

"Go Into Peace."

A SERMON DELIVERED AT UNION CHAPEL, MANCHESTER, BY REV. ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D. D.

"And He said to the woman, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."—Luke vii. 50.

We find that our Lord twice, and twice only, employs this form of sending away those who had received benefits from His hand. On both occasions the words were addressed to women: once to this woman, who was a sinner, and who was gibbeted by the contempt of the Pharisee in whose house the Lord was; and once to that poor sufferer who stretched out a wasted hand to lay upon the hem of His garment, in the hope of getting healing—fishing it away unknown to the Giver. In both cases there is great tenderness; in the latter case even more so than in the present, for there He addressed the tremulous invalid as "daughter," and in both cases there is a very remarkable connection hinted at between faith and peace; "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."

I.—Now, there are three things that strike me about these words; the first of them is this—

DISMISSAL OF THE WOMAN.

One might have expected that our Lord would have flung the shield of His companionship, for a little while at any rate, over this penitent, and so have saved her from the scoffs and sneers of her neighbors, who knew that she was a sinner. One might have supposed that the depth of her gratitude, as expressed by her costly offering, and by her tears, would have spoken to His heart, and that he would have let her stop beside Him for a little while; but no! Jesus said to her, in effect: "You have got what you wished; go away, and take care of it." Such a dismissal is in accordance with the way in which He usually acted. For very seldom indeed do we find that He summoned any individual to His side after he had gathered the first nucleus of four disciples. Generally he broke the connection between Himself and the recipients of His benefits at as early a moment as possible, and dismissed them. And that was not only because He did not wish to be surrounded and hampered by a crowd of slightly attached disciples, but for two other reasons; one, the good of the people themselves, and the other, that, scattered all over northern Palestine, they might, in their several circles, become centres of light and evangelists for the King. He dispersed them that He might fling the seed broadcast o'er the land.

Jesus Christ says to us, if we have been saved by our faith, "Go!" And he intends two things thereby. First, to teach us that it is good for us to stand by ourselves, to feel responsibility for the ordering of our lives, not to have a visible Presence at our sides to fall back upon, but to grow by solitude. There is no better way of growing reliant, of becoming independent of circumstances, and in the depths of our own hearts being calm, than by being deprived of visible stay and support, and thus drawing closer and closer to our unseen Companion, and leaning harder and heavier upon Him. "It is expedient for you that I go away." For solitude and self-reliance, which is bottomed upon self-distrust and reliance upon Him, are the things that make men and women strong. So, if ever He carries us into the desert; if ever He leaves us forsaken and alone, as we think; if ever He seems—and sometimes He does with some people, and it is only seeming—to withdraw Himself from us, it is all for the one purpose, that we may grow to be mature men and women, not always children, depending upon go-carts of any kind, and nurses' hands and leading-strings. Go, and alone with Christ realize by faith that you are not alone. Christian men and women, have you learnt that lesson—to be able to do without anybody and anything because your whole hearts are filled, and your courage is braced up and strengthened, by the thought that the absent Christ is the present Christ?

There is another reason, as I take it, for which this separation of the new disciple from Jesus was so apparently mercifully and perpetually enforced. At the very moment when one would have thought it would have done this woman good to be with the Lord a little while longer, she is sent out into the harshly judging world. Yes, that is always the way by which Christian men and women that have received the blessing of salvation through faith can retain it, and serve Him—by going out among men and doing their work there. The woman went home. I daresay it was a home, if what they said about her was true, that sorely needed the leavening which she now would bring. She had been a centre of evil. She was to go away back to the very place where she had been such, and to be a centre of good. She was to contradict her past by her present which would explain itself when she said she had been with Jesus. For the very same reason for which to one man that besought to be with him, he said, "No, no: go away home and tell your friends what great things God has done for you"—he said to this woman, and he says to you and me, "Go and witness for me." Communion with him is blessed, and it is meant to issue in service for him. "Let us make here three tabernacles," said the Apostle; and there was scarcely need for the parenthetical comment,

"not knowing what he said." But there was a demoniac boy down there with the rest of the disciples, and they had been trying in vain to free him from the incubus that possessed him. And as long as that melancholy case was appealing to the sympathy and help of the transfigured Christ, it was no time to stop up there. Although Moses and Elias were there, and the voice from God was there, and the Shekinah cloud was there, all was to be left, to go down and do the work of helping a poor, struggling child. So Jesus Christ says to us, "Go, and remember that work is the end of emotion, and that to do the Master's will in the world is the surest way to realize his presence."

II.—Now, the second point I would suggest is—
THE RELIGION INTO WHICH CHRIST ADMITTED THIS WOMAN.

It is remarkable that in the present case, and in that other to which I have already referred, the phraseology employed is not the ordinary one of that familiar Old Testament leave-taking salutation, which was the "good-bye" of the Hebrews, "Go in peace." But we read occasionally in the Old Testament a slight but eloquent variation. It is not "Go in peace," as our Authorized Version has it, but "Go into peace," and that is a great deal more than the other. "Go in peace" refers to the momentary emotion; "Go into peace" seems as it were, to open the door of a great palace, to let down the barrier on the borders of a wide, and to send the person away upon a journey through all the extent of that blessed country. Jesus Christ takes up this as he does a great many very ordinary conventional forms, and puts a meaning into it. Eli had said to Hannah, "Go into peace." Nathan had said unto David, "Go into peace." But Eli and Nathan could only wish that it might be so; their wish had no power to realize itself. Christ takes the water of the conventional salutation, and turns it into the wine of a real gift. When he says, "Go into peace," he puts the person into the peace which he wishes them, and his word is like a loving creature, and fulfils itself.

So he says to each of us: "If you have been saved by faith, I open the door of this great palace. I admit you across the boundaries of this great country. I give you all possible forms of peace for yours." Peace with God—that is the foundation of all—then peace with ourselves, so that our inmost nature need no longer be torn in pieces by contending emotions—"I dare not" waiting upon "I would," and "I ought" and "I will" being in continual and interminable conflict; but heart and will, and calmed conscience, and satisfied desires, and pure affections, and lofty emotions being all drawn together into one great wave by the attraction of his love, as the moon draws the heaped waters of the ocean round the world. So our souls at rest in God may be at peace within themselves, and that is the only way by which the discord of the heart may be tuned to one key, into harmony and concord; and the only way by which wars and tumults within the soul turn into tranquil energy, and into peace, which is not stagnation, but rather a mightier force than was ever developed when the soul was cleft by discordant desires.

In like manner, the man that is at peace with God, and consequently with himself, is in relations of harmony with all things and with all events. "All things are yours if ye are Christ's." "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera," because Sisera was fighting against God, and all creatures, and all events, are at enmity with the man who is in antagonism and enmity to him who is Lord of them all. But we have peace with God, and peace with ourselves, then, as Job says, "Thou shalt make a league with the beasts of the field, and the stones of the field shall be at peace with thee." "Thy faith hath saved thee; go into peace."

Remember that this commandment, which is likewise a promise and a bestowal, bids us progress in the peace into which Christ admits us. We should be growingly unperturbed and calm, and there is no joy but calm, when all is said and done. We should be more and more tranquil and at rest; and every day there should come, as it were, a deeper and more substantial layer of tranquility enveloping our hearts, a thicker armour against perturbation, and calamity, and tumult.

III.—And now there is one last point here that I would suggest, namely:—

THE CONDITION ON WHICH WE SHALL ABIDE IN THE LAND OF PEACE.

Our Lord said to both these women: "Thy faith hath saved thee." To the other one it was even more needful to say it than to this poor penitent prostitute, because that other one had the notion that, somehow or other, she could steal away the blessing of healing by contact of her finger with the robe of Jesus. Therefore he was careful to lift her above that sensuous error, and to show her what it was in her that had drawn healing "virtue" from him. In substance he says to her: "Thy faith, not thy forefinger, has joined thee to me; my love, not my garment, has healed thee."

There have been and still are many copyists of the woman's mistake, who have ascribed too much healing and saving power to externals, sacraments, rites and ceremonies. If their faith is real and their longing earnest, they get their blessing, but they need to be educated to understand more clearly what is the human condition of receiving Christ's saving power, and that robe and finger have little to do with it.

The sequence of these two sayings, the one pointing out the channel of all spiritual blessing, the other, the bestowment of the great blessing of perfect peace suggest that the peace is conditional on the faith, and opens up to us this solemn truth, that if we would enjoy continuous peace, we must exercise continuous faith. The two things will cover precisely the same ground, and where the one stops the other will stop. Yesterday's faith does not secure to-day's peace. As long as I hold up the shield of faith, it will quench all the fiery darts of the

wicked, but if I were holding it up yesterday, and have dropped it to-day, then there is nothing between me and them, and I shall be wounded and burned before long. No past religious experience avails for present needs. If you would have "your peace" to be "as the waves of the sea," your trust in Christ must be continuous and strong. The moment you cease trusting, that moment you cease being peaceful. Keep behind the breaker, and you will ride smoothly, whatever the storm. Venture out beyond it, and you will be exposed to the dash of the waves, and the howling of the tempest. Your own past tells you where the means of blessing are. It was your faith that saved you, and it is as you go on believing that you "Go into peace."—London Baptist Times

Yet We Say We Love Him.

A PFAVER MEETING TALK FOR THE LATITUDE OF AMHERST, YET SUITED ELSEWHERE.

Do we treat anybody else so ungratefully as we do our Christ, "whom we say we love." If any member of my family was in peril, and I was helpless to succor them; is there one person here tonight who would not come to the rescue even at a sacrifice. Of Christ's great family whom he has created, loved and died for, millions are in hopeless distress and deadly peril every hour; and Christ himself is powerless to save them without our co-operation. He commands and pleads with us to "go" and rescue them. Year after year we treat his commands with stolid indifference and yet we say we love him.

Do we coldly as a matter of habit put in a few cents or dollars on the collection plate once a month. Of the twelve collections (apart from the Woman's Society and the Sabbath school) the part going to Foreign missions is so very small. If we possessed the right spirit of consecration we could easily make it hundreds and perhaps thousands of dollars, and yet we say we love him!

I talked with a sister with large intellectual and financial ability. She responded, "Yes, the sisters in our society pay the one dollar per year, but there are so many of them that forget to pay the dollar when the year comes round." How sad that our sisters are in the bondage of paying only once a year, with the danger of sleeping all the rest of the year after the dollar is paid. Who will introduce the divine system of paying weekly or even monthly, and thus increase the annual giving of the sisters manifold. And yet we say we love him. Is love worthy of the name unless it leads us to acts of self-sacrifice? And does not the condition of the two million Telugus committed to us by Christ, in order that we through him might save them, demand self-sacrifice. Who lays it to heart, that we have in India only one missionary and his helpers, for every 300,000 Telugus? And yet we say we love him. Rev. I. C. Archibald estimates that only one hundred thousand out of the two million Telugus hear the voice of our missionaries even once in a year, and we call that giving the gospel to the two million Telugus. And yet we say we love him. Is it true that within the limits of this convention we have one pastor for every 250 members or of 500 adherents? Is there not here evidence of thoughtless selfishness? Are we more deserving than the Telugus? No, in no wise! The gospel of the grace of God alone has made us to differ. Ought we not to divide up with them? Shall we not send to our Telugus twenty-five of our pastors and give them some chance to hear about Jesus and his love.

What about our young minister's. Dr. Manning says that only one of them has offered to go, and he will not be ready for one year. They all love Jesus—but love is not simply a sentiment. Does not true love constrain to enlarged, intelligent action. Will it not seek to spend itself, where it is most needed? Is not the need one thousand-fold greater in the Telugu field? The result of past experience in heathen lands teaches that ten times as many souls will be won by a given amount of labor as when spent in this land. And though they say they love him yet none offer to go. Sisters, brothers, and young ministers, is our love genuine?

Are we all enchained by habits of indifference to our Lord's ascending command to "go." Has this indifference been inherited, fostered, encouraged, until indifference is our normal condition? Who can tell us what kind of dynamite will break through the crust of this indifference? The love of Christ in us is the only power that can do it. What if we have silently formed the habit of saying it by our acts. "We will not permit the love of Christ to constrain us to cease laying up treasure upon earth as our chief good, nor will we use our invested funds, nor our interest income for Christ's work, though of course I will give my one-dollar per year and perhaps more out of my pin money." And yet we say we love Him?

Is it not supremely reasonable that intelligent love to Christ should constrain us to at once send twenty-five missionaries to the Telugus? What is the one hindrance to our raising the extra fifty-thousand dollars per year to support their work? Only this and—nothing more—the iron clad habit of not doing it. No innovation upon our religious habits can be allowed. And yet we say we love Him?

It is twenty-five years since we accepted from the Lord Christ the two million Telugus to teach them about the great salvation. Meanwhile it is estimated that while we have been busy here and there one million have died without hope. And yet we say we love him.

Is it not quite probable that there are within the limits of this convention one hundred members of our churches whose net annual income, after deducting a reasonable amount for family support and ordinary benevolence, there still remains enough to support one, two, three or four missionaries to Telugus from each man? That is, each and all could support one and some of them according to ability, two, three or four missionaries at \$800 per year. Only one thing hinders them from doing it, and that is the terrible habit of not doing it, which means that they have no intelligent sympathy with their Lord and Saviour in his plans for saving men from every nation, kindred and tongue. And yet they say they love him. True love constantly sacrifices much, if not everything in order to obey his commands. The ever present command is "Go Ye." DIMOCK ARCHIBALD.