

Pastoral Visitation.

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The minister is called of God to preach the Gospel. Is that duty done when the sermon is delivered? We think not. A fair beginning has just been made, that must be followed up by private individual dealing which finds one of its best opportunities in pastoral visitation. As the shepherd's care of his flock includes his watch over them and provision for them in the fold as well as in the field, so the minister's pastoral oversight of his people covers his dealing with them in private as well as in public. Both are essential and equally necessary parts of one work. It is a very inadequate conception of the minister's work that limits it almost exclusively to his pulpit performances, and regards the visitation of the people as a secondary matter, and that often uninteresting and distasteful, because in it the minister descends from his throne, his place of power, and mingles with his people and is made to feel their poverty and their prejudices and the tremendous pressure of their unlikeness to Christ.

Paul had no such conception; he said to the Ephesian elders as he bade them farewell at Miletus "Ye know . . . how I kept nothing back that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And urging them to faithfulness, he says "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." Paul preached publicly, and privately, and individually and all that with such affection as broke up the fountains of his great loving soul, and made him weep over them.

We see in Paul the true Pastor: the consecrated minister of God's Evangel. Writing to Timothy his ideal accords with his actual ministry he says to him in words full of awful solemnity: "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 'Preach the Word: be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.'"

Carrying with us then, this conviction, that what we call "pastoral visitation" is an essential part of our ministry of the Word, equal in every way in importance with the public proclamation, aye and often to poor, hungry souls of far more importance, because they can tell us their fears, temptations, troubles, hinderances, unbeliefs, and we can answer them and help them, or at least do the best we can to that end;—carrying with us this conviction, we may speak of the spirit and the manner in which this part of our ministry is to be done.

1st. As to the spirit in which it is to be done. In this work, in which the minister meets his people without their Sunday garb, and their Sunday restfulness, and their Sunday moods, and above all their Sunday equality—for in God's house all are equal, there "the rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all," he must be a man of faith, strong faith so that he may see the immortal behind the mortal; the infinitely precious behind the comparatively worthless and despicable; the grand possibilities open to God behind the impossibilities that form an impenetrable wall to man; the objects dear to God in those that are often loathsome and repulsive to the mere natural sensibilities and tastes even of a man of God. The glamour of the world touches and tells upon the minister as well as upon others, and he too, must ever be armed with the shield of faith. The more spiritual the duty the more danger, hence the more need of faith. Faith will so heighten and refine his vision that the shimmer of the glory of the rich will not dazzle him, nor the squalor of the miserable poor discourage him, he will seek the good of the soul in all circumstances, seek it believingly, and therefore, bravely and heroically. "Not yours but you," being his motto. Faith is urgently needed to carry this out consistently and constantly. But let faith live and soon love comes in to help.

As the Saintly Sibbs justly observes, "True faith works love, and then it works by love, when it hath wrought that holy affection, it works by it." Love

makes him intensely anxious and earnest to win souls, and it gives him too, the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. It makes his heart break over the people and stirs him up to watch for souls as one that must give account. Love brings him into sympathy with the Saviour in His passion and death. And there is none of love's labor lost.

(Continued next issue).

The Sunday-School Lesson.

BY THE REV. ERASTUS BLAKESLEE.

(Continued.)

VI. THESE LESSONS SHOULD BE SCIENTIFIC IN METHOD.

The scientific method is the one of personal investigation. As applied to Bible study, it means the intelligent, systematic, well directed study of the Bible itself, rather than of notes and comments on the Bible. Any lesson system that tends to induce the study of lesson helps in place of the study of the Bible stands self-condemned. Better is the Bible without note or comment in the hands of the scholars than the best possible notes and comments without the Bible. The importance of this principle is almost beyond measure. The object of Bible study is to study the Bible. The only way to know the Bible is to use it. The only way to become familiar with it is to use it constantly. The lessons, therefore, should be prepared in such a way as to compel the study of the Bible itself. One great object of the new Sunday-school crusade should be to restore the Bible to the Sunday-school. Aids to study are valuable. Within proper limits they should be used freely. But none should be permitted which can by any possibility take the place of the Bible in the study of the lesson. The value of the scientific method in that in all grades of the lesson, from the kindergarten methods of the infant class to the most abstruse doctrinal topics of the Bible class, it can provide for personal work, which shall fix the truth in mind and make the Bible familiar.

VII. RESULTS TO BE EXPECTED FROM SUCH A SYSTEM OF LESSONS

1. *Results in the Sunday-school.* Among these we may note the following: The children would be interested because always learning something adapted to their own use and within the range of their comprehension. The young people would be interested because making continual progress in knowledge. Adults would be interested because giving most of their time to those great subjects which touch the problems of life at its most vital points. The amount of real Biblical instruction for old and young would be almost beyond belief. To those instructed in this way the Bible in all its parts would no longer be as a tangled thicket, but would become as a familiar garden.

2. *The Results Outside of Sunday-school.* With such a system in use in the Sunday-school the whole question of Bible study in schools and colleges, in theological seminaries and in the pulpit, would be lifted on to a far higher plane than now. Children would come to know so much about the Bible as to put their elders to shame. Well graded lessons in the Sunday-school are like Jack-screws under a building, everything above them must rise at their bidding.

VIII. RESULTS ALREADY ACHIEVED.

As the brilliant possibilities of such a system of Bible study rise before the mind, one is fain to ask himself. Is this a vision only, or can it become a reality? Let me in answer briefly state what has already been done toward working out such a system. The methods proposed by it were first tried in a Tuesday evening Bible class in the winter of 1888-89 as a part of a Pastor's work for his young people. The result was so successful that an attempt was made to apply these methods to the lessons of the International Sunday school system. It was soon found that the ends sought by these methods were not those for which these lessons were selected, and that those methods could not be applied to these lessons. But the methods seemed of too much value to be lost. An independent course of lessons on the Life of Christ was therefore prepared, and put on the market in 1891. The circulation increased rapidly. New courses followed. The Bible Study Union was formed in the autumn of 1893. This is an organization of about five hundred distinguished college Presidents, Professors, Clergymen, Sunday school Superintendents and