

ance side by side with another; and if you are a truly evangelical man, there will be no fear of their mistaking your standpoint. There is no kind of preaching so wearisome and unprofitable as an anxious, constrained, and formal repetition of the most prominent points of evangelical doctrine. The only cure for this is to keep in close contact with both human nature and the Bible, and be absolutely faithful to the impressions which they make on us.

Yet, take heed that your doctrine be such as will save them that hear you. What saving doctrine has been determined in this land by a grand experiment; and it is only faithfulness to the history of Scotland, as well as to God and your people, to make it the sum and substance and the very breath of life of all your preaching. Our calling is emphatically "the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." This is the glorious message of the gospel, which alone can meet the deep spiritual wants of men.

Preach it out of a living experience. Bunyan, in his autobiography, gives an account of his own preaching, telling how, for the first two years of his ministry, he dwelt continually on the terrors of the law, because he was then quailing himself beneath them; how for the next two years he discoursed chiefly on Christ in his offices, because he was then enjoying the comfort of these doctrines; and then, for a third couple of years, the mystery of union to Christ was the centre both of his preaching and his experience; and so on. That appears to me the very model of a true ministry—to be always preaching the truth one is experiencing oneself at the time, and so giving it out fresh like a discovery just made; while at the same time the centre of gravity, so to speak, of one's doctrine is constantly in motion, passing from one section of the sphere of evangelical truth to another, till it has in succession passed through them all.

III. TAKE HEED TO THEM THAT HEAR YOU.

I almost envy you the new joy that will fill your heart soon, when you fairly get connected with your congregation. The first love of a minister for his own flock is as original and peculiar a blossom of the heart as any other that could be named. And the bond that unites him to those whom he has been the means of converting or raising to higher levels of life is one of the tenderest in existence.

You have come to a hearty people, who will be quite disposed to put a good construction on all you do. This is a busy community, that appreciates a man who works hard. If you do your work faithfully, and preach with the heart and the head, they will come to hear you. It is wonderful how lenient those who hear us are. You will wonder, I dare say, some Sabbaths, that they sit to hear you at all, or that, having heard you, they ever come back again. But if a man is really true, he is not condemned for a single poor sermon. Honest and thorough work and good thinking are not so easily found in the world that a man who generally exhibits them can be neglected. If we fail it must surely generally be our own fault.

The more we put ourselves on a level with the people the better. We stoop to conquer. It is better to feel that we belong to the congregation than that it belongs to us. I like to think of the minister as only one of the congregation set apart by the rest for a particular purpose. A congregation is a number of people associated for their moral and spiritual improvement. And they say to one of their number, Look, brother, we are busy with our daily toils, and confused with domestic and worldly cares. We live in confusion and darkness. But we eagerly long for peace and light to cheer and illuminate our life; and we have heard there is a land where these are to be found—a land of repose and joy, full of thoughts that breathe and words that burn. But we cannot go thither ourselves; we are too embroiled in daily cares.

Come, we will elect you, and set you free from our toils, and you shall go thither for us, and week by week trade with that land and bring us its treasures and its spoils. Oh, woe to him who accepts this election, and yet, failing through idleness to carry on the noble merchandise, appears week by week empty-handed, or with merely counterfeit treasure in his hands! Woe to him, too, if going to that land he forgets those who sent him, and spends his time there in selfish enjoyment of the delights of knowledge! Woe to him if he does not week by week return laden, and ever more richly laden, and saying, Yes, brothers, I have been to the land; and it is a land of light, and peace and nobleness. But I have never forgotten you and your needs, and the dear bonds of brotherhood. And look, I have brought you this, and this, and this, back. Take it to gladden and purify your life!

I esteem it one of the chief rewards of our profession that it makes us respect our fellow-men. It makes us continually think of even the most degraded of them as immortal souls, with magnificent undeveloped possibilities in them—as possible sons of God, and brethren of Christ, and heirs of heaven. Some men, by their profession, are continually tempted to take low views of human nature. But we are forced to think worthily of it. A minister is no minister who does not see wonder in the child in the cradle, and in the peasant in the field—relations with all time behind and before, and all eternity above and beneath. Not but that we see the seamy side too—the depths as well as the heights. We get glimpses of the awful sin of the heart, we are made to feel the force of corrupt nature's mere inert resistance to good influences, we have to feel the pain of the slowness of the movement of goodness, as perhaps no other men do. Yet love and undying faith in the value of the soul and hope for all men are the mainsprings of our activity.

For the end we always aim at is to save those who hear us. Think what that is! What a magnificent life work! It is to fight against sin, to destroy the works of the devil, to make human souls gentle, noble, and Godlike, to help on the progress of the world, to sow the seed of the future, to prepare the population of heaven, to be fellow-sufferers and fellow-workers with Christ, and to glorify God.

This is your true work; and the only true measure of ministerial success is how many souls you save—save in every sense, in the sense of regeneration, and sanctification, and redemption.

HATING REPROOF.

Suppose it were not true that "he that hateth reproof shall die?" Then folly would be rampant. Wisdom would be at a discount. The bigger the fool the greater would be his success. Confusion would be universal. It would not then be true that godliness would be profitable in this life.

There are many ways of knowing a wise and good man. Sometimes you can tell him by his treatment of good men, sometimes by his treatment of bad men; sometimes by his behaviour under affliction; sometimes by his conduct in prosperity; sometimes by his silence; sometimes by his speech. Even a child is known by his doings.

There are as many ways of knowing a bad and foolish man. His words condemn him; his company tells who he is; his shame is often written on his forehead; his crimes have a doleful record in the memory of his friends. In vain does he attempt to conceal his arts and his follies. Often does he dive deep, but he does not succeed in getting his heels out of sight. He doubles on himself, but the hounds of hell still pursue him. He protests his innocence, but no one believes him. He tells marvellous stories, but no one credits him. Even when he speaks the truth, people know not what to think.

If such a one is reprov'd, he shows his aversion to it by avoiding his reprover, by laughing at him when he mingles with the profane, by contumely, by telling him to mind his own business, and by not quitting his evil courses. He may become more artful, more cunning, more secret in his operations; but it is of the nature of sin to come forth to the light.

There is nothing more foolish than hating reproof. It is like the conductor of a railroad train neglecting all the signals given to him. It is madness. It is desperation. It is true that reproof may be given in a wrong spirit, in a harsh manner, with undue severity, or with needless publicity. In such cases a wise man will dislike the manner or time of the warning, but he will not be averse to the counsel itself.

The most notable example of hating reproof found in very early history was probably that of Pharaoh. By words of authority and of kindness, and by ten awful plagues, he was warned to stop in his sinful career. He asked God's servants to pray for him. But he had at no time loved instruction. Duty was to him as nothing. His will and his passions had the mastery over him. His drowning in the Red Sea was as natural and unavoidable a result as one can conceive. He thought he was wiser than God. He was, in fact, as great a fool as ever lived. He loved death. He worked out his own ruin. He dug into hell.

The same madness was manifested by Belshazzar. The awful judgment that befell his grandfather was fully known to him. No sublimer sketch of Jehovah's character and ways is found than that given by Nebuchadnezzar. Yet it was all lost upon his grandson. The prophet Daniel still lived in Chaldea; but Belshazzar had no use for him, and never sent for him till it was too late. All that Daniel could do, when at last sent for, was to pronounce sentence of death on this guilty prince. And that sentence was executed in a few hours. The sun rose only to shine upon the putrefying carcass of the tyrant, who opened not the house of his prisoners, and who mocked the God of heaven, and praised the gods of silver and of gold.

Sacred history tells us of many a wretch whose end was as cheerless as that of the monsters just named. Time would fail us to tell of the persecutors of ancient and modern times who died in horror. Read history. The course of the wicked is always toward ruin. Sometimes, for a short season, progress in that direction seems to be stopped, at least checked. But it is a delusive seeming. Sin has no holidays. It eats like a cancer.

Dear reader, are you living in some sin? Have you found iniquity to be your master? Is there some form of temptation that you cannot resist? You have had warnings. Conscience has admonished you. Friends have given you hints which you ought to have heeded. Your being a professor or a non-professor of religion does not make your case the less critical. All prudent people see that you are bound to endless weeping and wailing unless by divine grace you shall soon escape from the snare of the devil. Oh! hear God's reproofs. Oh! be warned before it shall be said of you, "His own iniquities have taken him, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins; he shall die without instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray."

You cannot harden your heart against God and prosper. He scorneth the scorners. God will hold all your devices in derision. You cannot contend against the Most High. As well might the flax and the tow contend against the flame.

But God has great grace, plenteous mercy, full forgiveness for the penitent. Forsake your evil ways. Break off your sins by righteousness. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Accept with gratitude God's overtures of mercy. Open the door of your heart, and let the Saviour come in as a conqueror, and reign over you, his willing servant, his obedient child. Then iniquity shall not be your ruin. Then salvation shall be yours.—*Rev. Dr. Plumer, in N.Y. Christian Intelligencer.*

To acknowledge that we have done wrong to a fellow-being is to give evidence of growth in wisdom and grace, if the wrong was consciously done.

POLISHED steel will not shine in the dark; no more can human reason, however refined and cultivated, shine efficaciously but it reflects the light of divine truth from heaven. *Josh Foster.*

The temperate man is dear to the Deity, because he is assimilated to Him. The first and best of victories is for a man to conquer himself; to be conquered by himself is of all things the most shameful and vile.