

## Pastor and People.

### WAITING ALONE.

Waiting alone in the night,  
Never a star to shine;  
Never a heart-throb in the fight  
Close to this heart of mine.  
Waiting in weary pain,  
Almost too weak to moan;  
No loving hand to share the strain,  
Waiting, alone, alone!

Waiting, unable to sleep  
Thro' the long dragging hours,  
Thinking of graves, where are buried deep  
All of life's sweetest flowers.  
Scanning the frowning sky,  
Listening for some faint call;  
Seeing and hearing no light, no cry,  
Waiting—and that is all

Waiting on God in the night,  
Seeking His will and choice,  
Walking by faith, and not by sight,  
Striving to hear His voice.  
Crying to Him to save,  
While the storms ne'er abate;  
Sinking beneath the cruel wave  
Still for my Lord I wait

Waiting alone in the night,  
Facing the doubt and fear;  
Thicker the gloom as the morning light  
Steadily draweth near.  
Waiting in desperate faith,  
Whether the heavens fall,  
Hoping in Him—come life or death—  
Jesus, my all in all.

Surely the God of light  
Succour will send to me;  
Standing alone in the frowning night,  
Promise of help I see.  
Strong in His mighty power  
Faith can assurance trace;  
Trusting that God in the crucial hour  
Surely will give me grace.

—Capt. R. Kelso Carter.

### ON PREACHERS AND PREACHING.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D., PH.D.

#### NO. XVII.—PREACHING THAT COMFORTS.

The mission of the preacher, as we have seen, is manifold. It is to satisfy the hunger of the nature in its various manifestations. It is to awaken, alarm, convict of sin, discover Christ, lead to close communion with Christ, build up the soul in the knowledge of Him, and bring it into the holiest of all to enjoy communion with Him. It is not to be one-sided. It is to have breadth enough to furnish some food for all classes, saints and sinners alike. And then again it is to recognize the various stages of growth which the saints have attained and the diverse conditions in which they may be doing battle, and striving hard to serve the Lord; as well as the numerous obstacles and hindrances that stand in the way of godless and wicked men becoming Christian. There is often much to be done ere the Gospel can be preached—all that comes under a proper conception of "repent," which is like digging the trench to the live rock on which to lay the foundation. And there is also often much to be done after the Gospel has been accepted and Christ embraced, to keep the soul grounded and settled, that it be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel. There must be for it a ministry that will enable it to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. And when we remember all the bitter experiences that come to professed followers of the Lord—the weariness that comes of labour, the heartache borne of hope unrealized, the dark clouds of doubt driven in upon the soul from fleshly reasonings, the defeat that seems meanwhile to quench all the lights that shine in the heart because faith has failed, and, above all, the incipient despair that creeps over the spiritual nature because of the uncertainties that spring from the dark disappointments and discouragements it has found. We are not surprised that He who knows our frame and remembers that we are dust, speaks thus to His ministers, saying: "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people." This without doubt is always needed, and urgently needed. Dr. Austin Phelps has a very suggestive statement in regard to this matter. Speaking of the failure of the pulpit in reference to rebuke, he says: "Often the failure is more marked in respect to its mission of comfort. If there is one thing more obvious than another in the general strain of apostolic preaching, it is the preponderance of words of encouragement over those of reproof and commination. In no other thing did inspired preachers disclose their inspired knowledge of human conditions more clearly. The world to-day needs the same adaptation of the pulpit to its wants. We preach to a struggling and suffering humanity. Tempted men and sorrowing women are our hearers. Never is a sermon preached but to some hearers who are carrying a load of secret grief. To such we need to speak as to 'one whom his mother comforteth.' What delicacy of touch, what refinement of speech, what tenderness of tone, what reverent approach as to holy ground do we not need to discharge this part of a preacher's mission! And therefore what rounded knowledge of human conditions." And then he goes on to say with too much truth alas! "Is it a cynical judgment of the pulpit to affirm that in our times it has reversed the apostolic proportions of preaching in this respect? It is vastly

easier to denounce rampant sin than to cheer struggling virtue. Preaching to the ungodly is more facile than preaching to the Church. And in preaching to the Church it is less difficult to reprove than to commend, to admonish than to cheer, to threaten than to help. Hence has arisen, if I do not misjudge, a disproportionate amount of severe discourse, which no biblical model warrants, and which the facts of human life seldom demand from a Christian pulpit."

This statement cannot be too deeply pondered. It points out a serious and a glaring defect. Whence does it come? Have the conditions of the minister's heart anything to do with this, as well as his sense of the need of warning that obtains? Is he interpreting the condition of the people by his own? Does he see them in the mirror of his own mind and spirit? Is his congregation only regarded as a multiplication of himself? Very often no doubt this is the case. The spiritual condition of the preacher will give the keynote to his preaching. It will determine largely what he shall inculcate and declare. His pulpit work will but reflect the work of the Spirit in the inner sanctuary of his nature. And therefore, as Dr. Phelps charges home, this easier work is chosen because progressive development has not been made to the higher experiences which bring the harder work of the ministry. How much is said of comfort in both the Old and New Testaments? These passages should be studied until their spirit takes possession of the nature and broadens the sympathies of the preacher and endues him with the power to enter into the cloud that darkens many a condition and makes it hard to bear. They shall help him to think of the deep meaning of "fight the good fight of faith." The conflict with evil, the anxiety, the watching, the weariness, the defeats, the trials, the failures, the doubts and fears and ten thousand spiritual foes that assail the inner man of the heart. They shall lead him into rich and fruitful regions of meditation and discourse. They shall keep him from this woe: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and cruelty have ye ruled them." Ezek. xxxiv. 2-4. See Christ's work, Isaiah lxi 1-3, and think of this—the minister's work is the same, essentially. How many broken hearts need to be bound up! How many wandering sheep that have lost their way are to be recovered? How many poor in spirit cry out for encouragement and comfort? How many lost ones need to be sought after and found? How many diseased ought to be healed with the balm of Gilead?

What a work lies to the hand of the faithful pastor! Payson once wrote to his mother: "Satan rages most violently against Christ's sheep, and I am constantly employed in trying to counsel and comfort them under their manifold temptations." Duncan Matheson was wont to visit the old Christians who had been the disciples of Mr. Cowie, for from them he got both instruction and comfort. Once as he was calling on Isabel Christie, then upwards of ninety years of age, she welcomed him with: "Come away, my son David." "Perhaps," was his reply, "the hands are the hands of Esau, but the voice is Jacob's. How do you know that I am not a hypocrite?" This is just such a question as both torments and enfeebles many. How did she answer it? Thus: "Ah, d'ye think I dinna ken the breath o' a true Christian? We ocht to lay down our lives for the brethren; an hoo could we dee for them if we didna ken them?"

Luther was once asked: "Which is the greater, to controvert adversaries or to exhort and hold up the weak?" He answered and said: "Both are good and needful, although to comfort the faint hearted is something greater; yet the weak themselves are edified and improved by hearing the faith contended for. Each is God's gift." Of William Hewitson this is said: "His ministry had been eminently an earnest one. He had so preached that, whether men believed or no, they felt that the preacher spoke because he believed. It was not the earnestness of the flesh—not vehemence, not noise, not physical fervours—but the deep, calm, solemn, gentle earnestness of the Spirit. There was no scolding, no impatience, no angry upbraiding, but the tenderest pity; he warned and besought with tears. This was his unanswerable argument." And it ought to be every minister's.

### NEVER GIVE UP.

Never sit down and confess yourself beaten. If there are any difficulties in the way, struggle with them like a man. Use all your resources, put forth all your strength, and "never say die." The case may seem hopeless, but there is generally a way out somewhere. Are you bound and fettered by hurtful habits? Do not despair. You can't do much to help yourself, it is true, but there is One who never fails to strengthen the young man when he makes an honest attempt to overcome temptation and master every evil passion. "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." That is the experience of thousands of fellows who have felt their feet slipping, who have begun to sink in the quicksands of sin, and have reached out a hand to accept the loving help of the strong and gentle Christ. While He lives and loves, no man need ever give up.

### THE ELDERSHIP.

Brethren of the eldership, a word with you. When you entered upon your office you assumed the following vow: "Do you promise, through grace, to perform all the duties incumbent on you with zeal and fidelity, following after righteousness, faith, charity? Answer, I do." Brethren, are you keeping that vow? Are you endeavouring to perform all the duties of your high office with zeal and fidelity?

There are some elders who seem to think their duty is simply to act as brakemen. Now, a brakeman is an important officer, if he is careful to draw the brakes only when the train is starting on a down-grade; but if he is so thoughtless as not to consider whether it is up-grade or down, and persists in drawing the brakes all the time, he is a very poor officer. The train would be better without him, notwithstanding some down-grades, for then it would move, though it did move sometimes too fast.

There is a familiar story of an elder who was ambitious to be put into the office, and, when asked concerning his qualifications for it, gave an answer that had the merit of being candid, at least, and one that expresses what seems to be the governing principle of many who hold that position. He was asked if he could be a leader in Sabbath school work: he thought not, then, if he could take a prominent part in the prayer-meetings; for this he thought he was not fitted; then, could he be useful in visiting from house to house and comforting and instructing the Lord's people; he thought he could not do that. "What could you do then?" he was asked, "that would make you an efficient elder?" His reply was: "I think if I were in the Session and anything new was proposed, I could offer a strong objection."

That is precisely what very many elders do, and about all that they do. I once heard a pastor say: "When I am planning aggressive work for my congregation and trying to lift all the interests of the Church to a higher plane, the question on my mind is not, How much will my elders help me in this? but, How much difficulty will I have in overcoming their opposition to it? This is not true of all our elders, for there are those who are powers for good in their congregations, but it is true of very many."

My brother, now reading this, how is it with you? If you were to die to-day, would the church over which you have been ordained an elder be better or worse off than it is? Would there be many families who would say, "We will miss him at our fireside, when sickness and sorrow come again?" Would there be young men who would say, "I will miss the good man who gave me counsel and encouragement, when I was disposed to go astray?" Would the prayer-meeting miss the voice of one who always led them in plain, earnest prayer for things they needed in every-day life? Would the Sabbath school miss you as one who had led them as a good under-shepherd into the fold of God? Or, would the pastor, in his secret chamber, draw a long sigh of relief at the thought of one who had always stood in the way of his cherished plans being now out of the way? And would the people, who have it in their hearts to advance the cause of the Master in your congregation, say "Now he is gone, we can go forward?" Do not think that I am drawing a fancy picture; I am describing just what many a pastor feels, and what the working element in the church feels concerning many elders. Do you want to live so that the church, over which you have been solemnly ordained a ruling elder, will be glad at heart, though of course they do not say it, when you die or move away?

It is time for the eldership to wake up and realize more the nature of their ordination vows. Their office is parallel to that of the minister except in teaching, and their responsibilities are equal to his in the oversight of the flock of God. The blood of souls will rest on them if they are not faithful.—*United Presbyterian.*

### THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY.

"The duty of Christians is to be like-minded with Christ. Does Christ long for the conversion of souls? You who are true Christians will do the same. Does Christ show His deep feeling on this subject by the active efforts he makes? You who are Christians will in this be followers of Christ. You will not only earnestly pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' but you likewise will do all you can to set up His kingdom in the earth. You will strive that your children, your servants, your dependents, your neighbours, and your fellow-parishioners may be brought with repentance and faith to the foot of the Redeemer's cross. You will also be anxious that the Redeemer's last command that His Gospel should be preached to every nation may be fully obeyed. You will, therefore, by your prayers and your contributions, help those devoted servants of Christ who, at home and in foreign lands, are enduring the heat and burden of the ministerial day in proclaiming repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ."—*Clayton.*

### IF YOUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE

You put water on the burning timbers, not on the smoke. And if you have catarrh you should attack the disease in the blood, not in your nose. Remove the impure cause, and the local effect subsides. To do this, take Hood's Sarsaparilla, the great blood purifier, which radically and permanently cures catarrh. It also strengthens the nerves. Be sure to get only Hood's Sarsaparilla.

Minard's Liniment cures Burns, etc.