

In this consists the terrible responsibility of talents.

What we have of gifts and endowments, and what we are by means of them, and the good hand of God upon us, are trusts committed to our care for the good of others; and therefore *the not living to ourselves* is a duty which every man owes to society, flowing from that trust.

In connection with this it is to be remembered, that few if any are *without some circle of influence* more or less extended. No man's example, then, is without some power on others. Even the most limited has his next neighbour; others their own families, whilst others again *a whole community*. Then no man can excuse himself with this idea—"I have no influence, and therefore *what I do* is of *no consequence* to others."

Nothing is further from the truth than that a man can be *his own enemy only*; so long as example is power for good or ill. That man is a *friend* or *enemy* to society, in proportion as his example is good or bad.

Nor is example confined to those on whom it first acts. It descends to those that come after; and evil example is so subtle a fluid that it can, and often does, infect *unborn generations*.

Take an illustration. St. Paul laboured with his own hands to make himself "*an ensample*" to the Thessalonian Church of a noble independency; and how much of that of which he says of them, "*Ye were ensamples to all them that believe,*" flowed from Paul's pattern, we may imagine from considering the power of such a minister as "*an ensample* to the flock."

IV. Brethren, I would draw to a close. From what I have said it appears that *life is a fearful thing, full of tremendous responsibilities*, for which each living man will have to give an account to God; whilst

they that come after him will ennoble or brand him, in proportion as the power of his life has been an ensample *for good or ill*. I conclude that a good example of self-sacrificing for the good of others is to be set—*cost what it may*. The Holy Spirit commands it! The One Master and the faithful disciple exemplify it! "*For even Christ pleased not himself;*" "*Even as I please all men (for their profit) that they may be saved.*"

By way of application—

"I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say;" 1 Cor. x. 15. I speak to the Church—to its members, its communicants, such of you as think yourselves "*strong*" in all that makes true strength: not physical, but moral; not moral only, but spiritual also. Brethren, "*Whilst we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith.*"

Opportunity is doing the right thing at the right time and in the right place. Life is the day of opportunity. Each of us has *but one day*, and that is only lent; and the loan may be recalled long before the day of life, our threescore years and ten, is spent: and as a past hour cannot be recalled, so a lost opportunity cannot. How many have consumed their latter days in vain regrets over former days mis-spent or ill-spent! Remember, it is to the world and to the church that we professing Christians *owe a duty*, and that is to be paid as occasion offers, *denying ourselves for their good*.

Brethren, there is a practice which has become a custom, equally affecting albeit all—the professing Christian as well as those who make no profession of religion; a practice which, when it has become habit with any man, seizes alike the Christian and the Christless; respects neither persons nor character, but brings down to one common level prince and peasant, the