

Pastor and People.

"Those Dreadful Words."

In my old parish there was a young man in whom I came to feel a peculiar interest. He was a physician, and of no mean proficiency in his art, to which he was very devoted, and in which he had fair to attain to eminence. His mother was a devoted Christian woman, a member of the Baptist Church, deeply interested, as might have been expected, in the religious welfare of her son. He had been educated in the family of an uncle, who was connected with my church, and this brought the young man directly under my own pastoral care. He was a regular attendant upon my ministry, never absent from church services except when prevented by professional engagements. His manner was serious and devout, he showed much interest in the truth; his external character was irreproachable, but he had never made any open confession of Christ, and was not in communion with the visible Church. As I saw more of Dr. C., I became more and more interested in him. And I was more and more perplexed to know why such a man stood aloof from the Lord's table. I never discovered anything in his conversation or general deportment that seemed inconsistent with the character of a Christian. Several sacramental seasons passed after I had formed his acquaintance, and at each of them I hoped to see him come forward and ask to be received into the Church. But still he did not come. It happened that a season occurred when a larger number than usual were added to the Church, and the services of the Sabbath were more than usually interesting. I noticed that Dr. C. remained in his pew, and witnessed the administration of the holy ordinance. He seemed to be deeply interested, and at times especially overcome with emotion. I determined that I would seek an early opportunity of conversing with him on the subject, at greater length than I had ever done, and found the opportunity which I sought during the week which followed the sacramental Sabbath. We had a most interesting conversation, and though more than twenty years have passed, I think that I can give the substance of it to my readers. After some remarks on the ordinary topics of the day, I said: "Doctor, I was very much gratified to see that you remained last Sabbath and witnessed the administration of the Lord's Supper."

ly, and especially such a solemn thing as taking the emblems of the body and blood of Christ? I cannot do it. I should eat and drink damnation to myself. For I cannot conceive of a more solemn and holy ordinance than that of the Lord's Supper. And with those dreadful words before me, I cannot, I dare not venture to go to the table." "My dear friend," said I, "far be it from me to depreciate the solemnity of the Holy Sacrament in your estimation. No man ought to approach the Lord's table lightly or irreverently, or 'unworthily.' Yet I am persuaded that you have a mistaken idea of the real meaning of this particular passage, and if you will listen to me, I shall be glad to explain to you its true significance." "I shall be most grateful to you, if you will." "You say then," I replied to my young friend, "that a sense of personal unworthiness keeps you from the Lord's table. Do you think that the word 'unworthily' in the passage in Cor. 11th, qualifies the act, or the person? In other words, does our personal unworthiness necessarily prevent us from eating and drinking worthily?" "I should think that an unworthy person, as I said before, must eat and drink unworthily." "Suppose," I replied, "that you should invite a man very much beneath you in the social scale, and who had no claims at all on your hospitality, to be a guest at your table. He might very well say that he was not worthy of such an honor, and yet inasmuch as you with a full knowledge of his position, chose to invite him to enjoy your hospitality, might he not properly accept your invitation? And if he conducted himself in a proper manner at your table, would you not consider him a worthy guest? You would think no less of him for his modesty and self-depreciation. You might say that this was proper and right, but that if you, with a full knowledge of his character and position, did in good faith invite him to be your guest, he need not be deterred from accepting your invitation, even though he might confess himself to be unworthy. You, as his host, would after all be the judge of his fitness, and if you were satisfied to ask him, surely he need not be ashamed to come. A proper sense of his unworthiness, would probably all the more commend him to your hospitality. But on the other hand, suppose that this man being unworthy, should yet have no sense of his want of his worth, but should come to your table, as if he had a right there, as if he was in all respects your equal; as if the invitation was only a proper recognition of his merit, and should conduct himself at your table in a very self-complacent and arrogant manner, that would be a very different thing. That would be eating and drinking 'unworthily.' That is, the manner of eating and drinking would be unworthy, unsuitable, improper, and would evince a state of mind in your guest, which would not command your approbation but your condemnation. "Now, my dear Doctor, the Lord Jesus Christ has spread his table, and invites you to become His guest. You say, you cannot accept His invitation, because you are not worthy. But he knows that, just as well as you do. He knows that better than you do. But he does not invite you on the strength of your merit, but in his own free and sovereign grace. A full sense of your personal demerit need not hinder you from accepting his cordial invitation. If he is willing to receive you, ought you not to be willing and glad to be received? If you were to reply to His invitation, 'Yes, Lord Jesus, I am perfectly worthy to come to your table, I have merit enough to entitle me to a place there,' do you think that if you were to go in that spirit, you would eat and drink worthily? No! indeed." "But what, then, is the meaning of those words, 'unworthily,' and 'damnation to myself?'" "To whom was the Apostle writing?" "To the Christians at Corinth."

"Who were they?" "I suppose that many of them were converted heathens." "They were, and being such, they were not yet free from the influence of their old habits and associations. The Apostle had occasion to rebuke them for the irregular and unworthy way in which they often celebrated the Lord's Supper. They followed in a measure their old habit of feasting, and made this simple commemorative rite an occasion of revelry and excess. If you read the eleventh of Corinthians from the twentieth verse to the end, you will see that the language describes and rebukes the irregular and improper way in which they celebrated the holy Supper. And he tells them that if they persist in this perversion of the ordinance, they will receive no spiritual profit from it, and will not enjoy the approbation of Christ, but His condemnation. The word rendered 'unworthily,' means observing the ordinance in an irreverent and improper manner, and has no reference to any humble sense of personal unworthiness on the part of the individual communicant. It rather refers to his misunderstanding of the nature and design of the ordinance and his mistaken method of its celebration." "But what," said the Doctor, "is the meaning of that fearful word 'damnation to myself?'" "Simply condemnation, as opposed to approbation, and not the eternal portion of the soul. The sense of the whole passage is, that they who come to the Lord's table, without understanding the real nature and design of the ordinance, and who observe it in an irreverent and unworthy manner, are guilty of making an improper use of that which represents 'the body and blood of the Lord'; and so far from enjoying the approbation of Christ, and deriving spiritual profit from the rite, they will receive condemnation rather than approbation, and will 'eat and drink damnation to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body.'" "But there is nothing at all in this passage intended to discourage a Christian, who feels a sense of his personal unworthiness from coming to the Lord's table. Such are most welcome, and your

'dreadful words' have no application to him at all." Doctor C. listened with profound attention and absorbing interest. The view presented was new to him, and impressed him deeply. After a few moments of deep thought, he said: "I thank you, my dear pastor, for your explanation. Those words have given me a great deal of trouble. I know that I never could feel that I was worthy. I am satisfied that I misinterpreted the words, and I hope that will no longer keep me from what I felt to be not only a duty but a privilege, to sit down at the table of the Lord." At the next communion Doctor C. was one of the communicants. Twenty years have passed away, and he is a very eminent physician and a consistent and useful member of the Church of Christ.—A City Pastor, in N. Y. Christian Intelligencer.

Abraham.

And Abraham said unto Lot, "let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me. If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or, if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." Genesis xiii. 8, 9. How right royally Terah's son, from Uz of the Chaldees, stands out in this Oriental picture! Mark the peaceful spirit, the tender relationship, the princely magnanimity of this old, true character. What a domain for a choice, as the fertile plains of Jordan stretch out on the left, and the land of Canaan and the cities of the plain meet Lot's uplifted eyes. The man, the time, the place, the occasion, the result, belong to the world. The geography of this historic scene was where his tent had been at the beginning—between Bethel and Hai, about twelve miles north of Jerusalem, and midway between the great Mediterranean and the river Jordan, looking out upon a plain "even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest into Zoar." Here was first settled, without bloodshed, questions of strife. Here was the world's first Peace Congress. The arbiters were the foremost men of the world. Their lives have been wrought into the web and woof of all time. This man Abraham, who was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold, dwelling in tents, looking for a city that both foundations, whose faith was counted unto him for righteousness, was a perfect man, like God's servant Job, but much rather a man with strong human affinities, and, like Elias, subject to temptations. We are glad of the human side of this friend of God. Such a man God chose, to found a kingly race, whose throne should endure forever. Such a man God chose, as worthy of great promises, and worthy of great struggles. Such a man God always chooses for great tests. Such a man was David, and Nehemiah, and Peter, and Luther, and Cromwell.

Political (in a good sense) as wise, prudent, sagacious, no doubt Abraham was the man for his place, and possessed talents of wonderful power and adaptation. His plea with the Lord for Sodom is a masterpiece of eloquence and sagacity. "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak out this once. peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for the ten's sake." His refusal to accept, from a threat to a shoe-latchet, from the captive kings, lest thou shouldst say, "I have made Abraham rich," was chivalrous and Christian. But Abraham's faith concerns us most—the simple faith of a child, yoked to the iron will of a giant. Yielding perfect obedience to God, he commanded his children and his household after him. By faith he saw, in a smoking furnace and burning lamp, his seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is upon the sea-shore; but with Abimelech. He must have the seven ewe lambs as a witness that he had dug the well at Beersheba. By faith he could bind his son of promise upon the altar; but his well-tried prime minister, "this Eliezer of Damascus," whom he sends out on an errand of astute diplomacy, he commands to swear by the Lord of heaven and God of earth.

The lesson of this narrative is an important one to the Christian. Paul, as usual, strikes the key note of this man's faith. "And he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heir, with him, of the same promise." Mark, dwelling with Isaac and Jacob, and having them as heirs who were not born. Luke adds, "and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." More than this, the promise was also for an inheritance in Canaan. Luke further says, "and he gave him none inheritance in it; no, not so much as to set his foot on." Clearly Abraham did not inherit Canaan. He even purchased of Ephron, the son of Zohar, the cave of Machpelah, to bury his dead, for four hundred shekels of silver, current money. "And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Beth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you; give me possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of sight."

Did God promise Abraham in vain, or meek his faith? Verily, if Abraham looked for the fulfillment of the promise in this life. But we find him giving up the ghost, in a good old age, and entering the heavenly Canaan. Here is the patience of the saints; here speaks the comforter. Brother man, God's promises lay hold on eternity; they roll back the golden gates. Abraham's life was as our life. We are promised blessings, but our sin goes down with no Canaan for an inheritance in sight. Nevertheless our city hath foundations, and abideth forever. "He beheld Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." He who was very rich in silver and gold, and was denied the earthly Canaan, and he whose sores the dogs licked, and was denied the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table dwell together in eternal companionship. Who shall say what is the inheritance that is denied us in this life? Who shall say what iron marks we lay down at

the grave's mouth, or what we put on? Shall we not rather trust God, and say, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering?" Shall we not rather hear God say "fear not; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward?"—Selected.

Angel Visits.

I have often thought I would like to have lived in the old angel days—to be like the patriarch, sitting at evening in my tent door, and be surprised by a visit of celestial ones in human disguise. It seems to me that heaven and earth were on greater terms of intimacy in that by-gone age, than in this Gospel day. The air was fanned by angelic wings, and the bright inhabitants of Paradise thought nothing of spending an hour with the servants of God on earth. There are lots of Lots in these days, but they are never honored with these guests from the land beyond the strange river. Why is it? Should not the last superior dispensation bring the angel world nearer to the heirs of immortality? Have we lost the art of heavenly communication? It is, I am confident, the Saturday afternoon of the long week of the world, and the eternal Sabbath is drawing nigh; then, why do not the angels throng the glorious highway between earth and heaven?

WE HAVE ANGEL VISITS IN THESE DAYS.

True, we have not the bright vision of God's ancients. The natural eyes of ours do not see them. These flesh-tongues, and hands, do not talk with and touch them. But is there not often a spiritual intercourse? The musical prayer of the sweet-singing blacks from the South is often answered to-day—"Lord send down angels down." Dear brother in Christ, have you never had a visit from the bright brotherhood of the skies? In the sanctuary, while the preacher has been unfolding some Gospel truth? In the prayer-meeting, in song of praise, or voice of supplication? In the closet, alone with God? Reading the words of Christ? In business; in the thronged streets of the great city; in the country, wandering in the forest or by the river side, have you not had a visit? A sudden joy? A soul-vision of the better world? A holy exultation of the spirit? A blessed assurance of faith? A strange gladness which hinted of a heavenly home? Were not the angels near thee then giving thee a foretaste of the heavenly communion?

O, brother, let us look for these calls from the skies. Let us hold ourselves in a receptive condition, and expect the ANGEL VISITS.

The Last Walk to Bethany.

So ended that great discourse upon the Mount of Olives, and the sun set, and He arose and walked with His apostles the short remaining road to Bethany. It was the last time that he would ever walk it on earth; and after the trials, the weariness, the awful teachings, the terrible agitations of that eventful day, how delicious to Him must have been the hour of twilight loveliness and evening calm; how refreshing the peace and affection which surrounded Him in that quiet village and the holy home! Jesus did not like cities, and scarcely ever slept within their precincts. He shrank from their congregated wickedness, from their glaring publicity, from their feverish excitement, from their featureless monotony, with all the natural and instructive dislike of delicate minds. An Oriental city is always dirty; the refuse is flung into the streets, there is no pavement, the pariah dog is the sole scavenger; beast and man jostle each other promiscuously in the crowded thoroughfares. And though the necessities of his work compelled him to visit Jerusalem, and to preach to the vast throngs from every olive and country, who congregated at its yearly festivals, yet He seems to have retired on every public occasion beyond the gates, partly it may be for safety—partly for poverty—partly because He loved the sweet home at Bethany—partly too, perhaps, because He felt the peaceful joy of treading the grass that grew on the mountains, rather than the city stones, and could hold gladder communion with His Father in heaven under the shadow of the olive trees, where, far from all disturbing sights and sounds, He could watch the splendor of the sunset and the falling of the dew.

The exquisite beauty of the Syrian evening, the tender colors of the spring grass and flowers, the wadis around Him palting into solemn gray, the distant hills bathed in the primrose light of sunset, the coolness and balm of the evening breeze after the burning glare—what must these have been to Him to whose eye the world of nature was an open book, and every page of which He read His Father's name! And this was His native land. Bethany was almost to Him a second Nazareth; those whom He loved were all around Him, and He was going to those whom He loved. Can we not imagine Him walking on in silence too deep for words, His eyes around Him or following Him, the gibbous moon beginning to rise and gild the twinkling foliage of the olive trees with rich silver, and moonlight and twilight blending at each step insensibly with the garish hues of day, like that solemn twilight-purple of coming agony into which the noon day of His happier ministry had long since begun to fade.—Farrar's Life of Christ.

Time Enough.

No, there is not, if thereby is meant that you may postpone the good deed which conscience commands you to do. The monitor within brooks not delays or postponements; to hear its voice, and to delay to do its bidding, is to have a perverse, rebellious spirit. Basswell says that Dr. Johnson, speaking one day of pious resolves of which the performance was delayed, used these words: "Hell is paved with good intentions." And pious George Herbert, in his *Jacula Prudentum*, puts the thought in this form: "Hell is full of good meanings and wishes." But we may be sure that no good intentions, meanings, or wishes are in that place where "hope never comes." One aptly says, "such

things are all lost or dropt in this way by travellers who reach that bourne." But we may truly say that the road to hell is paved with good intentions which have never been executed. And, indeed, there is always reason to fear that where obedience is delayed to a moment of conscience, the delay will be infidelity protracted. About the doing of the things, then, which ought to be done, there is not time enough. Repentance of sin should not be delayed a moment. One cannot too soon be sorry for his evil, confess and forsake it. One cannot too quickly cut loose from all evil associations. The neighbourhood of iniquity defiles and even paralyzes a good purpose. One cannot sunder himself from such a vicinage too widely or too soon. There is also a new element of goodness in the doing of a good deed at once. Promptness shows heartiness, displays the obedient spirit which hears quickly and heeds at once the voice of God. On the other hand, delay evidences of sloth and reluctance. It shows that the heart is not fully devoted to yield itself to good purposes and pursuits. Such persons also reap as they sow. He who is slow in doing the duties of religion, finds the consolations of it very slow in coming into his heart. But he who is always shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace—that is, is always ready to do the will of God, finds the consolations of that Gospel always largely granted unto him.—N. Y. Christian Intelligencer.

Charles H. Spurgeon.

Something more than a score of years ago a Christian man who resided in London, in the providence of God, was called, in company with a friend, to spend a Sunday at Cambridge. He was very strict in his observance of the Lord's day, and quite careful to confine his "Sabbath-day's journeys" to very moderate limits; but on this Sunday afternoon, instead of attending public worship in the vicinity, he felt an unaccountable restlessness of spirit, and a strong impression that he must take a walk—whither he knew not, why he knew not—but he must go, and go he did. He walked out into the country a distance of several miles, seeing no special occasion for his uneasiness, nor for his journeying, yet feeling that he was taking the proper course; until at length he heard the voice of sacred song issuing from a little lowly chapel by the wayside. He stopped and listened at the door, and presently went in, and seating himself near the entrance, gave attention to the services.

A young man, a stripling of eighteen or twenty years, conducted the exercises. There was much about him that betokened youth and inexperience, but there was more that gave evidence of acquaintance with God and the gospel of his Son. The stranger returned to his lodgings and to his home. Shortly after, on another Sunday, he took another brother with him, and they together sought out the humble chapel, and listened again to the preaching of the young man. On another Sunday they went, taking a delegation of Christian friends, and listened again to the words of grace.

They found, on inquiry, that the young man was the son of a minister, a graduate of Cambridge, and was now preaching the gospel freely, and supporting himself by acting as a tutor. They themselves were members of an old and well known church, which had been blessed with a succession of pastors, eminent for learning, and remarkable for their permanence; the combined pastorates of three of them having extended more than one hundred and fifty years; but more latterly the church had fallen into decline. The house, which seated from twelve to fifteen hundred people, being found too large, they had divided it by a partition, and then the pulpit had been pushed into one corner, and the little flock had been gathered around it there. Some were dependent; others had faith and patience, and held fast a hope of better days, praying that God would send them some one who should preach the word of truth, and brighten the feeble flame of their candlestick; and at length they decided that this young man should be invited to come up to London for three months, and preach the gospel to the New Park Street Church.

He came, and with considerable careful management objections were overcome, and at length the church concluded to call "the young man" to preach the gospel there. He preached two months, and they knocked the partition out of the church. Another month saw the seats full. Ere many months they decided to build a larger house. From that time the work went on. The minister preached in the largest available places of the metropolis, to from five to twenty thousand people, stirring the city as it had not been stirred for years, and finally, when his tabernacle was done, entering upon the work with fresh zeal, making it the centre of earnest and extensive operations in the gospel field.

Of course, the wise people about town heard of the new preacher, and said he was going up like a rocket, and would shortly come down like a stick. The going up proved according to their expectation. The coming down they are yet waiting for. To-day that young man preaches stately in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, to six or eight thousand people, the largest congregation that gathers regularly on this globe for the worship of the Lord. An hundred thousand copies of his sermons are caught up and scattered weekly by the press. Twenty volumes of them have been collected, published, and scattered by hundreds of thousands, one person having purchased not less than two hundred and fifty thousand copies for gratuitous distribution, sending them to all the students of the universities, members of Parliament, and to all the crowned heads of Europe. Volumes of them have been translated into some twelve or fifteen different languages, and have been read by millions scattered through every quarter of the globe. A single volume from his pen has had a circulation of a million copies. Orphanages and benevolent institutions have sprung up around him; and a training college for ministers has been established, the students from which have founded or revived not less than three hundred churches during the last twenty years.—Exchange.