

gotten, sometimes subordinated to purposes of personal popularity; and the thought in preparing the discourse not so much what will this make the people think of my Saviour, as what will this make the people think of me? There may be a legitimate desire for the approval of our people, but it is a dangerous element to admit to any considerable place in our hearts, the desire for approval by God is a far safer feeling to encourage, there is moreover this advantage in it, when the approval of God is honestly and earnestly sought in our work it will certainly issue in as much of man's approval as it is desirable to get, or safe to hold, besides this when we can so far forget ourselves as to make it our great aim that all men may know, appreciate, accept and love our Saviour that they may forget us and our discourse, our eloquence and oratory, and go home and talk about Christ and his work, then we shall best subserve the great purpose for which we were called into the ministry. The temptation to labour for applause is yielded to will not be yielded to alone, there were others in its wake that will draw us into sin. Such as trimming our discourses to please men—omitting offensive truths—softening down denunciations against sin—touching lightly on the sins of the wealthy in our congregations. "I always aim to roll my pills in sugar before I administer them," said a minister in the presence of the writer by the way of advice to him. It would have been a far more correct illustration to have said I bind round the "two edged sword" of the spirit with wadding: if the truth be not pungent enough to be felt, if the sword of the Spirit do not penetrate deep enough to give pain it may well be doubted whether it will effect the desired separation between the sinner and his sins. The preacher must seek to find out "acceptable words" and must not willingly give pain for its own sake; yet if the truth be so preached that men understand and apply it and feel its force it will give pain to evil doers, as in the removal of a diseased member of the body the pain is not the design of the surgeon, but an incident in bringing about a healthy state of the system. Modern science has indeed discovered how it can render the body insensible to pain while surgical operations are performed; but no special benefit can be conferred on the soul while it remains in insensibility, nay, men will resist every thrust made by the sword of the Spirit while under the influence of the Devil's chloroform. It is in the nature of moral anodynes to harden the surface, to encrust the soul in a coat of mail, when it is once pierced insensibility ceases. When a minister undertakes to preach painful truths in such a way that his hearers shall not feel them, or administer bitter truths so that his hearers do not recognize them, he may be amusing himself but he is trifling with his hearers, and discovers a lamentable ignorance in that part of the work in which he is engaged. If the fear of man bringeth a snare, the desire to please men will frequently entrap us.

Suffer me here in this connection to make a quotation from Baxter, he says, "We have a base man's pleasing disposition which will make us let men perish lest we lose their respect and let them go quietly to hell, lest we should make them angry with us for seeking their salvation: and we are ready to venture on the displeasure of God and risk the everlasting misery of our people rather than draw on ourselves their ill will. This distemper must be diligently resisted." As the following paragraph from the same author strikes boldly at another of the errors to which ministers are tempted which I had marked down for consideration, I shall be pardoned if I introduce my own remarks by quoting it. He adds—"Many of us have also a foolish bashfulness which makes us backward to begin with them and to speak plainly to them. We are so modest forsooth that we blush to speak for Christ or to contradict the Devil, or to save a soul while at the same time we are less ashamed of shameful work."

What was a matter for complaint in Baxter's time has not ceased to exist now. There is a very grave difficulty to be met in this matter, some men are constitutionally diffident,—delicate and sensitive. Some even of those whose piety is above the reach of suspicion, whose love to Christ is fervent and whose communion with him is sweet, nevertheless recoil from any such mode of personal address as would seem to imply a felt superiority in themselves, they instinctively shrink from the utterance of a word that might be supposed to give pain. There is not doubt that such persons perceive their duty and resolve on its performance, but