

proper sequence. I think, too, it adds grace, vigor and flexibility, and is on the whole more effective.

I told the whole story of my experience in this matter some years ago, in lectures before the students of the Union Seminary, and you will find it there. I said then, that this way of preaching seemed to me to be, at least, the more apostolic way. I could not learn that Paul pulled out a Greek manuscript and undertook to read it when he addressed the woman at Philippi, or even when he spoke to the critical Athenians on Mars Hill, under the shadow of the Propylea and the Parthenon. Even in my early seminary training I had distinctly determined to learn, if possible, to speak without manuscript, and without writing, and then committing to memory. That was at old Andover, and at a time when such methods were regarded as innovations and sternly discouraged. The conditions were not favorable to success, and, though I came from the seminary with convictions unaltered, my courage and confidence were weakened somewhat by the record and memory of failure.

The town of Brookline, Mass., was the scene of my first ministerial labors. I had been there about a year, when, passing through Brooklyn, I was unexpectedly called on to preach at the Church of the Pilgrims. I had no manuscript with me, but it happened that at that time my mind was full of a subject on which I had lately written, and in which I was very much interested. The sermon which I preached under these conditions was well received by the congregation, and quite satisfactory to myself. In its delivery I felt a sense of mental facility and exhilaration which had never come to me in reading a manuscript. When, shortly after this event, I accepted a call to the pastorate of this church, I was fully determined to preach, at least occasionally, without notes.

Accordingly, my first sermon in that Church after installation was without notes. To my intense mortification, it came near being a dead failure. The

congregation was disappointed, and I was almost determined never to hazard so dangerous an experiment again. The fault was, that I had made too much preparation in detail. The headings and subdivisions and some entire passages had previously been written out, with the result that, in preaching, I was continually looking backward instead of forward. I had overloaded my memory in trying to recall pre-arranged trains of thoughts and particular forms of expression, instead of trusting to the impulse of the subject. After that, years passed before I could bring myself to speak without manuscript, except at the regular weekly lectures, and on special occasions, when the conditions seemed most favorable to extemporaneous preaching.

When I had been in Brooklyn rather more than sixteen years, the sense of routine began to be teasing and almost oppressive. There came to me, too, that recurring desire for change, which is the natural and almost inevitable result of long years of continuous service in the same field and upon precisely the same lines; I felt that I was getting into ruts, that my mind was becoming rigid and narrow, and positively needed change to give it force and vivacity and flexibility. I should have been ready to have transferred my service to some other field had the opportunity presented, and had I felt justified in leaving the Church of the Pilgrims at that time. As both these conditions were unfavorable, I determined to remain, but to give myself the benefits of a change by making decided alterations in my methods of work. I determined to make it the practical rule of my public ministry thenceforth to present subjects without immediate help from manuscript.

In pursuance of this purpose, I at once adopted the plan of delivering my morning sermons *extempore*, and in a short while both my people and myself became accustomed to it, and preferred it. I continued to write for the evening service, but that was largely subordinate, very much more time and force being expended on the morning discourses.