

either I have mentioned. I should call it "The Parable of the Wonderful Father!" Think of the father sitting cross-legged, his eyes on the ground, in dejection and sorrow. And you try to comfort him. You are inclined to urge the view that the further away such a profligate, debased son is, the better. But the father says, "He is my son; I wish he were home." Something appears in the distance; at last it seems to take something of the appearance of a human being. The father knows what the figure is. He says, "It is my son!" and he rises and runs to meet him, kisses him and forgives him. "Bring the best robe, and put rings on his fingers and shoes on his feet! Kill the fatted calf, proclaim a holiday, a high feast! For my son was dead and is alive, was lost and is found"

And if you had been standing by and one had said, "This is the *seventh* time that young man has come back, making all kinds of promises, and the father has always forgiven him," what would you think of the love and kindness of that father? But it is not seven times, but seventy times seven yea, times without number that God forgives us! And so I would call it the "Parable of the Wonderful Father," and if we thus return, we will all have cause to sing

"Oh happy day, that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour and my God!
Well may my glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad.

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"Now rest, my long-divided heart,
Here on this blissful centre rest!
With husks who would refuse to part
When called on angels' food to feast?"

PREACH THE WORD.

There are a thousand things that a minister can do; and all useful; but his great work is to "Preach the Word." That first; all other things in their subordinate place. Just as Paul was himself instructed in tent-making, it may well be believed that he instructed others—young men—in that most respectable and useful handicraft. Quite likely, too, on many occasions, he would give gratuitous, but very excellent lessons in Hebrew prosody, to some young Jewish friend, who had not shared *his* early advantages. And without doubt he would be able to give very sound

advice to the members of the Church in Corinth or Ephesus, who happened to be possessed of the municipal franchise, about election time. But these things never interfered with his great work. That work was to proclaim Christ as the Saviour of men: to teach holiness and consecration: to extend the kingdom of heaven on earth. There must be philosophy; there must be artistic skill; there must be diligent handicraft-work; there must be business application: but none of these were the peculiar avocation of the Apostles, or their humble successors of to-day, the Gospel ministers.

We are pleased to think that there is an improvement in preaching, in perhaps the majority of quarters. Less of the essay, and more of the homily: less of appeal to the critical intellect, and more to the yearning heart; more insisting that men should *be* right, than that they should merely *think* right: more teaching what the Word really means, and how it is related to us poor sinners—and not so much how it is related to this or that philosophy.

We are extremely well situated in this respect. We have no three-century-old, nor twelve-century-old system, that we must walk by. Our system is nearly in its twentieth century; and the articles of our creed are the same now, as if we had lived in Philippi, or traded at Corinth. And when one of us is in our humble study, preparing for Sabbath duties, we feel the liberty and inspiration of having no one, all the way up to the Lord Jesus, to come between, to interfere with us, or to whom we owe submission. And when, with prayer and thought we come before our people to endeavor to teach them—they having the same open Bible, and the same liberty and responsibility as to the truth with ourselves—if we tell them what they believe to be truth, they will so receive it at our hands. If we tell them what is not correct, they will set it down to our weakness and ignorance. But let the preacher *preach*. Let it be "The Word" he is engaged about.

Our wise friend, the Boston *Congregationalist*, a week or two ago, in an editorial, had this:—

It is fair to judge of a sermon not only by the pleasure which it gives a hearer while listening to it, but by the abiding impressing which it leaves upon his mind. Two friends on a recent Sabbath