

The Visitor's Pulpit.

A SERMON

BREACHED BY REV. I. M. MUNRO, AT THE ORDINATION OF EDGAR HATFIELD AT BLACKVILLE, ON THE 18TH ULT. "Preach the word," 2 Tim. 4: 2

These words are a part of Paul's charge addressed to his son Timothy. The great apostle was nearing his triumphant end, and knew times of apostasy were at hand. He therefore delivers to Timothy this solemn and weighty charge, that he might be fortified against the attacks of the evil that were approaching, and he prepared to do his duty in holding forth the pure word of life.

How awfully solemn this charge is introduced. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom, to preach the word.

The strongest and the best of men have need to be awed into the discharge of their duty. The work of the minister of Christ is not an indifferent thing, but absolutely necessary. "Woe be to him if he preach not the Gospel." 1 Cor. 9: 16. That Timothy might be faithful, he must consider that the eye of the great God was upon him. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, "Preach the word, be constant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." And as you will have to give an account of your stewardship at the appearing of the Great God and his kingdom, be faithful with that which has been committed to your trust, and so make full proof of thy ministry; urge what you preach, and press it with all earnestness upon your hearers. In this way the apostle would have his "son in the faith" fulfill his ministry, and gain for himself a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

The minister of Christ is to "preach the word," with all fervency of spirit. To call upon all to whom he addressed himself in the Gospel to repent, and believe, and live a holy life, and this both in season and out of season that God may be glorified. But the chief business of the servant of God who is called to preach, is to proclaim the logos or word; a dispensation is committed to him; he is not to preach his own notions and fancies, but the pure, plain word of God; and he must not corrupt it, but as of men, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak in Christ, 2 Cor. ii, 17. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." Sincerity and earnestness should characterize the gospel minister who has so important a message to deliver to his fellow beings.

Says the distinguished Baxter: "I'd preach as though I ne'er should preach again. And as a dying man to dying men."

It should ever be remembered by the preacher, that this effort may be the last. Some person present might be hearing for the last time, and therefore should be earnest. But what is he to preach? "The word of God which liveth and abideth forever." "The word which by the Gospel is preached." 1 Peter, 23, 25. That is, if we understand it correctly, the word which was made flesh and dwelt among us. John, 1: 1. "The only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." When we preach, says the apostle in his epistle to the Colossians, 1: 28, "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The object then of preaching the word is to set forth Christ in his great and glorious work of atonement and meditation, as the only foundation of the great Church which he came to rescue and save, and of the faith and hope of every individual believer. This was evidently the grand theme of the prophets. How plainly did Isaiah speak of Jesus Christ; how faithfully he preached him? The old Testament is full of Christ. "He is the great central light of the Jewish Scriptures and the subject of holy prediction. To the doubtful, Jesus Christ said, "search the Scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." This same Jesus, the apostle preached as being the "Way, the Truth and the Life." God "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," was the theme of all the apostles, a theme in which the angels rejoiced and worshipped. When God brought in the first begotten into the world He said, "And let all the angels of God worship Him." Heb. 1: 6.

This was the word or gospel Paul charged Timothy to preach, and the word which every gospel minister is to preach. 1 He is to preach it in all its adaptedness

to human necessity.

The peculiar wants of the soul are richly met in the gospel. All the necessities of the immortal mind are supplied through faith in Christ. "But my God is able to supply all your wants according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The soul of man is too capacious for all this world to fill. It is endowed with mighty capacities for enjoyment and happiness; and these powers of the soul are capable of expansion. There is a something in man that is continually longing after something better and nobler than this world is capable of imparting; but this desire is not justified till the gospel is received in all its fulness. Then those noble powers of the mind are filled with the true and substantial principles which not only impart the greatest amount of happiness to the soul, but form and develop a true character, such as God can only admit into His kingdom.

The word of God must be delivered by the minister of the cross in all its fulness to save the sinner, in other words, the servant of the Most High God must lift up the Son of Man upon the pole of the gospel, as being the only remedy for a sin-bitten soul—a ruined world.

"And point to His redeeming blood, And say the way behold to God."

There is pardon through the blood of Christ for every one will believe. "Who-soever believeth in the Son of God hath everlasting life." Blessed news to the dying sinner. Let us preach this gospel in all its repletteness and fullness to our fellow-men. "Go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."

Again, let us preach the word plainly, so that all who hear may be edified who are Christians, and instructed in the way of life who are unconverted. This should be one great object of the preacher, namely the edification of the Church, and the bringing of unbelievers into the Church by converting them to the Christian faith. When in order to this "preach the word" plainly and earnestly. In a great many instances this is not done. Some ministers are wonderfully high and mysteriously profound; gifted for talk. Says Euripides, "What thou canst say, I hear unmoved; a voice indeed is thine, but like a shadow, void of active power; thou canst do naught but talk." To Dr. Bates, who complained of little success as a minister, Daniel Burgess replied, "Thank your velvet mouth for that—too fine to speak market language." I think Paul said on one occasion that his speech was "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

A gentlewoman went one day to hear Dr.—preach and, as usual, carried a pocket Bible with her, that she might turn to any of the passages the preacher might happen to refer to. But she found that she had no use for her Bible there, and on coming away said to a friend, "I should have left my Bible at home to-day, and have brought my dictionary. The doctor does not deal in Scripture, but in such learned words and phrases as require the help of an interpreter to render them intelligible." To my mind there is a great deal of preaching of this type. Sounding brass and tinkling symbols, unmeaning metaphors and metaphysical ghosts, rhetorical flourishes, and a vast corporation of technics. And this is palmed off as the gospel. Just such a gospel as the devil likes. I am pretty well acquainted with one sermon. I think it was delivered upon a certain mountain. Matt. 5. This is a model sermon, according to my idea, for all preachers. In the 6th chap. of Matt. we have the model prayer. We should take Christ for example, both as regards our preaching and praying. It would do the preacher of the gospel no harm to study Paul. Also, he is a first rate authority on preaching. I choose him however in preference to Dr.—who is so profound that he is verily foolish. My dear brother, preach the word in its simplicity; preach it plainly; preach it as a message from God to sinful men.

2d. Preach the word in its entirety. Before the morning stars sang together, or this great world turned upon its axis did God see a fallen race ruined and mangled by sin, "lost" and "dead." God the Father of all our mercies in His own silent and awful eternity, thought of beings, who as yet were without an existence. It was a thought of mercy which, if he communicated to angels, struck a chord that vibrated throughout the angelic universe. If concealed in His eternal mind, it was His purpose. "The Word was with God," from all eternity with God. And was manifested in due time. The Redemption

of man was based upon the line of the fore-knowledge of the Infinite Jehovah. And when the due time arrived, the eternal plan of salvation was executed by the Son of God, who cried on Golatha's heights, "It is finished."

The glorious gospel of the Blessed God has boasted of an antiquity that cannot be measured by centuries or cycles. It is as the everlasting hills.

"The old, old story of Jesus and his love."

It is without beginning of days as to its plan in the infinite mind, and as to its blessed effects it will be without end of time. From everlasting to everlasting. This is the Gospel of the covenant in which is embraced the entire Church which the Almighty Father has given to His Son. "And in due time, when we were without strength Christ died for the ungodly." He died to save the lost Church, though not lost in Christ. For they were given to Christ in his covenant of grace. "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "As thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." John, 17, 2. We believe in the eternal purpose of God to save His people. According to the 9th article of our "Faith and Practice," "That God the Father has chosen a great multitude of the human family, whom no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues and given them to his Son in the covenant of his grace, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people, zealous of good works, which is the only foundation of salvation for lost and helpless sinners; and thereby the ministers of the Lord are encouraged to preach the Gospel to every rational creature, because the purposes of God, and the infinite value of Christ's atonement. Secure the increase and establishment of Christ's kingdom, so that the kingdom of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. Rom. 8, 29, 30; Eph. 1, 4, 5, 11; John, 6, 37-39; Rom. 7, 9; Titus, 2, 14; Mark, 16, 15; 2 Tim. 2, 19; Isaiah, 9, 17: Rev. 11, 15. Therefore let us preach the word in its entirety, and the purposes of God to save his people.

2d. Preach the word in its doctrines. We may just hint at a few of them. The doctrine of Regeneration by the Spirit, as declared by Christ and his apostles is a doctrine that cannot be neglected with impunity. Our Saviour said to Nicodemus, "ye must be born again,"—born from above. It is by the Holy Spirit that the unregenerated is convinced of sin, of righteousness and of a judgment to come. And it is by the Divine Spirit, Christ is revealed to the soul as the only remedy for sin, and the medium of Divine communication. He works faith in the heart by which the humble penitent receives Christ as his righteousness, wisdom, sanctification and redemption. Thus he is made a "new creature in Christ Jesus." "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

No baptismal regeneration taught here. It is nowhere found in the Sacred Scriptures. It is a dogma of the scarlet enchantress of the Seven Hills, and is therefore false, and is as dangerous as it is false. By no outward form is a change of heart produced. The gospel teaches us that it is by the word and Spirit of our God. Therefore let the minister of the word preach it faithfully to his fellow-men, that he may know that there is no possible way of entering into the kingdom of God, only by regeneration, as taught by Christ and his apostles.

Then second, the precious doctrine of the saints final perseverance must be preached, for this is a part of God's word and God's will. We believe that the child of God will continue in a state of grace, to a state of glory. He is "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." 1 Peter, 1, 4. "I give with my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, etc." John, 10, 28, Rom. 8, 34-8, God does not convert and justify the soul and then abandon it to the world of woe. It is not like the God of the Bible to do so. It would be derogatory to his glory. The saints' spiritual life is "hid with God in Christ," hence nothing antagonistic in that life principle can approach it. It is a fortification invulnerable to the attacks of the enemy of the soul and God. Blessed be God, for a sure and certain salvation. Let us preach it to the household of faith, for their edification and comfort, and also as a powerful inducement to the sinner to come to Christ and be saved.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord is laid for your faith in His excellent word? What more can he say, than to you He hath said You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled.

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose I will not, I will not desert to his foes; That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

3. The doctrine of practical godliness. No man has reason to believe that he is regenerated, and will be saved while he is living as the world does. If there be no godliness in his life, there is no piety in his heart. For the apostle says, "The love of Christ constraineth us."

Christ and his apostles preached this doctrine, and they preached it as being a legitimate outgrowth of a work of grace in the soul. I fail to find it in the Scripture any way declared that it is a mere duty or a Christian to live a holy life. If a man love God he will with pleasure an delight choose the path of the just, and the way of holiness; because it so perfectly agrees with his new nature to do so. Never let us, as Baptist ministers, especially inculcate this as a duty, or that believers should do so; but that they will do so if they be true Christians. This is one of the great evidences of the believer's acceptance with God. We do not do in order to be saved, but we do because we are saved, and because we love God. This is the great motive by which all Christians are actuated. Now, if this be so, there is no effort involved. It will be perfectly easy and delightful for the Christian to walk in the way of his divine Lord and Master. We love, because we have first been loved.

Again, all the requirements and claims of the gospel must be presented by the ministers of Jesus. None can be dispensed with. In order to this the gospel must be studied, as it is, "Study to show thyself approved unto God. A workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Tim. 2-15. The truths of God's Word must be carefully distinguished from error, and so arrange them in such order as that they may be easily and well understood, so that the unconverted may be instructed in the way of wisdom, and Christians strengthened and comforted in all stages of the Divine life. Dr. Ryland said:—"My aim in every sermon is a hasty call to sinners, to quicken the saints, and to be made a universal blessing to all."

4. And lastly, "Preach the Word" in its ordinances. Some men are afraid to preach the ordinances of the gospel. For instance, I have heard some men try to quote the command of Christ in the commission, "Whosoever believeth shall be saved." No such thing; but that is the way it is quoted in many instances.

He that believeth is that all? He that believeth and is baptized. Is that all? No. The most blessed part is contained in the three last words, *Shall be saved.*

Faith in Christ first. Baptism second. The Lord's Supper third. So Jesus preached, and so did Peter on the day of Pentecost. Let us love the Saviour. Preach the gospel to every creature, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel.

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