

Pastor and People.

Purpose in Preaching.

One great cause of much of the unaffectionate preaching we hear is a lack of the proper aim. It is true that some preachers seem to have no definite purpose whatever in their preaching. They cannot tell what they are driving at themselves, nor anybody else. They aim at nothing, and let it with magnificent precision.

A man's preaching is usually determined by his character. If that is patient and purposeless, lacking force and individuality, his preaching will be the same. The chief of such a preacher is expressed in the following statement concerning one of his disciples: "My trouble with him is that he don't make no points, and when he's done and though, and see down, I can't tell what he's driving at himself, nor anybody else. They aim at nothing, and let it with magnificent precision."

But the deplorable fact is that in the absence of a definite and proper aim there is generally an unworthy and selfish one,—a seeking to benefit themselves instead of others, by making a profound impression of their own eloquence and abilities, or by catering to the low tastes, and overlooking the aims and needs of the people.

The apostle Paul has set forth this error and its remedy in the powerful antithesis:—"We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord." We preach not for our own benefit or emolument, or to display our abilities, but with a deep sense of the peril and worth of souls, and forgetting ourselves in our love for them and in our anxiety for their salvation; we earnestly preach Christ Jesus the Lord and him crucified as the only way under heaven given among men whereby they can be saved.

Here, then, are the two elements essential to a true ministry of the gospel—an intense love and sympathy for men suffering from the malady of sin, and a perfect faith in Christ as the all sufficient and only Saviour from sin. That preaching which combines these two elements will have definiteness of purpose—the one and only proper aim of saving immortal souls.

Such a preacher knows his business, knows precisely what he is aiming at, and compels his hearers to know and feel it too. They see that he has the "burden of souls." They know that he is intensely interested in themselves; that he is intent upon saving their souls. They feel his grasp upon them, to pluck them as brands from the burning; not the grasp of logic; they can evade that by counter arguments, nor the power of graceful and eloquent utterance, but the grasp of a mighty human and divine sympathy upon their hearts, accompanied by the influence of the Holy Ghost upon their consciences. For such singleness of aim and passionate yearning to help and save men are usually attended and rendered efficient by the power of the spirit. Men can "smile at the artifices of rhetoric, and be pleased with displays of eloquence. They can sit unmoved under sermons intended by the preacher to raise their estimate of himself." But the preacher who is inspired by an intense desire and purpose to save their souls, and whose words and tone and gestures evince his sense of their peril and his anxiety for their salvation, they cannot elude.

Such preaching will be no mere word-painting, or straining after beautiful, elegant diction, and well-rounded, harmonious periods. "Forgetting the doctrine for the sake of an epithet," or buying it in a mass of glittering verbiage, and leaving only a vague impression upon the hearer that he had attended some sort of semi-religious literary, or dramatic entertainment and heard a "good kind of noise for about five-and-forty minutes." How often do we hear it said of a preacher that "he is a polished speaker; that his language is exquisite; that his composition is exceedingly artistic, and his sermons literary models." And this of a minister of the cross, a preacher of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come!" This of one who has been "put in trust with the Gospel," and called to "watch for souls as they must give account," to warn men, to "flee the wrath to come," and "beseech them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God!"

Preaching the Gospel is not purposeless declamation, or a mere literary performance—a rhetorical display, consisting of a rhythmical jingle of pretty words and sentences, nor is it a frigid discussion of "a dry crust of philosophy, or a meaningless, marrowless bone of criticism," on which men's souls starve and perish for lack of food, and in all of which men preach themselves and not Christ Jesus the Lord. There is not only no need of such preaching, there is positively no excuse for it. It is a wicked betrayal of the highest possible trust—an abandonment of the most glorious and responsible mission ever committed to man.

The Gospel has a single definite object. Its sole purpose is the salvation of men. This is the grand purpose of its publication by means of a living ministry; the purpose of revelation in both dispensations—that of prophecies and ceremonies, all of which pointed to Christ the Saviour of men, and that of fulfilment of the gift, suffering and death of the "Only Begotten Son," that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." The whole of the remedial plan from its inception in the Garden of Eden to its completion on the cross, is directed with the one grand purpose and aim of saving lost men. It has enlisted the energies and taxed the resources of Omnipotence every day and hour from the beginning of time until now. And shall ministers, called of God to be co-laborers with him in this great work, lose sight of this object of their high calling, and fritter away their strength in cultivating the flowers of rhetoric and making nice ethical, wretched and logical discourses; or, what is worse, seek to make that call subservient to the attainment of their selfish ambitions by degrading it to a pack horse on which to ride into positions of preferment and ease?

Thou one question which every minister of the Gospel of Christ should invariably propound to himself, and seek to answer in

every sermon he preaches is, How can I influence men to accept and follow Christ? With this purpose constantly before his mind, he will not preach himself, but "Christ Jesus our Lord." He will forget himself in his burning, absorbing zeal and love for souls, and will never rest until he has brought his hearers face to face with the cross of Christ, showing them its bearing upon human sin and human need, and forced upon them a pungent sense of personal obligation and responsibility and danger.

"In Perfect Peace."

BY REV. J. S. BACHELDER.

My friend Jones has had a new experience of the power of the glorious Gospel. He has been a sincere Christian for many years, but, like many sincere believers, he has not enjoyed the abiding peace and rest of God. He is a man of many cares and responsibilities, and they have weighed heavily upon him. With occasional flashes of light, he has, as a Christian, dwelt much in the shade, and walked over rough and thorny ways. In a large measure he has lived a doubting, distrustful, irritable, burdened life. In truth he has been by no means a model disciple of Jesus.

Not long since, this good brother, in his Scripture readings, came upon that transcendent utterance of Isaiah: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." The words were familiar, but they seized his attention with unwonted force. He re-read them, and pondered them; he turned them this way and that—as one would turn a diamond—to get every possible reflection of light. "In perfect peace! Is this indeed a truth of the Word of God?" he asked himself. "Is it possible that such a truth is here, and I have never before caught its meaning?"

"Thou wilt keep him." Why, this is one of the unalterable promises of the Eternal Father, is it not? And how has my Christian experience tallied with such an assurance? Have I not been as far from perfect peace, and such divine keeping, as a wave of the sea driven of the wind and tossed?"

My friend did not hasten to his business that morning. He was getting a new vision from above, and he could not be disobedient unto it. He reached down his concordance, and made a study of that word "peace." In John's Gospel he found the Master saying: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "In me ye shall have peace." "And yet"—said Jones to his own soul—"I have been bearing about with me a troubled and fearful heart, more or less, every day since first I sought to lay myself on the altar of Christ. Surely there is something wrong in this. Such a startling discrepancy between the promise of my blessed Lord and my own life convicts me of the grossest inattention to His words; yea of the most fearful unbelief!"

Then he looked further on, and found the Spirit saying through the great apostle: "Let the peace of God rule in our hearts, to which ye are called." "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." "And the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

As he pursued these readings he was filled with surprise at the persistent and untiring emphasis with which this doctrine of the perfect peace of God in His children is rung throughout the Scriptures. And yet had he not dwelt outside the gates of that temple of peace, very much as if no such temple had existed!

Then came to his soul the words: "Ask, and ye shall receive." Then and there he bowed himself before the throne of Eternal Grace, and poured out his soul in earnest entreaty for the unspeakable gift. He laid himself, his possessions, all, upon the altar of consecration. The heavens opened to him and the light poured down. He wrestled and prevailed. It was his "Peniel."

When Jones came out of his library that morning, all outward things were very much the same as when he went in; but, somehow, it seemed to him as if a new light were shining over all things.

My friend's life since that day has been a new life. A saved man before, he is a joyful man now. What an almost miraculous difference between the man who had only looked to Jesus as the deliverer from the suspended thunderbolt of Divine Justice, and the man who now looks to Jesus as the "Author and Finisher of his faith"—between the Jones who frowned, and fumed, and exploded at every little spark of irritation, and the Jones who walks among the bramble bushes of life with the light of perfect peace on his countenance!

In my friend's life the vexatious things are as numerous as in the old dark days. These hard times have brought business perplexities to him from all directions. The failure of a noted business house finds him among the creditors upon whom the blow falls. For him, as for multitudes besides, the clouds do not yet lift from the horizon of the business future. But what of all that? He is enabled, with calm trust and perfect confidence, to lay every burden upon Him who has performed for us a finished work of salvation and deliverance, and whose reiterated assurances make it not merely a misfortune, but a sin, for us to live outside the circle of God's perfect peace!—Congregationalist.

RECOMMEND Christ by your words, but especially recommend Him by a gospel-like behaviour. If, through the Divine blessing you may be the means of bringing one soul to Christ, you will be instrumental in doing more good than by saving a kingdom or conquering a world.—Livington.

No Time to be Religious.

What poor, deluded mortal ever made such an excuse for not devoting himself to the service of his Maker? What was time given to us for, but that we might prepare for eternity? Why are our lives lengthened out from day to day, but that we may make our peace with God ere it shall be forever too late? Why is not the unprofitable fig tree cut down and cast into the fire? Who can tell? It seems wonderful, that we can find time for anything else, until we have obeyed the command. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." God will watch over and take care of all who put their trust in Him. He feeds the fowls of the air, which have neither storehouse nor barn. Can we doubt, but that He will supply all our wants, if we love Him and keep His commandments? To do so, would make it manifest that our faith was very weak—that we do not believe in an over-ruling Providence. Surely, God has not given up the world to the government of chance. The want of faith in the goodness and mercy of God is the crying sin that will at last bring down condemnation upon an ungodly world. We should be on our guard against it. It leads us all astray.

Our most important duty ought to be attended to first. That is a plain proposition. All will admit that it is a wise one. It is, in fact, the dictate of common sense. Now, what is the most important duty binding on the conscience of every man? What is the duty, which, if neglected, will be followed by the most disastrous consequences? It is a duty, to which, perhaps, but little attention has been paid—which has often been pressed home on the heart and conscience, leaving there only a sense of guilt and shame. It is the duty of giving the heart to God and devoting ourselves to His service. How long would it take to perform it? What, then, becomes of this excuse, that they have no time to be religious, which is so often made by persons who seem to think they are excoriated from the performance of all their religious duties, by having so much worldly business to attend to? Did praying to God in secret, or in public either, ever hinder any man from being diligent and industrious, when engaged with his worldly affairs? It would have just the contrary effect. To pray well, is to study well, so we old preachers used to say; and why may we not take it for granted that, to pray fervently for the blessing of God, would only make us work the more diligently, never mind in what occupation we might be engaged.

But not to pray at all; not to let God have any place in our thoughts; not to remember that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever—that would be to live as the heathen do; and yet, how many in this Christian land live without God and without hope in the world, because they have not time to be religious? Strange delusion! Do they not know how uncertain is life? How near they are to the world beyond the grave? What if death should come upon them at an unexpected moment, when they had no time to repent and prepare to appear before God in the judgment? Strange, however, as is this delusion, that men have no time to be religious, it undoubtedly has great influence upon all classes in the community. People have gotten it into their heads, that the first and most important duty of every man is, to make money—to get rich, if he can; but at all events, to provide for himself and his family, never mind what else may be neglected. Now, that is wrong. It displaces the order of things. It puts the calf before the horse. We must first seek the favor of God. Without it nothing can prosper; and, if it could, what amount of wealth or worldly honor would compensate a man for failing to attend to the duties of religion? How many, on their deathbeds, have bitterly lamented their waste of precious time in pursuit of the vanities of life? They were so busy, so completely occupied with their schemes of pleasure or profit, that they had no time to lay up treasure in heaven. What an excuse is that for any rational man to make! Yet thousands make it, and awaken to a sense of their folly when it is too late to seek admittance into the kingdom of heaven. The door is shut.—Christian Observer.

Light will Shine.

If we have life it will be seen. Even young children detect its existence and discern the cause. A friend in Southern Indiana relates an incident of his ministry which illustrates this. An exceedingly rough and profane man attended a revival meeting and gave his heart to Christ. His family knew nothing of the occurrence, but his young children discovered a change. The next morning they watched him and wondered at his kindness. They followed him to the barn where he usually abused his horses, and was shamefully profane, but there was no violence or passion now. The children were satisfied, "Pa has got religion," and they ran to the house with the marvelous tidings. They detected the good fruits, and traced them to the real cause. Not a word had been said, but the new life was discovered. The candle was lighted, the children's eyes caught the light and knew the cause. Here are rich lessons taught. First, that grace cuts the root of sin, and changes the life by renewing the heart. Before, this man could scarcely restrain his swearing, now he could not be forced to swear. Second, the new life cannot be concealed. If it exists at all it will become visible; light will shine, life will be seen. Third, little children read our lives and know when we bear the fruits of faith. They soon feel the force of the testimony of saved men to the power of religion, and believe.

For everyone life has some blessing—some cup that is not mixed with bitterness. At every heart there is some fountain of pure water, and all men at some time taste its sweetness. Who is he that has not found in his path of life some fragrant rosebush, scenting all the air with its sweet perfume, and cheering the heart of the weary traveller with its beauty.

Aim Your Prayers at a Mark.

Prayer, to be prevailing, must be direct, intense, personal. This is the character of the Spiritual prayers which called forth an exhibition of miraculous power for healing the body, and of divine grace for redeeming the soul. Elijah, when told of the death of the widow's son, does not proceed to offer up a general petition for some unknown or distant mother who may be supposed to be agonizing over a dead boy, but he stretches himself three times upon the very child whom he wishes to restore, crying out with a tremendous energy of faith, "O Lord, my God, I pray Thee, let this child's soul come into him again." A general request uttered in a half-hearted way would have availed no thing here—a specific and intensely earnest request brought God to the rescue. It was the same in the case of Eli-sha-bere the Shunammite's lifeless son. The definiteness and personal application of the prophet's presence in behalf of the object sought is strikingly significant and instructive. "And he went up and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm." Nor was this all. The yearning anxiety and profound struggles through which the prophet passed, as through a process of spiritual growth up to victorious faith, are evinced in his walking to and fro, and his repeating the operation of stretching himself upon the yet motionless child. The Almighty arm moves in response to the cry of a soul thus burning with personal sympathy and love,—thus pursuing a conscious and well-defined purpose. When Paul bowed himself over the fallen Eutychus, Divine strength rushed through the door of this personal embrace, and the young man arose alive! The wandering, indirect, impersonal prayer is absolutely futile. Like an arrow shot in the dark toward the star, it has no aim, nor does it ever by accident hit anything. Such a performance, though made up of choicest words arranged into elegant phrases, and though exciting admiration from an appreciative lover of eloquence, does not deserve the name of prayer at all. It is a mere address to a human audience, often as insincere and devoid of genuine grace as it is brilliant. The supplication must alight, like Noah's dove, somewhere, before it can return with the olive branch promise of rest from the troubled waters.

Oh, that disciples would remember this. Why not imitate our Lord at the grave of the dead? He did not call for somebody in general, caring not who should come, or whether anybody at all should come. He named the person whom he wished to revive distinctly, "Lazarus, come forth!" Have you, Christian parent, a son or daughter dead in trespasses and sins? Why not from your closet send up that child's name to heaven, beseeching that it may be definitely written down in the book of life? One of the sweetest, because tenderest, assurances ever given by the Saviour of sinners is contained in that inimitable picture of himself as the Good Shepherd who "calloth his own sheep by name." If Christ addresses himself to the individual, surely he wants us to pray for individuals, to labour for and with individuals. Have you, then, an intimate friend yet unconverted? God doubtless has ordered and allowed this friendship on purpose to give you the opportunity of pouring out before Him your petitions, commingled of trust and affection, and the ardent solicitude inspired by daily companionship, for that friend's salvation. Nay, more, you can fix your attention upon a slight acquaintance or a comparative stranger, and bear his eternal interests in the voice of entreaty to the mediatorial throne, where the Great Intercessor delights to show Himself the hearer of intercessors. The marvellous answers to the prayers of the old Faltou Street meetings are to be explained on the principle of their directness and personal bearing. Written descriptions of abandoned young men, of intemperate husbands, of vicious youths, of frivolous and fashion-crazed girls, and of all kinds of transgressors, have aroused an intensity of personal interest and a living freshness of faith in prayer, such as have elsewhere never been so completely and fruitfully witnessed. Hundreds upon hundreds of souls have been melted in repentance by the pentecostal fires bursting from these clearly expressed and accurately aimed petitions. Mothers and sisters, before you enter the social or church prayer-meeting, endeavour by requests preferred in writing or conversation, to have your children and brothers remembered. And if every member of Christ's kingdom would keep a list of friends and acquaintances for whom secret supplication should be daily made, doubtless those prayers would be answered by the conversion and blessedness of those prayed for.—Christian at Work.

Saving Faith.

If we would at once see in brief what a true and saving faith is, we may take the sum of it in this description. It is when a sinner, being on the one hand thoroughly convinced of his sins, of the wrath of God due to him for them, of his utter inability either to escape or bear this wrath; and, on the other hand, being likewise convinced of the sufficiency, willingness, and designation of Christ to satisfy justice, and to reconcile and save sinners, doth hereupon yield a firm assent unto these truths revealed in the Scripture, and also accepts and receives Jesus Christ in all his offices; as his Prophet, resolving to attend unto his teaching as his Lord and King, resolving to obey his commands; and as his Priest, resolving to rely upon his sacrifice alone; and doth accordingly submit to Him, and confide in him sincerely and perseveringly. This is that faith which doth justify; and will certainly save all those in whom it is wrought.—Bishop Ho, King.

The Hindus, when gathering in their harvest, before it is removed from the threshing-floor, take out the portion for their god. However poor, however much in debt, or however much the crops may be, the god's portion is first given.

Random Readings.

Good or bad habits, formed in youth, generally go with us through life.

Let every minister while he is preaching remember that God makes one of his hearers.

The only religion possible to man is the religion of penitence.

Ye glory in private, glory in precept I for ye love Christ in proportion as ye love Him altogether.

If God has given you victory over your enemies, you have never more need to watch and pray than at that moment.

Thou on the fine edge of the wedge only is inserted in the tree, the object of him who inserts it is to rend the tree asunder.

I know of two beautiful things: the stary heavens above my head, and the sense of duty within my heart.—Inmanuel Kant.

Be thankful for past mercies before you plead for new favors; this is the way to plead successfully; he that dotheth praise glorifieth God.

We may escape the censure of others when we do wrong privately; but we can not avoid the reproaches of our own mind.

We are to be judged not only for the sins committed in a life-time; but also for the evil influences which they may exert after that we have passed away.

As we are nearing the grave, it should be with accumulated sweetness and dignity and generous allowance for the foibles of youth, the failures of the unfortunate, and the failings of the tempted.

Out of heaven to which the virtuous shall at last come, out of heaven which gives us the idea of a Father and Saviour, comes the only explanation of humanity that can give man any morals for his life, and lofty ideal for his education, any consolation in sorrow, any flowers for his tomb.

A DYING Scotchman was asked, "Have you a glimpse of glory now, my brother, that you are dying?" He roused himself from his lethargy at such a question, and raising himself from the agonies of death, said, "I'll have none o' your glimpses now that I am dying, since I ha'e had a full look at him for forty year." We all expect to have that full look at Christ in dying. Let us have it now.

You will not catch the hungry hearer drowsy. Hunger and drowsiness are not often in each other's company. When one is present, the other is generally missing. A hungry hearer sleeps! Not he. He does not go to sleep. He goes to satisfy a craving appetite. That appetite makes divine truth sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. It would not look well to see a man drowsy at his dinner. It does not look even as well as that one so at the spiritual banquet.

A rich landlord once cruelly oppressed a poor widow. Her son, a little lad of eight years, saw it. He afterwards became a painter, and painted a life-likeness of the dark scene. Years afterward, he placed it where the man saw it. He turned pale, trembled in every joint, and offered any sum to purchase it, that he might put it out of sight. Thus there is an invisible Painter drawing on the canvas of the soul a life-likeness reflecting correctly all the spiritual history on earth. Eternity will reveal them to every man.

To watch without prayer is to presume upon our own strength; to pray without watching is to presume upon the grace of God. The Lord's Prayer is the rule of our duty and desires. We are engaged by every petition to co-operate and concur with Divine grace to obtain what we pray for. A stream preserves its crystal clearness by continual running; if its course be stopped, it will stagnate and putrify. The purity of the soul is preserved by the constant exercise of habitual grace.—Dates.

A MAN who has been redeemed by the blood of the Son of God should be pure. He who is an heir of life should be holy. He who is attended by celestial beings, and who is soon to be translated to heaven, should be holy. Are angels my attendants? Then I should walk worthy of my companionship. Am I so soon to go and dwell with angels? Then I should be pure. Are these feet so soon to tread the courts of heaven? Is this tongue soon to unite with heavenly beings in praising God? Are these eyes of mine so soon to look on the throne of eternal glory, and on the ascended Redeemer? Then, these feet, and eyes, and lips, should be pure and holy, and I should be dead to the world and live for heaven.

Much has been said about systematic giving, and it is hoped that our Churches and people are rising to a higher standard of intelligent consecration. But little or nothing has been said concerning systematic private praying, with reference to our great benevolent agencies. Since the connection is so intimate and so important, a suggestion will not be considered untimely. If we attempt, in our closet prayers, to mention all of these subjects at once, it must be done in a somewhat indefinite and unintelligent manner. And much is lost to these causes by such confused praying. But if we separate them, and take pains to gather all the information that will give stimulus to our desires, the results will be apparent.

LORD, my voice by nature is harsh and untunable, and it is vain to lavish any art to better it. Can my singing of psalms be pleasing to Thy ears which is unpleasant to my own? Yet, though I cannot chant with the nightingale, or chirp with the blackbird, I had rather chatter with the swallow, yea, rather croak with the raven, than be altogether silent. Hadst thou given me a better voice I would have praised Thee with a better voice. Now, what my music wants in sweetness, let it have in sense, singing praises with understanding. Yea, Lord, create in me a new heart (therein to make melody, and I will be contented with my old voice until, in due time, being admitted into the choir of heaven, I will have another, more harmonious, bestowed upon me.—F. A. L.