

## PREACH THE TRUTH.

The following incident, related by Dr. A. T. Pierson, may bring a re-inforcement of courage to some preachers to preach the truth that men most need, regardless of the hearer's tastes or position in life. "At the funeral of a rich and popular but dissipated man who died of delirium tremens, I felt it my duty to be very plain in addressing a large number of men who attended the funeral, with words of warning. So after a few words of reference to the dead, I began a pointed appeal to the hundreds of his unconverted business associates who came to the last rites. I asked them that old question of profit and loss, 'What shall a man be profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' With as much plainness as I could, I applied that question to many who, as I knew, never showed themselves within church doors. Of course they took offence. Many came that day, expecting that the officiating clergyman would pay homage to a rich and popular man, and gloss over with polite varnish his life of profligacy and inebriety. They hoped to get some salve to their own consciences from the ointment of praise with which such a man would be anointed for burial. The disappointment of a few was both outspoken and violent. One man went away angrily cursing and swearing at me and declaring that he would put it in his will that I should never have any part in his funeral ceremonies! Any minister of the Gospel who seeks first of all to be true to himself and to God as well as man, knows at what sacrifice of feeling, truth has sometimes to be told, and conscience obeyed. But sooner or later the compensation comes. And in this case it came very unexpectedly and markedly. Within a few months God smote that man with an incurable disease; and, as he belonged to my congregation, it became now my duty to offer him such consolation and help as I could. Hesitatingly I ventured to call upon him; and to my surprise he was not only glad to see me, but begged me to come often, which I did. He clung to me like a little child—opened his whole heart to me, confessed his own lifelong sins, besought me to pray for him and with him, and before he died wrote me a letter, which is among the precious things preserved with great care. In that letter he says, after paying the most loving tribute to whatever attentions I had paid him during his illness, 'Always tell men the truth: be honest with them under all circumstances. They may be offended at the time, but they will believe in you and trust you in the end.'"

If the end of one mercy were not the beginning of another, we were undone.

## THAT SERMON TO AN AUDIENCE OF ONE.

Ministers of the Gospel very generally and very naturally desire large audiences, and dislike to face small ones. Indeed they sometimes seem to carry their likes and dislikes in this matter to such an extent as to make very little earnest preparation for meeting small congregations. And yet more frequently than they suppose, the small congregation is the more hopeful one, and demands equally careful, earnest, and prayerful preparation.

Our Lord has left us an instructive lesson upon this topic—one which His ministers can, and should, always follow—He never despised the small congregation. It always received from him as earnest and careful attention as at the large, and from it there often came more wonderful results. If He had been as particular about the size of His audience as some of His ministers sometimes seem to be, He might not have preached in the noontide sultriness of a summer's day, that wonderful sermon to an audience of one—and that one a sinful outcast and a despised Samaritan woman, who came to draw water from the well at which He was resting, on His toilsome journey into Galilee.

That woman was certainly not an inviting audience, and yet look at the results of that sermon. She was a caviller at first, earnest, even bitter, and yet intelligent. She soon became a subdued and eager listener, then an earnest convert, and then a wonderfully successful evangelist to her own neighbors and people—so successful that the preacher at once received an earnest and unanimous call to the Samaritan city of Sychar, which He of course declined. Some of His ministers would have undoubtedly preached earnestly to such an audience, but how many?

And so we get back to the great lesson, that the largest congregations are not always the most promising fields of labor, that the smaller ones should receive the results of careful and prayerful preparation quite as fully as the larger, and very often a far more promising fields for useful and rewarded labor.

Grace thrives by frequent meditation on portions of God's word: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly."

Simply to be in this world, is to be ever exerting an influence—an influence, compared to which, mere language and persuasion are feeble.