

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

SERMON.

PREACHED IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, THREE RIVERS, ON DECEMBER 12TH, 1880., BY REV. CALVIN E. AMARON, M.A.

Matthew v. 14 to 16.

We meet this evening, Christian friends, for further instruction. I take it for granted that it is from a desire to know more of God and heaven, that we left our homes to repair to this house of prayer. Let us individually ask the Father to open our hearts to the influences of His gracious Spirit, that we may receive with meekness and obedience the precepts of His law. I am not speaking to the unconverted this evening, else my language would of necessity be different, that they might understand me; neither do I address myself to young believers, to whom I gave encouragement in my last discourse. I speak to you who claim to have long known the Lord, and who by your profession, oft times repeated, have affirmed that God is the chief object of your affection, and duty to Him your first and all-absorbing concern. As your pastor, I have a perfect right to look to you for help; it is my privilege to ask you to become my auxiliaries in carrying on the work of true religion, in fostering true spiritual life in this church and in God's vineyard. You need to understand your responsibilities, and having understood them, to shoulder them manfully. Now, let us see what Jesus Christ expects of those who are His avowed disciples. He calls them "the salt of the earth." The comparison is pregnant, it is full of meaning. The fisherman would be doing a very thankless and futile work when he draws his net full of fishes, both great and small, had he no salt to preserve his source of revenue, that he may send it to market and realize his profit. Salt is indispensable. But "if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" What use can be made of it? It is good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. Now, brethren, ye are the salt of this church, and its moral and spiritual preservation depends largely on you. The youth cannot preserve their way from earth's pollution free without you. The tide of sin, of worldliness, of sham and empty religion, of gross inconsistency and rank infidelity, will rush into the church like a torrent, unless you stand between them and the church as strong and immoveable gates. Christ looks to you and expects that you should preserve His Church from corruption. Take care, now, and act your part. Not only are you the salt of this church, but you are also its light; as such you must shine. A candle is not lit to be thrust under a bushel; it is on a candlestick it should be placed, that it may give light unto all that are in the house. Being called by Christ to be the light of the world, and accepting that attribute, what is expected of you? That your light should so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Alas! how dimly our light shines at times. If you did not know that in such and such a family there are two or three lights burning, their reflection would hardly be sufficient to attest their existence. The lamp has become begrimed with the smoke of worldliness, frivolity, selfishness and vanity; the wick has not been trimmed for so long a time that the light it gives through the smoky chimney is but a yellowish, flickering, and uncertain one, better suited to mislead and deceive than to guide aright.

Christian brethren, do you not know that thousands of ships have set sail on the ocean of life? Do you not know that this ocean is beset with shoals, quicksands and icebergs? Do you not see everywhere floating on the foaming billows, the debris of the hundreds that have already made shipwreck? The moral wrecks we could count by scores in our very city. Now, remember this, you have been asked by Jesus Christ, who knows the dangerous places, to accept great responsibilities. You have accepted them, and only last Sabbath you renewed your engagement. You are the guardians of the various lighthouses erected by the wise and good Pilot on the rocks and quicksands of indifference, carelessness, irreligion, intemperance, worldliness, fashion, folly, and sin of every shape. You are in duty bound to keep those lamps trimmed and filled with oil, and you yourselves are those lamps, for you are "the light of the world." How many shipwrecks have been caused by your negligence? How many a ship has been dashed

against the cliffs above mentioned, because the light was so dim and faint that it could not be seen until the ship struck the rock. I hear the cries of the drowning as their heads rise for the last time above the surges—mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, and friends—down to the bottom of the sea of moral ruin they go, because we, who are the light of the world, have shone so dimly that the danger could not be seen. Friends, this is no poetry, this is no flight of an overheated imagination, no rhetorical effort; it is fact, stubborn fact. If you will follow me for a little while I will endeavour to point out some of the means whereby we can help men and guide them to heaven.

I. *Avoid a life of sin.* I need hardly say that we, as Christians, are bound to avoid the sins of the world. If our life is in every respect similar to that of other men, if we commit the same sins as the unconverted and non-professors do, how much better are we than they? How much better, did I ask? Had I said how much worse, you could have more easily answered. We are worse, because having a name to live we are dead. We wear a cloak by means of which we cover our iniquities; but as we sometimes are forced to set aside this cloak, our nakedness appears, our inward corruption is disclosed, and we do more harm to God's Church and to the world that see us, than scores of infidels could with all their writings. I need not insist upon this point. If we had in our midst, as members of the Church of Christ, drunkards, liars, deceivers, dishonest men, blasphemers, the Church would be constrained to discipline them, and after warning, or it may be temporary suspension, she would be obliged to excommunicate them fully if they did not amend their life according to God's holy law. We all readily understand this and acquiesce in it. It is impossible for us to bear the name of Christians and break in such a flagrant manner the commands of God.

II. *Rebuke sin.* But God is not satisfied with us even if we keep from such sins as those just mentioned. He asks something more. We may become partakers in other men's sins, by allowing them to pass unrebuked when committed in our presence. I need not go on to shew how a Christian becomes guilty of the sins of his worldly friends when, through moral cowardice, he seems to assent to what is said and done against the laws of God. Suppose a minister of the Gospel happens to meet with a company of sceptics or godless men. He hears the name of God blasphemed, he hears profane and obscene language, religion is made little of, and God's people are ridiculed. Do you think that that minister is free from blame if he hears all this without a single manifestation of disapprobation? Do you imagine God will count him guiltless who allows His name to be thus disrespected and trampled under foot? No! That man is guilty; he should be a light in that dark place, and the greater the darkness the brighter should he shine. I would not tell him how he should condemn such a course of action on the part of this godless company; his own judgment should guide him. But those men should be made to understand that such conduct meets with a Christian's entire disapprobation, and in his sight, and especially in God's, is absolutely wrong and deserving of punishment. No dissenting voice, so far, I fancy. You all agree with me, do you not? Very well. But now let us extend this and apply the rule to all who, by profession, are disciples of Jesus Christ. You come in contact daily with men and women of the world; some are barefaced enough to tell you how clever they have been in playing some contemptible little trick, whereby they have defrauded one of their fellows—and how they laugh! Others will tell you of a long premeditated vengeance about to be poured out on some poor victim. You may suppose scores of cases of like nature. Do you consider yourselves free from all blame, if you allow such sins to pass unrebuked? If so, you are wrong. It is your duty, plainly and unmistakably, to shew in some way or other your disapproval. Your light should shine before these men. And be convinced of this: those sinful men expect as much from you. They know what profession you make; they know that their course of conduct is not in keeping with the principles you profess; in their innermost heart they know they are doing wrong, and should meet with your disapproval. They will not tell you, of course, but at the same time there can be no doubt that "the apparent approval of one true and earnest Christian, even the very humblest in worldly

rank, will have more influence to comfort the wicked man, to keep his mind easy and his conscience asleep than the loudest declarations of his own wicked associates, that he is a fine fellow and has done nothing wrong." I know the objection that will be raised here. I will be told that "the usages of society are such that we can't insult men and become unfriendly with them, and make enemies of them for the sake of carrying out the principle of action you are enforcing. I know that a great many Christians are condemned because they are brave enough to let the world know they have principles that are dearer to them than the usages of society, because they are based on the eternal laws of God. I agree with you when you say that we must not insult men. There is nothing to be gained by so doing. To condemn falsehood you need not tell a man he is a liar, although that is true. To condemn drunkenness you need not tell a man he is a drunkard. There is a quiet way of condemning sin—an unobtrusive way of shewing one's utter disapproval, which makes the sinner feel very uneasy and uncomfortable. Take that course if you like, so long as you do not allow sin to pass unrebuked. But have no sympathy with those weak Christians who through fear of giving offence to the world, allow the name of Jesus to suffer shame. I don't believe in the principle that "in Rome we must do as the Romans do." It may be good in worldly matters, but not in things spiritual. God has not a set of laws and principles for my parlour or drawing-room, and another for that of another Christian man. What is wrong and worthy of condemnation in this respect in my home is not better in yours. In reference to Christ's religion, the same laws prevail in Christian homes the world over; in Rome, in London, in the Queen's palace, in Paris, in New York, in Montreal, and in Three Rivers; among the high and among the low, among the rich and among the poor. God helps us to be true to His law, in all places and in all circumstances. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." This should be our motto, and never should we lose sight of it.

III. *Avoid making of sinful men your friends.* I help us in performing the duty I have just spoken of at some length, we should not make of sinful men our friends. I do not wish you to misunderstand me when I say this. I need not repeat here what I have said so frequently, in reference to our dealings with the unconverted. You know my views. We must necessarily meet with men of the world, do business with them, and so on. But it is one thing to have such persons as acquaintances, another thing to have them as friends with whom we live on terms of perfect intimacy. If the Christian man courts the company of the man of sin, if he spends one of his evenings the Sabbath, with God's people, and the six others in the company of godless men; if their conversation please him, have they not reason to ask what difference there is between the Christian and the unbeliever. They will reason thus: "My conversation pleasing to this Christian, he seems to relish it. He makes of me a bosom friend. He can't believe I am going to hell surely, else he would not care to associate with one who is fit for that abode. My conviction is that half these Christians are hypocrites, and don't believe in what they profess."

Christians, our responsibilities are great, let us take care how we act. Christ needs our co-operation, and if we are not careful we destroy His cause instead of building it up. When we are forced to mingle with the world, let us be helpful. We can give a word of warning, we can give a word of judicious advice that may result in the salvation of a soul. We do not realize the truth that men are going to hell by the score but if God is, and if His truth is what it claims to be—and we do not doubt it—Satan is adding each day victims to his kingdom of sorrow.

One word also in reference to our influence over the young believer. Has he not a claim on us? When discouraged by the difficulties which beset him on his journey to heaven, should he not find in us friendly and willing to encourage. In this sense again we are the light of the world. If the young Christian cannot look to us for guidance, counsel and help where will he turn his eyes? You, old travellers, who have almost reached the end of the journey, come to our help. We know so little yet of the road; we are so easily cast down. You can anticipate our difficulties, for you have met them and overcome them. Fear not to advise, to warn and exhort. We will listen