

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

DR JOHN HALL ON THE PASTOR'S WORK.

Dr. John Hall, of New York, has lately delivered three lectures to the theological students at Yale, of which the following is a brief report:

I. ON THE PASTOR BEGINNING HIS WORK

To-day I discuss the pastor beginning his work. I do not take into account those ministers whose names are adorned with S.S.—“stated supply” but which I interpret “saving salary.” I believe that the minister should sustain such a relation to the congregation as will justify him in speaking of them as “my people.” In choosing a field it is wise and modest for the young minister to choose one that will not be too exhausting in its demands on his as yet untried strength. Failure at this time is apt to be very disastrous. When he has chosen his place, let him work as though he always expected to work there. I think the young minister should contemplate making a home of his own. His failure or success will depend to a great degree on the partner he chooses. I believe it is the experience of society that celibates are not noted for their sweetness and gentleness. The home has much to do in making the minister more human, gentle, wise and tender. When a man has found a place to live, one of the first rooms that he needs to arrange is a study. Let it be sunshiny, plainly and simply furnished. Let it be clean. Let no one confound the odour of sanctity with that of tobacco. If you are extravagant in anything, let it be in books. Know what is in your books. One or two good sets of books, as Smith's Bible Dictionary, and Matthew Henry's Commentary, will do you great service. Make the best use of the books you have, and you will find as the years go by that your books will increase faster than you can read them.

Where should the pastor have his study? I prefer not to have it away from one's home, as in the church. It is more accessible, and the influence of his home will be a healthy and harmonizing one.

You will meet many people. Do not be too hasty in expressing your opinions. Do not be too free to make confidential friends. Do not make more than one a year. People with various motives will try to prepossess their pastor. So be slow and careful, and do not say much. Sometimes in a parish there are persons who are recognized by all as good and holy. Be prompt to recognize such. Cultivate all such, and let it be known that such are congenial to you, rather than the bright, the showy, the influential. When you are making your earliest calls avoid talking about persons. The virtue of silence in this also is a cardinal one.

There should be nothing in a minister's dress that will make a strong impression of any kind. His manner should be serious. Seriousness is compatible with the truest manliness. He should have the seriousness of gravity—the seriousness of great interests. Beware of frivolity. I think the minister should make his associates largely among ministers, and he should choose those who will help him most. Don't be slovenly in your dress, your style, your manner, your way of keeping engagements. Make the best use of your resources. Don't bring out all your best things first. Do not waste your material. You are to keep yourself strong and active and Christlike by the constant indwelling of the Spirit of God.

II. THE PASTOR AND HIS WORK.

Pains should be taken that nothing prevents your making pastoral visits. It is very necessary for you to know the people in their homes, and for the people to know you. The little children and the young people should know you. The men should know you. It is only in this way that you can get a distinct idea of the wants of your people, and so be enabled to adapt your preaching to them. Do not begrudge the time thus spent. In freely conversing with humble people you will get side lights, or particular testimony that will make you a stronger man and a better minister for many a day to come. Let this visitation be done impartially. It is not always wise to lead in prayer, but often it will be expected, and it will sometimes be a bright spot in a dreary day. Do the work of an evangelist. We ought to do this in relation to the rich, eminently. Some of our older churches are dying out, and should be replenished by bringing in

just this class. The minister should direct, supervise, and control the benevolent movements of the church. In the temperance work, if he let others take charge of it, he will have all kinds of seed sown. Do not coddle drunkards, but tell them their criminality. The pastor should keep the people interested in missionary work. The Sabbath school should be regarded not as a separate institution, but as the church teaching the young. The minister should be head and front in this work. Pastoral conferences should be more frequently held. We are so afraid of sacerdotalism that we do not make enough of this kind of work. It does not in the least approach the confessional. The minister is present merely as a Christian friend. We must in all this work try to maintain in our hearts simple love to Christ, which will make the work natural.

III. THE CONGREGATION IN GOOD WORKING ORDER.

One of the first things to be considered is the building. Be sure to get a good, sensible building committee. I think that we should care, in the first place, for the acoustic properties of the house. I think it is a great mistake to model our churches on the plan of the cathedral. Adequate light and ventilation ought to have very great attention. I think that it is very essential that the building should be paid for. The money should be given outright, as a gift to God.

The sexton should be a genial, quiet, sensible man; and, if possible, entirely in sympathy with the pastor and his work. He should be prompt and ready. A great deal of good or harm may be done by the way people are shown to their seats.

I think it is the duty of the pastor to find work for the body of his hearers. It is comparatively easy to do this in the case of ladies, but with men it is harder. Still there is much for them to do, which need not interfere with their business.

There are various kinds of ministers: the fossil ministers, who are cut out at the seminary, and who hold their form all their lives—formal ministers—funeral ministers—fluent ministers—flippant ministers—funny ministers. None of these suit us. The minister is to be a live man, a real man, a true man, a simple man, great in his love, great in his life, great in his work, great in his simplicity, great in his gentleness.

There are three things that pertain to the congregation. 1st. They are to be instructed. 2nd. They are to worship. 3rd. They are to work. The great power of the minister and the congregation together is the Holy Spirit. If He is present they will go away—not saying, what a clear sermon, what a beautiful sermon! They will not say much. They will go to their closets and to their knees.

WALKING WITH GOD.

Walking with God is a Christian duty and the grand characteristic of a Christian life. Let us see what is implied in it.

First, similarity of feeling with God—loving what He loves and hating what He hates. “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” In order to do this we must submit ourselves to God, no longer walk contrary to Him, but give up our will to His. We must receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour from sin, and seek through Him the renewing and transforming power of the Holy Ghost. God will meet the sinner so as to permit him to walk with Him only in Jesus Christ. The sinner cannot walk with God clad in the filthy garments of sin and self-righteousness. He must be stripped of these, and be clothed in the righteousness which comes of being found in Christ. Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Hence, it is implied, also, that this walk is by faith—faith in the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ as the way of acceptable walking with Him—faith accompanied by obedience leading us to set the Lord always before us, and striving to please Him always, in all things.

Walking with God implies activity in efforts to do good. Thereby will we be “labourers together with God.” So Jesus walked here on earth. “He went about doing good.” “He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.”

It implies, also, that we must be of a forgiving spirit, for such was Christ. Any one who thinks

he is walking with God and at the same time holds a grudge against another which he is unwilling to give up, is surely deceiving himself.

Communion with God in the exercises of prayer, praise, and the study of the Scriptures, is implied also, for thereby we converse with God, as those who walk one with another.

With this, there must be Christian communion and fellowship with all whom God receives to walk with Him, conversing with one another of things pertaining to the kingdom of God, praying with and for each other, and, let me add, also, coming together to the table of the Lord to break bread in remembrance of His death as that by which they have the privilege of walking with God, and in the observance of which ordinance, they are strengthened in their walk,—coming together there as Christians of different denominations but all one in Christ Jesus, there, certainly, if anywhere, this oneness ought to be manifested. Let no doctrinal differences hinder, so long as the doctrinal opinions which each may hold do not hinder either from walking with God.

God does not require us to make more of what we may think a doctrinal error than He Himself does. A conscientious error in doctrine which does not hinder the soul from communion with God is one which He will overlook; if he would not, who then could walk with Him? But did not Jesus overlook conscientious errors on the part of His disciples? instructing them, indeed, that they might learn better, but not excluding them from following Him and sitting at His table on account of such errors. If we would walk humbly with God we must do the same, remembering that we ourselves are not infallible, and may err in the interpretation of the Scriptures.

Again, walking with God implies progress. In the first stages of it we have but little strength,—can but creep, as it were,—for we are but babes in Christ but we must not remain such, we must become strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Finally, it implies a desire to be like God in holiness of character. One reason why so many walk contrary to God is because the way of walking with God is a way of holiness. That is the name by which it shall be called. “It shall be called the way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it, but the redeemed shall walk there.” “Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.”

A WORD IN SEASON.

Kilstein, a pious German minister, once heard a labouring man use the most awful curses and imprecations in a fit of passion, without reproving him for it. This so troubled him that he could scarcely sleep the following night. In the morning he arose early, soon saw the man coming along, and addressed him as follows:

“My friend, it is you I am waiting to see.”

“You are mistaken,” replied the man; “you have never seen me before.”

“Yes, I saw you yesterday,” said Kilstein, “whilst returning from your work, and heard you praying.”

“What! heard me pray?” said the man. “I am sure now that you are mistaken, for I never prayed in my life.”

“And yet,” calmly but earnestly replied the minister, “if God had heard your prayer, you would not be here, but in hell; for I heard you beseeching God that He might strike you with blindness and condemn you to hell fire.”

The man turned pale and tremblingly said: “Dear sir, do you call this prayer? Yes, it is true; I did this very thing.”

“Now, my friend,” continued Kilstein, “as you acknowledge it, it is my duty to beseech you to seek with the same earnestness the salvation of your soul as you have hitherto its damnation, and I will pray to God that He will have mercy upon you.”

From this time the man regularly attended upon the ministry of Kilstein, and ere long was brought in humble repentance to Christ as a believer.

“A word in season, how good it is!” “Be instant in season and out of season; rebuke, reprove, exhort with long-suffering and patience.”

It is easy to find fault, to pick flaws, to criticise and condemn. But can we improve upon what we blame, and is our life exalted enough to authorize us to act as censors of our friends? Do we not all live in glass houses?