

## Selected.

## THE POWERFUL SERMON.

What constitutes a powerful sermon? At least four things are required:

1. It must be adapted to the hearers. Their intellectual capacity, needs and moods, must be known and met. The theme and manner of treatment must be determined by their tastes, tendencies, modes of thought, characters, environments, and occupation of their thoughts at the time. Such adaptation of its sermon is no small element of its power. A sermon that under other conditions would be very commonplace will here rise into power, be long remembered and effectual; while on another topic the most finished and scholarly effort would fall limp and useless. That which is uppermost in the minds of the people and which is recognized as a living need, having to do with present perplexing problems, is that whose discussion will most interest and profit them.

2. To possess the highest power the sermon must be full of God's Word. Every need of man is here provided for, and that Word will be recognized and felt as a message from him, than which no other words can be more powerful. Every device and ornament of human origin will be but frills and decorations of the garment borne on the shoulders of eternal Truth. Let the sermon pulsate with the divine life if transforming power is sought. "The words that I speak unto you are spirit and they are life."

3. It must be earnestly delivered with a definite purpose high as the purposes of God. Earnestness is the very life blood of eloquence. Logical method, rhetorical finish, adaptation to present needs, moods and capacities; even the use of the divine Word will fail of the highest effect if not born of unquestionable honesty and earnestness. This will be found illustrated in the work of all the great leaders of the people since time began. A powerful sermon must be born from the heart. Impelled by this earnestness the preacher must have a clear conception of what he wishes to accomplish and bend everything to that end. This purpose must determine his selection of a theme and every step in its treatment. Aimless preaching is fruitless preaching. It is to be feared that there is too much preaching against time; too many sermons are made because they are easily prepared, too much preaching for the sake of preaching, or for social or pecuniary reward. The purpose must be definite and high if the results are to be large and worthy. The special preparation of a sermon should be made, therefore, on the eve of its delivery, with the audience and all their circumstances and needs in full view of the mind and heart.

4. The last constituent of a powerful sermon is a rational delivery. We recently heard a sermon on a lofty Gospel theme, a living question that, when announced, attracted the undivided attention of a great audience. The logic and diction of the preacher were almost faultless, the sermon was full of God's thoughts, there were no

reasons to question the speaker's earnestness; and yet, in common with many if not all in the audience, we were in constant pain because of a wretched delivery, unnatural, irrational, sometimes ridiculous. What otherwise would have been a powerful sermon was shorn of its power by a faulty, a positively vicious delivery.

Since men are to be saved by preaching it is of vital importance that the preaching be made the subject of greatest care. And what is true of preaching is largely true of teaching, whether in the Sunday-school or by the fireside. The exposition of a lesson or a religious conversation is a kind of sermon, and may be made effectual in the same way that a sermon is made powerful.—*Christian Tribune*.

## ARE WE DRIFTING?

History reveals that the world has been at all times governed by one of two spirits. One is the aggressive spirit, or spirit of progress. The other is the spirit of ease, satisfaction, or toleration. The former spirit attempts everything, attacks everything, accomplishes everything. It means development, growth, achievement. It is the spirit that marks the high tide of the world's progress. Here the great battles of the world are won, and, here the great discoveries and inventions are made. The other spirit is just the opposite. When men are satisfied and take their ease everything is done so far as they are concerned. Stagnation and decay follows. To apologize for sin is to tolerate it. To tolerate sin is to embrace it. Satisfaction, ease, toleration, death, naturally follow each other.

When men are governed by the spirit of progress they generally have a purpose. Their aims are upward and they work toward them. They overcome all obstacles. They remove all difficulties. Like Paul, they feel that they have a high calling. There is a prize before them and they will sacrifice everything to attain success. "Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel," is the apostle's cry. This apostle had a great purpose in his heart. He labored with "might and main" to carry out this purpose. Nothing affected him. Neither suffering, persecution nor imprisonment could change him from this sublime purpose. But others were ashamed of the gospel. They drifted along with the world. Demas like, they would forsake the Master. They loved this present world just as it was and did not care to cause any disturbance of the condition of things. Paul's preaching would raise an uproar; cause mobs and arrests, and cause men to cry for his blood.

The negative spirit, or spirit of ease and toleration, does not antagonize anything or anyone. This spirit never opens its mouth against sectarianism. It never says ought against the evils that divides the children of God. It does not antagonize wickedness and sin in high places. It says but little against the saloon, the brothel, or the gambling hell. Ah! yes; it is the spirit of peace—that spirit that deadens everything that is pure and holy. This spirit never disciplines for dancing, card playing, covetousness, nor drunkenness. It says, be careful. Do not pull up the tares lest ye also pull up the wheat. All

drift along together, instead of moulding sentiment and giving purpose and strength to the church, the church is being moulded by the world.

Is it not possible that we have reached this spirit of extreme toleration; when toleration means to let every fellow do as he chooses; when we are yielding and allowing everything about us to control us. In other words are we not being carried about by every wind of doctrine and yielding to conditions that the true spirit of Christ would overcome. It seems to us that we are adrift. We are losing the former vigorous spirit and are being lulled to sleep by the misnomer "toleration." We are too often willing to apologize for the short comings of others and then unconsciously fall into the same sins. What the church now needs is a vigorous spirit. That spirit that will fight to conquer. That spirit of our Master that led Him out to meet the mob. That spirit of Paul that brought him up to Jerusalem while men were waiting to kill him. That spirit that brought Christ to Calvary and redeemed mankind.—*Register-Review*.

## THOROUGHNESS.

It was Carlyle who said, "Genius is an immense capacity for taking trouble," and George Elliot gives us the same thought in other words, "Genius is, at first, a little more than a great capacity for receiving discipline." The most successful have always been the most painstaking. A prominent judge living near Cincinnati, wishing to have a rough fence built, sent for a carpenter and said to him:

"I want this fence mended to keep out cattle. There are some unplanned boards—use them. It is out of sight from the house, so you need not take time to make a neat job. I will only pay you a dollar and a half."

However, afterwards, the judge coming to look at the work, found that the boards were planned, and the fence finished with exceeding neatness. Supposing the young man had done it in order to make a costly job he said angrily:

"I told you this fence was to covered with vines. I did not care how it looked."

"I do," said the carpenter.

"How much do you charge?" asked the judge.

"A dollar and a half," said the man, shouldering his tools.

"Why do you spend all that labor on the job, if not for the money?"

"For the job, sir."

"Nobody would have seen the poor work on it."

"But I should have known it was there. No; I will take only a dollar and a half." And he took it and went away.

Ten years afterward the Judge had a contract to give for the building of certain magnificent public buildings. There were many applicants among master builders, but one face attracted his attention. It was that of the man who had built the fence.

"I know," said the Judge, after telling story, "we should have only good, genuine work from him. I gave him the contract, and it made a rich man of him."

Calcutta, if you can read its letters aright, spells for the C. W. B. M. *Opportunity!*—*W. M. Forrest*.