demands of the law; and no one can truly love God, who has no disposition to keep his commandments.

So too, men often fancy that they love their fellow-men, simply because they are not conscious of hating them and wishing them ill. There are very few persons so depraved as to delight in the misery of their fellow-men, in itself considered. Man is very seldom such a monster, that his heart cannot be touched with some sad story of human suffering and sorrow. Even those, who by their conduct and course in life, inflict a great amount of suffering upon those over whom they have controul, can nevertheless be deeply affected by narratives of personal calamity and trial. The man who lives by the grossest system of extortion—who useth his neighbour's service without wages and giveth him not for his work, seldom or never does this, out of a simple desire to cause pain, trouble and want, among his fellow creatures. He is intent upon another object—his own gratification. He can affirm, as well as others, that he is not conscious of wishing his fellow-men harm—but then his business is to take care of himself and make his way in the world.

But the love to men, which the gospel enjoins, is something of a very different nature from this mere constitutional sympathy and humanity. It is something which is to war against this desperate selfishness at its very centre and source. It requires of us far more, than the mere absence of positive hatred. It does not rest satisfied that we should not fiendishly rejoice over the miseries of others—but demands that we should ever be seeking to do them good—to make their interest ours—to look after their welfare as after our own. The rule of Christ on this subject is beautiful to look at. All men seem to admire it abstractly, but how few adopt it or ever make any attempt to adopt it! How many Christians are there, who would dare to put it in full practice—who do not in short distrust it, as something good enough in theory, but practically unsafe? They must take better care of themselves, than to live according to any such method. O, the weakness and short sightedness of our faith! We cannot have the courage to let go of ourselves. We must

walk in the light of our own wisdom. It is the beauty and glory of Christ's teachings, that they are not like the theories often propounded in the schools of the philosopher, fit for nothing but to captivate the thoughts, or try the speculative powers. Their excellence lies pre-eminently in this, that they are practical, and are given for no other reason, than that they might be put in practice. They are as much safer than the narrow and selfish views of the human understanding, as the wisdom of God is superior to that of men.—*Congregationalist*.

Sinners cannot stand alone.

One who wanders through low and wet grounds in the months of August and September, will very likely meet with a troublesome weed that goes by different names, as *prickly knot-grass*, the *Polygonum sagittatum*, and *arifolium* of botanists—and will be sure to be scratched if he meddles with it. The stalks of this weed are weak and flaccid, and not able, when standing alone, to sustain their own weight; but they are armed at their four angles with rows of prickles, and thus hold each other up. You may often see a mass of them standing erect, each by the help of its neighbours, while not a single one of them has strength enough to stand alone.

Now the application which we make of this is the following:—This weed is an apt emblem of wicked men; not only because of its hurtful character (the sweet psalmist of Israel describes "the sons of Belial" "as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands,") but especially in this respect, that it *cannot stand alone*. It has in itself no strength; but must lean for support on its neighbours. So wicked men are destitute of all true strength, a truth which they inwardly feel, however reluctant they may be to confess it. Take a truly righteous man away from his associates, and shut him in prison with the ungodly and he is still strong, because he carries his strength with him in his soul. He can rebuke sin with authority, though himself in chains. Place a truly righteous man in the presence of wicked rulers and judges, who have his life in their hands, he is still strong, and can face their frowns and threats without dismay.

But a wicked man cannot stand without the help of his wicked companions to keep him in countenance. The drunkard in the bar-room surrounded by men like himself, feels strong and vaunts of his courage; but set him down in the midst of a company of temperance men and (if he be in his senses) he has no courage left. The very thought of his own bloated countenance fills him with shame. He instinctively retreats to the bar-room again.

In like manner, the libertine, when surrounded by his companions in sin, glories of his exploits, and laughs all virtue to scorn. But place him in the bosom of a virtuous community, where he is conscious that his character is known and despised, and he can no longer hold up his head. He has an interest, dreadful interest, in having his neighbours as depraved as himself; for it is only by the sin of others that he can keep himself in countenance. Hence the disposition of depraved men to sneer at all virtue in others, and to represent the whole world as being like themselves; while truly good men are naturally generous and unsuspecting, and continue even after they have been often deceived by professions of virtue, to hope the best of their neighbours.

We close the similitude with a single reflection. Every ungodly man must die alone. Though his companions in sin may stand around his expiring clay not one of them can go with him to the bar of God. He must meet his Maker alone; and oh! how withering will be the sense of his utter weakness and inability to stand before the wrath of God! The ungodly are "like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment."

Present Sorrow and Eternal Joy.

The August number of the National Preacher, has a sermon by Rev. Prof. Shepard, of Bangor, Me., on "THE SUFFERINGS AND THE GLORY," founded on Romans viii: 18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." The following passage institutes a comparison between suffering here and glory hereafter:

"There is no comparison of a momentary sorrow, with an infinite and eternal joy. The apostle thought so amid the heavy trials of his

lot; burdened as he was, with an unwonted responsibility; carrying about him that dread infirmity, the thorn in the flesh; surrounded with enemies, traduced, beaten, killed, all the day long; the sufferings were present and almost without a parallel in Christian endurance; the glory future, and apprehended only by faith. He weighed the matter; he calculated carefully; he balanced the account, and this was his settled judgment, *I reckon; I account*; that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. And can any one hesitate in coming to the same conclusion? We might refer the question to one of far feeble faith, and in still deeper trouble; one, on whom the hand of affliction was pressing most heavily, and the glory seemed dim, and far away. Even such an one could not fail to utter the same judgment—not worthy to be compared; the affliction for a moment, the glory eternal; the affliction light, the glory unmeasured in weight and worth. Can the depressed and most sorrowing heart, hesitate in the judgment—not worthy to be compared. Suppose we pass to the other side of the scale, and put the question to a higher reference; to one of those spirits before the throne, who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Be the umpire one who encountered every form and variety of earthly trial; the direst malignancy of persecution; the most desolating strokes of bereavement; the tortures of a racked and groaning body; and the still keener anguish of a wounded spirit. That spirit, thus tossed and troubled, is now resting in the embrace of infinite and protecting love. That heart which at times drooped beneath the weight of its sorrows, now swells with the fulness of unutterable joys. It has felt its last pang; now it is perfect peace. Thus that purified intelligence has tried both sides; has had experience of the worst griefs of time, and of the commenced and growing blessedness of eternity. Ask him of his judgment; and what think you, he would say, as he looked back upon this little point and speck of trouble, and as he thought of the immeasurable felicities of his present and secured immortality?—What would he say? He would say with the utmost reach of language and strength of emphasis, and all the redeemed would join in and peal forth their intense agreement, till those eternal pillars should tremble with the utterance—NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED.

Benificence.

We need not hesitate to affirm that goodness is the main attribute in the divine character. Without it, God would be no more God. Its absence would render him a totally different being. The very thought of an infinite being destitute of goodness, is full of horror. Satan would be less hateful, because less terrible. Ah, no! If we would speak of God comprehensively, if we would utter him in one breath, if we would describe him by one word, if we would declare him as far as the force of speech can go by a single syllable,—it must be LOVE. God is love! This principle pervades all his perfections and is the motive of all his actions. His attributes are so many modes of goodness. His actions are so many exercises of goodness. This is the sum of his moral character, and the source of all his doings.

It follows from this, that benificence is the grand distinctive element in the character of a real Christian. No matter how orthodox he may be, nor how zealous for the forms of truth and piety, nor how honest and moral even to the full extent required by the laws and public sentiment of the land. If he have not within a heart which impels him to do good to others, he is no true Christian. The Spirit of Christ is not in him. The image of God is not in him. The Holy Ghost is not in him; or else the fruits of the Spirit, and especially goodness, would be there.

By the new birth, the child of God is made a partaker of the divine nature. As goodness is the main feature in the divine nature, it necessarily follows that it must be so in the new nature of the regenerate soul. "It is full of good fruits," which are not forced from it; but proceed from it easily and spontaneously, by a sort of happiness, a felicity of production.

Benificence, then, is the great duty of every disciple of Jesus. It fulfils all duties. It is the imitation of God and of Christ. It assimilates the soul to the High and Holy One, who has given us that exalted precept: "Be ye perfect, even as your Heavenly Father is perfect."—*Puritan Recorder*.