

THE HERALD'S PULPIT.

"God's Delight," the Subject of an Able Sermon by Rev. Dr. Mowatt.

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The following sermon was recently preached by Rev. A. J. Mowatt, D. D., at Erskine Presbyterian church, Montreal, of which he is pastor:

GOD'S DELIGHT.

"Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity? . . . He delighteth in mercy."—Micah 7, 18-19.

GOD'S WILL.

You know how ready we all are to find fault with God, to question His wisdom in the way He does things, to criticize and condemn His management of the world and its affairs, more particularly that portion of it that concerns us. I hear you say: "If I could have my will, and my way, as God has His will and His way, how very different things would be from the way they are. For one thing the snow would not be so deep, nor the weather so cold. Life as you know it would not have so much cross in it. You would live in a bigger house than you now live in. Your table would have more on it. You would have more money, more comforts, more books to read, more of everything. As to religion, the Sabbath, the church, the Bible, worship, you are not sure that you would have any at all. You would leave everything of the sort an open question. Your enemy, the man who breaks into your house and spoils your goods, the tongue that tells lies about you, the hand that is lifted against your interests, and so on—what about your enemy? Ah! if you had your will, as God has His will, you would make it hot for him; you would put him where he would not hurt you nor any one belonging to you.

Just think, for a moment, how it would be with things, if it would be your will, not God's will—your way, not God's way. Just think how it would be if God should say: "You, my children, my creatures, are all questioning my wisdom; you are all finding fault with, and censuring and condemning my method and management. Well, just will it your way, and see how it will work."

I tell you if everybody had to be consulted as to what they would like in the shape of weather; as to what sort of country they would like Canada to be; what sort of government and laws they would like to have; and then as to religion what it would have to be to suit every taste;—I tell you, things would soon be in an awful way, no end of trouble and confusion, and one and all would say: "Let God's will be done rather than that everybody should have their will and say as to things."

But there is a thought here with regard to will we had better look at for a little, and it is this:

Is it not true now, that, within certain limits, we have all our own will and say as to things? Look at it. There you are tonight, a young man, life lying before you, stretching out into a future bright with promise, radiant with hope. Life is in your own hands, as it were, the ball at your foot, and you can kick it forward, upward, backward, sideways, or not kick it at all. I hear you say in your self-will: "I will do this." So you do as you say.

You said tonight: "I can do just as I like. I can go to church or I can stay at home. I can bow my knees before God and say—Thy will be done! or I can serve my own interests."

Tomorrow when it comes, you can say: "I need not go to work unless I like. I need not go to college unless I choose to." So you choose to do just as you like, and your place at the store, the bank, the factory, is empty, and your seat in the classroom is without an occupant.

Then there are other things where will comes in—your will, I mean. There is such a thing as right and wrong, the good and the bad, duty and privilege, and in these things you can do as you will. I hear you say: "I can speak the truth or tell a lie. I can steal or be honest. I can drink or I can abstain. I can do my duty or I can do the other thing. I can avail myself of the church's privileges, or I can live my life and never be a church member."

Ah, young man, while you have a will of your own as to things, others have an interest in you, and a mind and will of their own. There is God's will. If it is better for the interests of all that His will be done, in the matter of weather, in climate and country, and in a thousand other things, than that everybody should be consulted, and have their mind and will carried out; is it not also better, that, in your own individual case, God's will, not your own, should be done? Can you not see that God has more interest in you than you have in yourself, and that if you would let Him have His way with you in everything, it would be better for you than if you had your own way? Can you not see that? And if so, the best thing for yourself just now, and for the future and all that awaits you in it, is to bow and say: "Not my own will, my God and Father and Saviour, but Thine be done"—not my own will in anything, but Thy will in everything.

GOD'S DELIGHT.

You speak of things you take special delight in. Your tastes run in certain directions, and you gratify them all you can. One delights in books, another in pictures, a third in curios, a fourth in gems. There is no accounting for tastes, indeed, men find delight in such opposite things.

Here is one and he seems to have no eye, for the beautiful, no taste for art, no interest in money, no pleasure at all in what others find so much pleasure in. His delight is in doing good to some one. If there is any need to relieve, any hunger to feed, any nakedness to clothe, any lost one to find, any drunkard to reform, any sinners to save—that is what he delights in.

Now, that is God's special delight. His works are great—great mountains, great seas, the great heavens studded all over with brilliant stars and gems. When you study his works and behold on every hand such marvellous displays of wisdom and power, you are sure he has bestowed so much thought and interest in these things, and has taken such delight in their creation, that he can have no thought nor delight left for anything else. But what do you find? Let God in the person of His Son, come down to where we are, and what is it to do? To promote science, encourage art, gather gold and gems, go in for the development of the world's resources? No His delight is in what we would call squalid work. He is down among the poor, the fallen, the wretched, the suffering, the sinful, rescuing, saving, relieving need, finding the lost, breaking men's chains and yokes, and working out their salvation. The prophet tells us here about God, and what He delights in, and it is in forgiving sin and shewing mercy: "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity? . . . He delighted in

mercy."

You are saying of God perhaps—"He is too good, too high and holy, to take any interest in a poor worm of the dust such as I am. You are afraid of God. You flee from His presence. You come not nigh where He is. The very thought of God is shuddering. You say: 'Oh do not speak to me of God! I hate the thought of Him. He is my worst enemy. I want to believe with the atheist that there is no God, and I wish I could believe it. But I cannot. If I pray at all, it is that I may never fall into the hands of God. Any hands but His! You think it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'"

Is there not, I ask, some such feeling as that with regard to God? You read of His judgments. He breaks out upon men in storm and tempest, strews the seashore with wrecks, flies abroad in pestilence and plague, arms His angels at times with a great sword, and sends them forth to kill and slay, and not to spare. You hear His people singing of Him as the All-Terrible, the God of vengeance. And how true. You recall the flood, Sodom's doom, Jerusalem's fall, Rome's burning, the London plague, and many another judgments. When Christian nations go to war with their battleships and bombs, their armies and siege-guns, they pray to Him to go with them, and they praise Him when they have driven their war-chariots over thousands of slain, and when they have carried women and children into captivity. And when you see that, and history is full of it, you say: "If that is true of God, and if He is like that, delighting in war and woe, then I have no use for him, and no faith in Him."

GOD'S STRANGE WORK.

Then now to that thought for a little. There are things about God hard to explain, difficult to reconcile. You meet with them here. You meet with them in His providences, His ways of dealing with His own people. There is the massacre of innocents. You see it yonder in the streets of Bethlehem. You see it here in our own city. And as you see it, you ask: "Is the Christ's God a Molech?" And then there are so many other awful things I need not detail, and you say of them: "If God has any hand in them, then I cannot understand Him."

But the prophet Isaiah offers a suggestion when he calls certain things God's strange work. Judgment is His strange work. It is not like Him, but then He finds it necessary in the world such as ours, and in the present evil state of things.

There is yourself. Have you not to turn aside sometimes from what you delight in, and do what is strange to you and most distasteful? A city minister told the other day what he did. He was early at church one morning. As he came forward, he saw a window open, and tracks in the snow up to it. He saw that there were no tracks out, and he was sure the man was still within. So he unlocked the door, and the first thing he did was to pull down the open window. Then he proceeded with due caution to investigate. After a while he came to a room where a table was overturned, and he saw a little bit of a man's foot exposed. He said nothing, but went and armed himself with a cudgel. That was not like a minister—was it? He was sure the man would seek to escape. And he did, and of course by the window. But the minister had seen to that. So the scoundrel was cornered. When the minister saw who he was, he threw down the stick, and sprang upon him, and had him on his back on the floor in no time. Strange work—was it not?—and a strange place where to do such strange work!

The minister found he was one of his young men. So there astride of him, he told him what he thought of burglars. The young man was very penitent and all that. So it ended with the minister's forgiving him and telling him to go. That was just like a minister to do that. But only a few days after the young man was at the same sort of work. The minister now sees that the strange work would have been in his case the best.

Now, while God delights in mercy, and finds no pleasure in the death of sinners, they are so lost to all that is good, He has to give them up to the terrors of judgment sometimes. And so you are saying: "How strange that God does what he does!" Ah! justice and judgment have their place in a world such as ours as well as mercy. But this know, they are His strange work—He delighteth in mercy. He loves to forgive.

IN GOD'S HANDS.

One writes: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And is it not true? How terrible the judgments of God! When His wrath is kindled, how terrible! You see it in the working out of His own laws. Break the laws of earth. Neglect sleep. Keep late hours. Go on doing that, and there come all the terrors of insomnia, and how cruel they are. Or yield to a life of crime. Gamble and steal. Judas did that. He pilfered out of the bag he bore. And where did it end? It ended with the betrayal, and the awful suicidal death at Akeldama. Oh yes, it is awful, a most fearful thing indeed, to fall into God's hands!

But there is another side to that truth. While God is just, and His laws fearful in their penalties, you cannot be in kinder hands than His, "because, as old Micah puts it," He delighteth in mercy." None is so forgiving, so full of compassion, so lenient.

You see, in the church yonder, the youthful burglar, and the minister after him with the cudgel. As the poor wretch is taken hold of, and downed, he thinks it a fearful thing to be in such strong hands. But before it is all over, he comes to know that he might have been in worse hands than his own minister's, for instead of being sent to the penitentiary, he is forgiven.

You remember about David. He had yielded to temptation, and for his sin the wrath of God fell, not



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upon the King himself, but upon the poor unoffending people. That is so often the way. A King's sins are visited, in judgment upon the people. You see it today in Russia. The Czar has his own trials and perils, but it is the poor people, their wives and children, that have the judgments to bear in their hideous forms. But going back to David, his sin led to a dreadful pestilence that swept away the people by the thousands. David was given the choice of one of three dreadful calamities—famine, war with defeat and pillage, pestilence. He chose the last. He said, fearful as it is to fall into the hands of God, he would rather be there than to be delivered over to the will of his enemies. "So he chose to be in the hands of God—'Because He delighteth in mercy.'"

Now, has any one here, like David, yielded to temptation, and fallen into sin, and is judgment chasing you with its cudgel, and there is no escape? Oh it is a fearful thing to be in the hands of God! But know you not, O sinner, that although He is a consuming fire, and terrible in His judgments, He delighteth in mercy.

and so there is hope for you. You cannot be in better hands. David found that. The prodigal found it when his father's arms were around his neck, and all the bad past he had lived was forgiven and forgotten in the mercy he experienced. And so cast yourself at the feet of God, and leave yourself in His hands. You cannot perish there, and so let me send you away with this sweet and precious thought about God—He delighteth in mercy.

STRAINED BACK AND SIDE.

"While working in a sawmill," writes C. E. Kenney, from Ottawa, "I strained my back and side so severely that I had to go to bed. Every movement caused me torture. I tried different oils and liniments, but wasn't helped until I used Nerviline. Even the first application gave considerable relief. In three days I was at work again. Other men in the mill used Nerviline with tremendous benefit, too." An honest record of nearly fifty years has established the value of Polson's Nerviline.

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