

In 1869, while our church building was being reconstructed, our services were held in the Academy of Music for many months. The seats were free, and the assemblies, especially in the evening, large and heterogeneous. It would have been folly to have attempted to enlist and hold the attention of an audience so promiscuous as that by reading from manuscript. It would have been like cutting a telegraph wire and inserting a sheet of paper in the gap. The electricity would not pass. The first night that I preached at the Academy, I threw aside the manuscript, and with one or two exceptions, on special occasions, have not used it in preaching since. I now write only a very brief outline of the discourse, covering usually scarcely more than a sheet of note-paper, and take no notes whatever into the pulpit—not even a catch-word.

While I am positive and decided in my conviction of the advantages of preaching without notes, I would not have any one think that the method brings any saving of work. Whoever undertakes to prosecute it with that end in view will inevitably fail. It is essential, also, for one who desires to widen and refine his vocabulary, to discriminate between shades of meaning and know the subtleties of the language—to keep up the habit of writing, with all the skill and elegance and force he can command. I say this is entirely necessary, for the reasons given, and others as weighty, whether he makes a practice of off-hand speaking or not.

I think that a clergyman who contemplates adopting this method (having previously followed the other) should be perfectly frank in laying his plans before his congregation. He should explain to them the reasons which prompt the change. This will do much to preclude the embarrassment which must come from the manifestations of surprise, at the time of making the change, to be expected from hearers if they have not been fully prepared for it.

Finally, he should in no circumstances do violence to his own nature. That is, should he be convinced after

sufficient effort that he can do more useful service with pen, he should use the pen without hesitation or reserve.

As to the conditions of success in preaching without notes, I can only speak very briefly. I have had occasion to give the matter much thought. Some of the chief points, which I have stated fully elsewhere, are:

1. The physical vigor must be kept at its highest attainable point.

2. The mind must be kept in a state of habitual activity, alertness and energy.

3. The plan of the sermon should be simple, natural, progressive, and thoroughly imbedded in the mind.

4. The preacher should have a distinct and energetic appreciation of the importance of his subject.

5. He must speak for a purpose, having in view from the beginning of his discourse a definite end of practical impression it is to make on the minds of his hearers. It is well also to have in view, in the preparation and delivery of the sermon, particular members of the congregation, whose needs are known to him, and on whom he desires to make an impression.

6. He should always take with him into the pulpit a sense of the immense consequences which may depend on his full and faithful presentation of the truth, and a sense of the personal presence of the Master.

Then, he should be perfectly careless to criticism, and expect success.

These, of course, are subordinate to and dependent upon the one sublime, fundamental condition and pre-requisite of success, and that is, a serious, devout, intelligent, inspiring conviction of the Divine origin and authority of the Gospel, and of its transcendent importance to men.

I think that a great many more men than now suppose it possible would learn to preach without notes, if they would systematically and energetically endeavor to do so; that thus they would more fully engage the attention of their hearers, and impress them with the truth; that they would themselves find larger leisure for more various studies;