

Pastor and People.

THE GREAT END OF LIFE.

A CHAPTER FOR YOUNG MEN.

Everything has a purpose. Not the greatest or smallest thing in animate or inanimate creation exists but for the accomplishment of some distinct and definite purpose. And not only has everything a purpose, but everything has a purpose worthy of itself proportionate, I mean, to its powers and potentialities. Nothing great exists for the attainment of an insignificant purpose. Great things have been made for great purposes. There has been waste neither of divine skill nor of divine power in the framing of this vast universe.

Man exists for a purpose, and a purpose worthy of himself—proportionate to his powers and capabilities; a great purpose! Man is at the top of the visible creation. God has made him only a little lower than the angels. The purpose of his being, therefore, must be a greater purpose than that for which anything else has its existence in the world.

Have you ever put the question to yourself: "For what end was I born, and for what cause came I into the world?" Why am I here? For what has God made me? What purpose was in His mind when He fashioned this complex and wonderful organism, body, mind, and soul, and gave me my place in the human family?

I fear many of you young men have never asked this question—the most important, certainly, to which you could set your thoughts. You have inquired as to the purpose of other beings, but not of your own. And, as a consequence, many of you are spending your energies upon objects which ought to be utterly contemptible in your eyes. Your life is a failure.

My knife is made to cut. If it won't cut it is a failure; and I throw it away. My pen is made to write. If it won't write, it is a failure; and I throw it away. You and I were made for certain high and noble purposes in God's hands. If we do not fulfil those purposes, we are a failure, and God, in great indignation, will visit us with everlasting destruction from His presence.

If I show my readers who are young men the purpose of their being, I shall render an important service. If my words should set any to make an earnest review of their life, so that they shall discover its emptiness and vanity,—its utter failure to realize the true end and purpose of your being,—by the grace of God, this brief paper may be to the saving of souls.

There are people who might be truly appalled by a vision of their life—what is it? The great capacities which fit them for achievements of the most glorious and godlike character are being exercised in the gratification only of what is lowermost in their nature. They are content with a life not essentially different from that of the beasts. Give a dog plenty to eat and a comfortable lair, and he knows no trouble. And if these can eat and drink to their satisfaction, and have a pleasurable nook to shelter them,—surroundings which will gratify the senses, they are happy just as the dog is satisfied.

God made man in His own image, after His likeness. Man accomplishes the object of his being, therefore, in as far as he resembles God. We are to be perfect, even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect. Study the character of God, if you would know the end of your being. "Thou art good, and doest good," says the Psalmist (cxix. 68). Follow this model; realize in your character and life what you see in God, and you will fulfil the purpose of your creation.

There is no purpose you can live for so great and glorious as this purpose. The wealth of a Croesus; the power and fame of an Alexander; the learning of a Solon!—what are these compared with God-likeness?—with resemblance to God in His perfect character and gracious works?

In the first place, God made you to be good.

"Thou art good," says the Psalmist.

There is no fault in God. He is perfect in every virtue. The holiness of God is without a stain. You can predicate of Him nothing but "holiness, justice, goodness and truth." In Him these qualities shine forth in their fullest splendour. He knows nothing of sin, but as an object outside of Himself and, in its slightest forms, utterly antagonistic to His nature.

The end of your being is perfect freedom from sin. God did not make you to be proud, and unjust, and malevolent; and if you are, you have missed the purpose of your being. "To have my character conformed to the moral character of God; to have my will one with His; to have my whole being in harmony with His sentiments, sympathies, thoughts and purposes; to have my entire soul permeated, ennobled, filled and inspired by His indwelling, so as to feel every power and every faculty under His immediate impulse," is the purpose of my being. And a life otherwise characterized is a life wasted,—a life lost,—with whatever success it may have pursued other and lower ends.

But, in the second place, God has made you to do good.

"Thou art good, and doest good."

"God is love." When God made man, He purposed that he should have eternal life; and in Christ He is seeking to restore the race ruined by sin to its lost destiny. This is the grand object of all the divine volitions and procedure. "All things are yours,—whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours" (1 Cor. iii. 21, 22). There are other objects in the divine mind, but they are subordinate, and intended to help forward this object. When Moses asked to see the glory of God, this was the response: "I will make all My goodness pass before thee; . . . and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." The greatest effort ever put forth by Deity, if I may so speak, was put forth for the world's redemption. When He peopled space with these vast orbs, He spake, and it was done. But when He provided for the recovery of our lost race, He laid bare His mighty arm. You pay the greatest price for that which you esteem of the greatest value. The greatest price it was in the power of Deity to give—I say this reverently—He gave to ransom our species from the hands of the destroyer. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."

To fulfil the purpose of your being, you must witness for the truth, not only in your character, but by your labours. "Hold forth the Word of Life." God intended you, young man,—oh think of it!—to be a co-worker with Him for the world's redemption. If you neglect the cause of the Gospel, you neglect the very purpose of your creation. God made you not only that He might confer on you eternal life, but that through you He might confer eternal life upon others. "As every one hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Every other object for which you live should be subordinated to this, and should be pursued in order to help you in this purpose. Oliver Cromwell, on one occasion, went into a church, where he saw twelve silver figures stuck in as many niches. "What are these?" he asked. "The twelve apostles." "The twelve apostles!" he cried. "And did the twelve apostles spend their lives thus uselessly? Take them down, sirs, and turn them into money, that, like the twelve apostles, they may go about doing good." God did not mean His saved ones to be put on pedestals as monuments of His mercy; but to go out into society, and to try upon others the power of that truth which has regenerated their own souls. He does not ask for statuary to His glory, but living, active men, who shall go out everywhere preaching the Gospel, bearing witness unto the truth, and thereby extending the conquests of His grace.

One reason why the Church is not more numerous to-day is that it has been so largely made up of statuary. Statuary have no power for active service. I might put up a dozen statues in this church; they would never add another to its membership. And so I might have a hundred men in this church, content to be monuments of divine grace, and they would never add another hundred, or add another one.

As you can, and where you can, you are meant to be agents for the spread of the blessed Gospel. Men have strayed from God and are exposed to frightful dangers; it lies with you to seek them out and save them—as many as you can reach. There are no exceptions, on the ground either of humble capacity or lowly station. "If you cannot do all you wish, try to do all you can." The highest honour in the last day will be shown, not to the servant who has brought the largest number to the Lord, but to some more lowly and less gifted disciple, whose works in comparison are small, but who did what he could.

What souls have you brought to Christ?—what fallen ones rescued?—what wanderers restored?—into how many hearts, broken and bleeding, have you poured the healing balm?—into how many souls have you infused the joy of salvation? If you cannot lay claim to so high a honour, are you still able to say that, realizing the purpose of your being, you are diligent, at you have opportunity, trying to win souls? It is a personal question. Do not look to this one or to the other—minister or missionary—inquiring how they are doing. Put the question to your own hearts and consciences. For it will matter nothing to you how others have acted if you have failed in the purpose of your life.

Multitudes in the Church are mere ciphers. They are not doing a particle to reduce the sin and sorrow abounding on every hand. They will not be missed in a single holy agency or cause, when they have passed out of the world. In some libraries there are (I know not what they call them) imitation books. They are used to fill vacant places and to prevent genuine volumes from falling into confusion. Looking at them in the shelves, you would fancy they were real books, for they have not only the appearance of books, but names on them, and often the names of classic writings. How many are like these shams—men in form, but blocks in reality! They give out no instruction—none of that truth which blesses and saves mankind.

A young man who was converted during an illness afterward found that his illness must end in death. When informed of this he manifested no alarm. One day his mother, while in a room adjoining his, overheard him exclaiming suddenly, "Lost, lost, lost!" she ran in and inquired anxiously if he had lost his hope in Christ. "No," he said; "I have no fears, mother. But oh! my lost lifetime! I am twenty-four; and I have done nothing until a few weeks since for Christ; but everything for myself and my pleasures."

Do not go down to the grave with such a regret. Let your labours be so abundant for Christ that when you die you shall leave a vacancy in the Church which shall be felt and deeply mourned. By earnest and laborious usefulness win for yourselves the gratitude and esteem of God's people. There are monuments more to be coveted than those erected over men's graves, even when inscribed with the most flattering eulogies. They are monuments which you may put up while you live—regenerated men—men blessed and saved for time and eternity. It is better far to have your name inscribed on hearts that shall endure, than on perishable stone—inscribed on souls than in the annals of a nation's glory, which can only secure for you at most a fleeting fame.

A Greek artist boasted that he made his pictures for eternity. But there is scarcely a vestige of his work extant even to-day. And there is not one among you all, I believe, who could give me his name. But to make converts—converts for Christ—that is to work for eternity. The lapse of ages shall bring no decay in the achievements of those whose lives have been devoted to the moral and spiritual regeneration of mankind. Their works shall abide even after the world itself has been consumed in the fires of the great day.

Oh, young men, there is no work to which you can devote your energies comparable with this of saving the souls of your fellows. This transcends all other vocations as far as heaven transcends earth. "If I lodge in the mind a thought that shall stir a man's deepest nature, and send him on a new career of life and virtue; if I kindle aspirations after God, and truth, and holiness, in a mind debased and grovelling; if I disenthral a mind from the bondage of fatal error; if I emancipate a soul from the tyranny of vile and vicious habits, I do a greater work than if I were to emancipate ten thousand slaves, heal all physical maladies, end all poverty, and enthrone reason in her lost seat."

And, oh! the rich joy of saving a soul! In this world there is no happiness like that of the soul-winner. It fills the mouth with laughter and the tongue with singing. And what a delight in the world beyond to see those, whom we have sent there, looking into our eyes their eternal gratitude and love; it shall be worth all the sacrifices we have made of our time and strength, and even of our means, to experience such rapture. To save souls, to rescue men from going down into the pit, and to set them among the throngs of the glorified is the joy of God. "He delighteth in mercy." For this joy Christ endured the cross, despising the shame.—*Rev. A. F. Forrest.*

THE JEWS AND CHRISTIANITY.

It is a significant sign of the times that the Jews, both Rabbis and laymen, have taken to writing to Christian periodicals, either in defence of the tenets of modern Judaism, or deprecating the work of evangelization among their co-religionists. It proves that their consciences are not at ease; and it proves more, it proves also alarm at the strides which Christianity is making in their ranks. Competent statisticians compute that from 1,000 to 1,500 Jews are now annually being gathered into the different Christian churches. Here are some reliable statistics of recent date. In 1881 the Synod of the Russian Church reported 572 Jews baptized during that year. In the same year 122 were received into the Evangelical Church of Prussia, and nineteen into the Lutheran Church of Hamburg.

A rapid glance through the reports of the London and British Societies for Jews, both situated in London, discovers forty-six baptized through the labours of the first, and fifty by those of the latter, in that same year. This gives over 800 Jews baptized in one year; but this sum does not include the result of the labours of Jewish Missions of the Presbyterian and other Churches in the United Kingdom and the Continent of Europe, nor those received into the Roman Catholic Church, which, in Vienna alone, in 1882, were 181; or many who are received into particular churches, of whom little is heard or known, especially of Jews of the higher classes, who do not like publicity, for it affects their status in the social scale.

As to the position in life of those who embrace Christianity, the following description is given of those baptized in Vienna in 1882, viz.: six doctors, three professors, three lawyers, ten students, two military officers, three civil officers, one solicitor, four journalists, twelve merchants, two actors, two actresses, one musician, one painter, two governesses, twenty-seven bookkeepers and clerks, one railway offi-