

other things. It depends, first of all, on the fact that you have been born from above, and in addition to this, that you have been set apart, by the Will of God, to the ministry of the Word. Apart from these two divine calls—the personal and the official—whatever your intellectual endowments and attainments, you have no right to put a hand on this work; you go a warfare at your own charges, and I can conceive no lot more miserable than that of him who runs unsent to this great work. Therefore, if there is a shadow of uncertainty in your inmost soul concerning these things, I would counsel you in the name of the Great Head of the Church to pause; to pause at whatever self-sacrifice and disappointment to yourself and others; to pause till light break in on your soul, and you hear the Lord say "This is the way, walk ye in it." I am the more encouraged thus to counsel you from the good results I have known to arise from such a self-examination in the case of others. Few men were more honoured in the ministry of Scotland than the late venerable Principal of the United Presbyterian Theological College, Dr. Harper, and his biographer, Dr. Cairns, informs us how he passed through such a period of spiritual searching as I have indicated. "Two congregations had called him to be their pastor, but the Synod, which according to the custom then existing, had to decide between them, received a letter from the young preacher intimating his deliberate and fixed resolution to accept of no fixed charge. The reason of this startling announcement was in the highest degree creditable to the young man of three and twenty. A cloud of distressing doubt had fallen on him simultaneously with the call to the ministry, and he would not advance a single step until he had questioned himself upon the grounds of his belief, going down to the very foundations, and reviewing his convictions on the Divine origin of Christianity itself. At the same time, or, perhaps, rather when his intellectual conflict had passed the crisis, he was visited with overwhelming convictions of the responsibilities attaching to the care of souls. Through anxious days and sleepless nights the cry of his heart was, 'Who is sufficient for these things?'" Who does not feel that if there were the same conscientiousness and courage on the part of all candidates for the ministry, there would be fewer shipwrecks of faith, and fewer miserable failures. Therefore, gentlemen, if you have doubts and difficulties, either in regard to yourselves or the doctrines formulated by this church, now is the right time to settle them. You have received a training which will enable you to do this much at least, and doing so you will save yourselves much misery, and the church much trouble.

But have you come to an assured conviction in regard to these things, as I trust you have, every one? Do you go forward to this work in the strength of the Lord? Then, whatever your future career may be—short or long, obscure or famous, dark or bright, I have only words of good cheer and congratulation for you. I do not promise that you will find the work easy; neither do I affirm that you will have no difficulties to contend with, no sorrows, disappointments, trials, rebuffs, reproaches to bear. I do not say that you will never meet with opposition, envy, jealousy, bitterness, contradiction, thwartings, snares, abuse, misrepresentation, persecution. Yea, so far from doing so, I would rather say, reckon on having to endure all these things, for there never was a faithful follower of Christ who did not receive his full share of them. The world is still the same world that crucified your Master.

Yet, notwithstanding, though all these things should come upon you, aye, and all together, of this I am convinced, that if you are true to your Master and His work, you may always, and in all circumstances, be able to say, "Surely, the lot has fallen to me in pleasant places."

The true minister of Christ has resources that never fail. In his experience the Pauline paradoxes are often repeated, "As unknown yet well-known, as dying and behold we live, as chastened and not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things." Indeed, the experience of the first and greatest of all Gospel ministers may, in some measure, be ours. Remember the Master. When He ministered the words of life He had to endure great contradiction of sinners—

The foxes found rest,
And the birds had their nest
In the shade of the cedar tree;
But Thy couch was the soil,
Oh, Thou Son of God!
In the deserts of Galilee.

Thou camest, O Lord,
With the living Word
That should set Thy people free;
But with mocking scorn,
And with crown of thorn
They bore Thee to Calvary.

Yet, remember that it was the experiences of this very Man of Sorrows, which David, by the Spirit, uttered in these words: "Surely, the lot has fallen to me in pleasant places."

As an explanation and illustration of what we mean, consider Him at one crisis of His ministerial career. Harken to His words when His work seemed an utter failure, when the tide of popularity, which flowed so amazingly in the early days of His ministry, began to ebb with such frightful rapidity; when even John Baptist's faith seemed to fail; when He had to liken the men of that generation to sullen children from whom no response could be elicited, however they were approached; when He had to upbraid the cities in which most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not. Do His words at that crisis betoken a spirit crushed down in despair? Nay! Listen: "At that time Jesus answered, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Therefore, again I repeat, whatever hardness, disappointment and opposition you may experience, I have nothing but words of good cheer in welcoming you to this work. Be strong, therefore, and of a good courage. I have put these hard things before you, not because I think they will bulk most largely in your experience, for I do not think that this will be the case, but for the purpose of making more emphatic the truth, that whatever your outward circumstances, God can supply all your need, and carry you about in triumph. And, so far from condoling with you in regard to difficulties you may encounter, I would rather congratulate you if to you it were given to suffer much in this good cause, for in this work to which we have devoted ourselves, the greater the present hardness, the higher the future honour. We are part of the Lord's host, and you well know that in an army they always receive the highest honours who have been in the thickest of the fight. The Victoria Cross was never won by garrison duty in time of peace, and while there may be not a few carpet knights of Christianity—selfish,