

## PREACHING.

NO. III.

The one great and grand object of preaching should constantly be kept in view, and that end should be recognized to be the salvation of souls, their translation from the kingdom of darkness into the glorious light and liberty of the regime and rule of Christ. There are other and many fields and opportunities of useful activity to the preacher, and with many of these he may enter with profit to himself, and to others. But such labors are incidental, and are concomitants to the main issue. His special work is saving souls by warning them to flee from the wrath to come, and inviting to except Christ as their Saviour—the grandest work vouchsafed to man. For this noblest of all employments, there are elements of character transcendently important.

The preacher of the gospel must not only be as we have shown in a former article, a man of practical common sense, with a burning love for the work, but he must have pre-eminently elements of power. There should be a reciprocity of feeling, and spiritual sympathy between the heart and soul of him who utters the truth, and the spirit from whom the truth proceeds. Without this the most serious truths may be to the hearer but as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." To secure this, as we have shown in our first article, two things are indispensable: The preacher must himself first have been brought under the powers of divine truth, and when he speaks he must also be strongly under its influence. This latter element brings us to that part of a preacher's character which is the fruit of an intense earnestness of purpose, genuine religious zeal. He cannot have too much of it. He cannot stand up between the living and the dead, and utter the message of Heaven aright, and be other than an earnest zealous proclaimer. The most effective preachers of early or modern times, were for the greater part characterized by a high degree of enthusiasm. How little real, soul-stirring preaching is there to-day, in the prosaic, essay, perfunctory disquisitions of learned doctors of theology, whose sermons are more tinged with the high-sounding phraseology of so-called "modern thought" and "progressive theology," than with the all-pervading "passion for souls," which fired the Apostles with unquenchable zeal, and bore them onward and upward with their grand work with resistless force till they laid down their lives. A sermon may be thoughtful, beautiful, and attractive, and yet not effective. The fault may be not so much in the matter of the subject presented as in the manner of presentation. Words are only the true symbols of thought and feeling when they are tremulous with life, and when the very soul goes out with them, and when they tend to awaken responsive thought and feeling in the soul of the auditor. We have to-day a paandering to a vitiated human taste in the pulpit, in the aspiration to please by ornateness of style or in the introduction of new and attractive theological systems. In the first, too much beauty is often a hindrance to usefulness. The Damascus blade wreathed with flowers is less useful than the naked steel, and as to the second the fact that we stand upon the shoulders of all past generations and perhaps see farther than they saw, does not prove that new revelations have been specially created for our sight. The truth is we want to-day men so full of enthusiasm in their Master's work, that the contagion of their spirits will melt and sway individuals and multitudes alike, and then as of old, the converts to Christianity will be counted by thousands and tens of thousands. The dull platitudes and dry sermonic lifeless pulpit work of the age has had a great and fearful tendency. Sin has been robbed of its hideousness, the power and simplicity of the gospel has been lost sight of in the speculations and the

cries of modern systems of thought, crude and dangerous utterances concerning the higher criterion and so-called scientific evolution, have unsettled the ancient faith, and many pulpits have almost ceased to present the gospel at all. There is a frigid tameness too common in the religious teaching of the age, which seems to be satisfied if religion receives an outward respect, but which never attempts to enshrine its principles in the heart. But on the contrary what mighty powers have been given by God to the ministry, in the divine revelation of His character, the solemn attributes that belong to Him as God, the character, history and devotion of Christ to mankind, the felicities and glories of Heaven, and the powers of the life to come. There is heard on earth no human voice so powerful, so enlightening, so absorbing in its influence, and so mighty in its power of truth as the voice of the minister, who, faithful to his trust, proclaims to the perishing sons of men the certain truths of God's revealed will. The blessed and saving influences of true religion comes to us from Heaven permeated with Heaven's life and power; it comes to make the wilderness glad, and desert to blossom as the rose; to break the hard and stony heart, and to set the soul-imprisoned free, and to set the liberated spirit faultless before the throne of God's glory. How all other missions, works and aspirations shrink into comparative insignificance when compared to the grandeur of this sublime work and mission! How all speculations and teachings, thoughts and tendencies dwindle before the effulgence of that sunlight of revelation—God's eternal truth! How short sighted and short-armed is every human design and desire to clove and educate mankind when placed beside the elevating and educating powers of the Bible! I is from the never-failing sources of heaven-born truth that the faithfully consecrated preacher drinks the inspiration that fills heart and soul with the harmonious interaction of co-ordinate forces, and that enables him to preach the gospel with earnestness, affection and with a heart warmed by his subject, not thinking of himself, not seeking applause, but solicitous for the welfare of mankind, deeply impressed with the value of the soul, and with the misery and ruin into which it will be plunged by irreligion and vice.

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## THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST.

This indeed is a foretaste of Heaven, and was given at the time for a particular purpose; and the record of it is useful and helpful for all time.

Looking at what immediately goes before, it would appear that this manifestation was intended to prepare Christ and His disciples for the solemn events which were now fast approaching. Satan had formerly shown Christ the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them; and now God gives Him a passing yet realizing view of the Kingdom of Heaven—that, seeing its surpassing excellency, He might the more cheerfully endure the cross. It was also given for the sake of His disciples that had followed Him in His temptations, and though much had occurred to stagger them, yet they had not wavered. Still it is evident that there was much carnality in their views.

Luke, the historian, says: And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and James and John and went up into a mountain to pray. Christ had no closet; no secret chamber of his own, therefore He resorted to the distant mountain-tops. He took with Him to this retirement these three disciples which seem to have been more eminent for grace, zeal, and love to Christ than the rest, and therefore He admitted them to more intimate fellowship, and employed

them in more important services. The same principle holds good to-day—"Them who honor me I will honor." May we all, therefore, seek in this world to be open-hearted like Peter or James, who counted not their lives dear to themselves, or like John in whose heart glowed a seraph's fire, if we wish close communication with God. "Jesus went up to pray." It was while He was in the act of prayer that the blessing came; "and as He prayed the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening." His body became brilliant with divine glory; the tabernacle of clay which had been a veil became transparent, clear as crystal, revealing the fulness of God that dwelt within; the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb was the light thereof. He was indeed the sun of righteousness. He, unlike Moses, shone not with a borrowed light; He shone with His own glory. Yet, see the price which must be paid. The face which now shines as the sun will ere long be covered with reproach; the raiment which is now white will be crimsoned with its owner's blood. "And behold there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." Many other saints were in heaven, but it was Moses and Elias who came to see on Mount Tabor what they had not seen in Heaven—God manifested in the flesh. They had honored God in their day; they had been eminent for self-denial; and now God honors them.

The subject of this interesting conversation is about Christ's decease or exodus—the same word which is used regarding the departure of Israel from Egypt—the one being the antitype of the other. By Christ's decease His people had their deliverance. Jesus had looked forward to it, and had spoken of it. He had studied the law and the prophets and knew what they said about His sufferings and the glory that should follow. We learn that Moses had taken a leading part in the exodus and had seen the enemy destroyed. Elias had been delivered from death and the grave and had entered into Heaven without experiencing the power of either. And it came to pass as they departed from Him, Peter, ever ready to speak, and wishing to prolong his happiness, forgot that there was work to be done on earth, said unto Jesus: "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." When Christ prayed the glory came; when Peter spoke unwisely it began to vanish.

Says Matthew: "There came a bright cloud [sign of divine favor] which overshadowed them, and they feared as they entered into the cloud." They did not fully know the way of acceptance; or how near and dear the friends of Jesus were to God. But God speaks to them out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;" and Jesus bids them not to fear. It matters little what we are or where we are, God can in a moment surround us with glory. He can give us days of Heaven on earth—when we draw near in the name of Jesus, confessing our sins and laying hold of the promises set before us in the gospel. It is then that our burdens are removed; our hearts are lightened, thus giving us the assurance that God is on our side—that we may enjoy happiness here in this life and in the world to come eternal life.

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There are hearts hard enough to resist the force of wrath, the malice of persecution, and the fury of pride, so as to make their acts recoil on their adversaries; but there is a power stronger than any of those, and hard indeed is the heart that can resist love.