

CANADIAN PULPIT.

No. 70.

Hearty Service.

Sermon by the Rev. James Buchanan, Richmond, B.C.

TEXT:—"Colossians iii. 23,—*"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."*

"Work," it has been said, "is the law of our being,—



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the living principle that carries men and nations onward," and when done "heartily as to the Lord," is the fountain of perennial happiness, sending forth streams of comfort and joy, to refresh and solace, and to give to the weary toiler, sweet content.

In our text, the apostle adds lustre to labor, by showing its true dignity, "Heartily as to the Lord."

It is not mere work for the sake of gain but service, as a part of the great human machine, the cessation or friction of which adds toil to the other parts, causing extra strain to the slides or crank, or axle or piston.

The apostle in this chapter urges upon all, the duties of their

respective relationships.

In social life there is an interchange of help. Thus Paul exhorts in short pithy sayings: "Lie not one to another," "Forbearing one another," "Forgiving one another."

In family life, he urges husbands and wives, children and parents, to perform the respective duties incumbent upon them.

Descending in the social scale, he speaks to servants, counselling obedience, because, being believers, they are "risen with Christ," and adds, "and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not to men, for ye serve the Lord Christ." "Heartily" means from the soul, not from mere servile restraint, but from hearty goodwill. "Hearty service" comes from the whole man, his will, his moral affections and sentiments, his inner spiritual nature.

That workmen, and even Christian workmen, need Paul's exhortation is too true. Work scamped, neglected even, to gain money more easily, time frittered and stolen, are the proofs of the necessity of Paul's earnest words.

It would, however, be unfair to Paul's spirit, if we narrowed his words to menial service only, when he said, "Whatsoever ye do."

Service is the common lot. The master and mistress whose wealth provides service for workers, are the servants who minister of their abundance, for the work performed for them, to the toiler; and the wages earned are to be "heartily" paid, as is the work to be "heartily" done. "Servants" therefore include all, who by the measure of their ability, in money, in moral, or intellectual service, or in the harder and more irksome service of bodily labour minister in their several spheres to the needs and comforts of others.

Human nature is fallen. Selfishness at every avenue asserts itself. Self-interest craves more labor for less cash, and more cash for less labor than an honest bargain permits; seeks to take every advantage that a congested labor market allows; benefits by clamant needs of wives and children. To force demands sloth and self-indulgence play their part; time and material of others are wasted; a Simon Legree lashes the poor worker with whip of scorpions. Indolence quotes the legend, "all the same a hundred years hence," or says, "it will do again." Intention contends for hearty service, but laziness, "the bane of body and mind, the nurse of naughtiness, the chief mother of all mischief, one of the seven deadly sins" holds the man in its thrall. Work then becomes an indignity, service a mean thing, and the lazy one, in whatever sphere shirks his share of allotted service for God and man.

Busy men are often too lazy to perform service either for themselves or others, and their selfishness some day wins its reward. Here the apostle cries "Heartily work in whatsoever ye do." Give up sloth, lay aside laziness, destroy selfishness, "for ye serve the Lord Christ."

Our text does not cover slavery in any form. It includes voluntary service only. If a square man is somehow squeezed into a round hole by exigency of necessity, by compulsion of hunger, by bureaucratic authority, or by the strivings of personal ambition, said square man is too tightly squeezed to listen to Paul's words, and must "git out" at whatever cost. "Whatsoever ye do," must be whatsoever is right. Wrong doing is not considered, for the service is "as to the Lord." The devil's cellarmen work "heartily,"

browsing, barrelling and bottling liquid fire, while the bartender "heartily" sells, and the bar-room loafer "heartily" drinks the poison.

The stockbroker "bears or bulls" the market from his very soul, because the "rise or fall" in prices puts money in his purse. The gambler plays Nap or Loo or Whist or Poker "heartily" straining every nerve, until the veins stand like whip-cord upon the brow, and the eyes dilate with the feverish excitement into which he is cast by the turn of an ace or a Jack or a King, showing clearly the hearty intense interest he has in a good "turn up."

The political party heeler works and votes for party only, heedless of justice and truth, while his only creed is the dirtiest of all—"To the victors belong the spoils."

But surely these things "heartily" done, do not come under the injunction of the apostle. Nay, the injunction is a command to inquire, are the things we do right? are they done, "as do the Lord?" By this test "as to the Lord" must every act of our lives be tried. Failure to pass the examination means the act is to be thrown aside. In the Bank of England, in London, there is a nicely balanced machine whose finger tests each golden sovereign as it comes from the mint; each failure is thrown aside to be smelted over and remade, that the coin may be "as to the law." So the finger on the testing machine of life is "as to the Lord," and the "Hall Mark" can only be stamped upon those words and thoughts and acts that conform to this standard. It cannot be otherwise.

Christians acknowledge the Lord to be the guide of their daily lives. Nay, further, He is the judge who tests all by His standard, and His pen writes their standing in the Book of Life.

"As to the Lord" includes therefore that His standard has been set up in our hearts, and that the Lord as judge controls "whatsoever ye do." Our plain duty then is to conform to His will, to obey His behests, and in all things whatsoever work heartily as to the Lord.

"As to the Lord" further implies that the Lord is the overseer, overlooking all we do, and judging as to the motive and character of our work. We "serve the Lord Christ," yet the service is for men, and to have moral value must be measured, not by result, but rather by motive. How often "seeking honor one of another" is the ruling motive in service; and the praise of men too often dominates life to the exclusion of "as to the Lord," while His approval counts less than man's applause. Only one result can follow. Men forget to be real and sincere. Certainty in work is unnecessary when the overseer is blind of an eye; and when praise is the only wages paid, conscientious work becomes almost an impossibility. Hearty work is sure work, for it has conscience in it. It is thoroughly done work, as if the eye of God were fixed upon it, and the worker felt and knew it. It is work that hinders dishonesty between man and man.

It prevents men who hold mortgaged land from selling it to greenhorns, who are lied to by the promise of a deed which the vendor cannot give.

It prevents farmers placing inferior grain in the sack-bottom, while the good grain gulls the eye at the top. It prevents shoddy goods from passing muster as all wool. It purifies the newspaper press from mud-throwing. It banishes boodlers and "meat" seeking vampires to the province of contempt. It covers with infamy Government suckers, and contract scandals; and it blasts with ridicule the notoriety-seeking parasite who swallows up the rights of others and fattens on his own self-conceit.

Work done "as to the Lord" purifies the heart from selfishness, the body politic from corruption, the nation from ruin.

Yes, "as to the Lord" is a service of righteousness, and "whatsoever ye do" if done "as to the Lord" bears that brand. Men know it, and purchase it with security in every mart of the world. It opens new markets in Africa by the hands of David Livingstone and Henry Stanley. Brave and true men, such as Titus Salt and the Brothers Coats of Paisley, as the Cheeryble brothers of Dickens; noble women like sister Dora of Walsall, and Ann Hasseltine of Bombay, are its true exponents, and service such as theirs is dignified far above the common routine of life because it was "as to the Lord" and not "as to men."

The keynote of our text is "as to the Lord." It is the Hallelujah chorus of labor, striking responsive chords in weary worked hearts, raising as the slogan and fiery cross to renewed effort for the service of men to the glory of God.

It would be a serious mistake to close this sermon under the idea that Paul had only in his mind's eye that service which is alone rendered on behalf of men. Service bears a wider meaning. The believer is the servant or bondsman of Jesus Christ, and for Him the word of Paul has a special meaning. Preaching the Gospel is the special service entrusted to the charge of every Christian. Not preaching in the technical sense by word and confined to the clergy; but rather the higher preaching of living the Gospel, and manifesting its power to save and sanctify the life. Parents should seek to preach to their children, godly elders who never uttered a word in public can preach by their lives. All can bear a share in the common service by preaching according to their several ability, in giving money to extend the Gospel, in sharing in the work of the Church, in short in showing to the world that Christ has redeemed them by His precious blood, and thereby declare to the world the preaching of consecrated life.