

Messenger and Visitor

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Sustain the Church.

Looking only at the earthly and material side of things, there is nothing for which a community can less afford not to make adequate provision than for the faithful preaching of the gospel and for wise and competent instruction in the Word of Truth. Many shrewd men, though personally irreligious, recognize this, and are willing to contribute liberally to the support of the gospel. The best class of people, the most desirable as citizens and as neighbors, are unwilling to settle in a godless community, or in one in which the best of religious privileges are not available for themselves and their families. A living church with a strong and stable ministry, not only perpetuates influences which make for the spiritual welfare of individuals and the community, it promotes also intelligence, education, and every good and wholesome thing. The school is better because of a living church to foster and purify its life. It is as a rule the Christian people who prize most highly intellectual training and all that goes to foster a wholesome and elevated life in the community. The church is a bulwark against intemperance and other evils which curse and degrade mankind. Every farm, every piece of property, every legitimate business is increased in value because of the presence in the community of a living Christian church; everything which makes for the advantage of human life is fed by the streams of gracious influence that proceed therefrom, for godliness is indeed profitable for all things, having the promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come. For Christian men and women the church must indeed have a value far beyond that of its influence in promoting decency, intelligence, refinement, as well as all material interests. As spiritual interests are to those who have truly learned of Christ immeasurably above all others, so the church, as a means of promoting spiritual life and of making the Gospel of Christ effective for the salvation of men, must have a value not to be measured by any of the standards which are applied to the things belonging only to the present life. To sustain the church in the community, so that its condition shall be the most vigorous and efficient possible, should be on the part of every Christian a first consideration and a constant, earnest endeavor. All interests demand it, his own, his family's, the community's—interests that belong to the present and to the world to come. And yet how sad it is to find in many a community persons who call themselves Christians and who thus profess their belief in the infinite importance of spiritual concerns, but who never seem to think that the church has any large claims upon them for support. They have time, ability, money to put into other business having for its immediate object the getting of wealth, but for the church, which seeks to promote those interests which give value to every other, they have little to invest in it. They can find no time or energy to put into a faithful and continuous effort to sustain the meetings of the church. The few dollars which they contribute yearly to support a minister they regard as money entirely given away and lost to them. They do not perceive that even taking account of no other interests than those of a material and worldly character, the faithful and efficient minister of the gospel is doing more for the community than any other man in it, and the church is more important to the welfare of the people than any other institution. Are there any people in this world so profoundly foolish as those Christians (?) who, with wealth at their command and with powers of service in themselves, look on idly and almost indifferently while the church building falls into decay, the means of grace fail, the minister grows discouraged and moves away, spiritual life ebbs to the lowest point and every interest of the community, moral, social, educational, financial, suffers with the decline of its religious life?

The Christian's Supreme Purpose.

That which the apostle makes prominent in the passage which forms the Bible lesson for next Sunday is self-devotion to the Divine Master and to His gospel. Paul's conversion, as we saw last week, was of the most radical character. It meant immeasurable things both for himself and for the cause of Christianity. It lifted him to a place so far above that of his former life that things which had seemed mountains in importance appeared as anthills, seen in the scope of his new horizon.

There was a sense in which Paul was free in respect to all men. To all classes of men, Jew or Gentile, bond or free, wise or unwise, he owed as little as did any other man, yet as a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, as an apostle of God and a brother to all men in Christ, he was a debtor to all and had brought himself under bondage to all that he might gain the more. In order that his ministry might be as widely and richly fruitful as possible he had, so far as he might without violence to his own convictions, and so far only, accommodated himself to the views and practices of others. To the Jew, therefore, in this sense, he was a Jew, to those under the law, he was under the law, and to those without law as without law. What Paul means here is made very clear by the instance of Timothy's being circumcised as a concession to Jewish prejudice. Paul saw clearly, and rejoiced greatly in the fact, that in Christ there was neither Jew nor Gentile and that Gentile believers were wholly free from any obligation to conform to the Jewish laws and rites and ceremonies. The contention of Judaizing brethren that the Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the law Paul opposed with all his might. He would not have his Gentile converts brought under that yoke. Paul's great business, however, was not to overthrow Judaism but to preach the gospel. If he could bring men into relation with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, that was the surest and directest pathway for them into all truth. Therefore he was careful not to antagonize unnecessarily Jewish prejudice and so fall of gaining a hearing for the gospel; as would have been the case, for instance, if he had associated with himself in the ministry of the Word a man like Timothy before he had submitted to the initiatory rite of the Jewish religion.

The grand controlling purpose in Paul's ministry was to bring men to Christ and to strengthen them in His fellowship. He did all things for the gospel's sake that he might win as many as possible for Christ. It was with this purpose that he became, as he says, "all things to all men." It is immensely important to note this and to understand that it is this sublime and heaven-born purpose which gives character to his whole attitude and course of action toward mankind showing the greatness and noble consistency of the man in connection with acts which, to a superficial observation, might appear to indicate a vacillating tendency. It seems hardly necessary to point out that it is just the absence of such a divinely-begotten purpose as this that makes so many willing to conform to the religious views and practices of others. The feebleness of men's convictions, the lack of vital faith, the failure of their natures to respond with any earnestness to Christ's call to service, indisposes them to contend against the popular trend of things, and so they become all things to all men in ways and out of motives which would have moved the Apostle to the Gentiles to deepest scorn. With Paul, the great motive to win and to save men through the gospel was always the controlling one. Whether or not they were brought just to Paul's own standpoint, so that they should obtain as large and clear a vision of the truth as he had, was not indeed unimportant, but he considered it as of far secondary importance to their coming into relations of faith and love to Christ.

In what Paul says here in regard to his own motives and methods there are lessons which should be of great value to every one who is or who desires to be in any sense a minister of Christ. 1. The first grand aim of the worker must be to win men for Christ, not to make them followers of Paul or Apollus or Cephas, but to bring them into living fellowship with the Son of God. 2. The wise worker will exercise a religious imagination and employ tact.

He will know how to put himself in the place of those whom he would help. He will know how to accommodate himself to the weaknesses and prejudices of others. He will not expect a child to take and maintain the gait of a full-grown man, or those who have been educated amidst vicious and degrading surroundings to live as exemplary lives as those who have never known other than wholesome and refining influences. 3. He will especially be tender of the weaknesses and conscientious scruples of those whom he seeks to help. It is most important to observe how exceedingly careful Paul is in regard to any action which might offend or defile the consciences of others. Never to do anything against conscience, he regards as of all things most important for the Christian. "Therefore it is good not to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth." 4. There is the true inspiration for all service in the supreme principle of self-devotion to Christ and to the Gospel. This single all-dominating purpose is the condition of all effective, fruitful service. Under the inspiration of this purpose the spiritual earnestness of the apostle is like that of the runner in the games who has gathered up and launched into this supreme effort the whole force and momentum of his physical manhood. For this cause too he treats his body, with its clamorous appetites, as a rebellious slave which must be beaten into submission in order that the fullest power of his redeemed manhood may be consecrated to the service of Christ and humanity.

Editorial Notes.

—Rev. Archibald Brown has resigned the pastorate of the East London Tabernacle church (Shoreditch) after a continuous and very fruitful ministry of 25 years. Mr. Brown who was a student at Spurgeon's College is widely known as a preacher of great ability. He is now in America and is engaged to conduct a month's mission services in Denver. As Mr. Brown's resignation has not yet been accepted, it is possible he may return, after a vacation, to resume his ministry in London.

—A story was recently published to the effect that Dr. Harper had threatened to resign the presidency of Chicago University because its income was insufficient to meet its current expenses, and that Mr. Rockefeller had come to the aid of the University with a pledge of ten million dollars more in addition to the eight million he had already contributed. This interesting piece of intelligence turns out to have no more solid basis than the brain of some Chicago news maker. It is supposed, however, that Mr. Rockefeller is not unlikely at some time to make large additional contributions to the University's funds. It is stated that Mount Holyoke has recently received from Mr. Rockefeller \$40,000 to build a dormitory.

—Speaking of how to get more faith, the Sunday School Times says with discernment that "faith is of value according to the use made of it. It makes little difference whether a man has much or little faith so long as he fails to put what he has into practice. Many a man says, "If I only had more faith I could do more," when the truth is that more faith would be only a hindrance so long as he refuses to use the little that he has. His trouble is not with the smallness of his faith but with his non-use of it. Faith, even of the size of a grain of mustard-seed, will never furnish a tree to lodge the birds of the air in its branches if it is kept wrapt up in a package. It must be planted in order to begin to grow. Unless a man puts into practice his feeble faith, he will never have, nor would he ever have use for, any stronger faith."

—The death of Professor Henry Drummond occurred at Tunbridge Wells, England on Thursday last, following two or three years of failing health. Professor Drummond was a man of earnest, Christian character and evangelical spirit, and was also an eager student of science. He is widely known through his books, "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," and "The Ascent of Man," in the latter of which he advocated the biological doctrine of Evolution. Certain booklets of his of a religious

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