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A

PASTORAL ADDRESS

TO THE

CONGREGATION

OF

SOUTH GOWER, OXFORD AND MOUNTAIN,

BY THE REV. W. J. MACDOWELL.

~~~~~  
" WOE IS UNTO ME, IF I PREACH NOT THE GOSPEL ! "—1 Cor. ix. 16.  
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TORONTO:

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A PASTORAL ADDRESS

TO THE CONGREGATION OF SOUTH GOWER, OXFORD
AND MOUNTAIN.

MY DEAR BRETHREN :

It is not with words of feigned affection or false friendship that I address you on the present occasion, for my heart is filled with gratitude, and overflows with love. It is now upwards of twelve months since the Lord inclined my soul to visit this far off land of strangers, and rude tract of desert; and I can say, with the utmost freedom, I have never yet known what it is to regret the leaving of my native shore; and never did I spend twelve months with so much pleasure and delight as the last twelve months have been spent. Still, I must say,

“ There is a spot of earth supremely blest,
A dearer, sweeter spot, than all the rest,”

to which the heart must ever look back with fond recollection—the place

“ Where the home of our infancy stood.”

Around that place, be it ever so homely, there rests a sacred halo which ever makes glad the heart of man. What being, separated from dear relatives, old acquaintances, and familiar friends, sighs not, as memory calls up from its sacred hiding-place those happy hours, when heart met heart in kindred sympathy! The cold forms of worldly acquaintanceship, having for its basis self-interest and earthly aggrandizement, can never atone for the loss of early associates; and the absence from that soil on which our first footsteps tottered, endeared by time and distance.

“ Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said—
This is my own, my native land.”

But the bewitching charm that the name of home carries with it, has, in a great measure, been lost to me. It is true, I often revert to the happy hours, when, separated from the external world, I united in sweet communion with those in whom I could confide, and who always shared alike with me, my sorrows and my joys. But though their company be lost, I am not without friends—friends, dearer than ever I expected to find in the wilds of North America. Since I first came amongst you, your constant care seemed to be, that I should want nothing to make me comfortable, and you failed not to give unquestionable evidence of your sincerity. The early opportunity you embraced of presenting me with a call to become your pastor, showed that you were anxious I should take up my residence amongst you; and your flattering address and valuable present to my esteemed friend and father, Mr. Boyd, spoke more to my praise than I justly merited. And this *noble animal* (a horse), with which you now present me, has done more than can be well conceived of, to endear you to my heart. Not for the value of the gift, which is considerable, but the feelings it exhibits, and the unequivocal evidence it gives of unfeigned attachment.

And now, in return, while I thank you for your kind liberality, I beg of you to accept of this short address, and impress it upon the minds of your children, that they may be able "*to contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints,*" and be guarded against that vile and pernicious Arminianism that is sweeping across the land like the withering winds of the desert, poisoning the moral atmosphere with its pestilential breath and deadly exhalation. And in order that you may have a full view of your real character and condition in the sight of a Holy God, let me tell you, in the words of Scripture,

I. That "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,*" (Rom. iii. 23); and, consequently, "*are under the wrath and curse of God,*" (Gal. iii. 10.) What you are to understand by this phraseology, is, that all men, whether rich or poor, young or old, in their first state, are universally wicked, and justly exposed to everlasting destruction, being

under the wrath and curse of God. And now, my friends, I would have you to consider what it is to be under the dominion of sin, and in actual rebellion against the sovereignty of heaven. Your own consciences must tell you that you are guilty, and the Word of God is most explicit in declaring your undone condition. You are at this moment suffering under the penalty of sin; but the dreadful day of final retribution is yet to come, and is rapidly approaching, when the awful but just sentence of condemnation shall be carried into full execution against the lukewarm and impenitent—for vengeance belongeth unto the Lord, and he will certainly repay, and "*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" When ages of revolving years shall have run their rounds, the misery of the wretched shall only be commencing; and endlessly and unavailingly will they toss on their fiery beds, striving to ease their position and relieve their pain. But—

II. "*It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,*" (1 Tim. i. 15.) This pre-supposes us to have been in a state of alienation from God, and outcasts from his presence, and that redemption could only be obtained through the shedding of his blood. "*God hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sin, that he might be just and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.*" Had it not been for his interposition, all the posterity of Adam would have remained in a state of depravity and misery. "*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.*" The merit of this sacrifice is not confined to your present condition. It reaches beyond death and the grave, and secures the final and everlasting happiness of believers in another world. Your present enjoyment is only a foretaste and earnest of the full fruition to be enjoyed at God's right hand. But let me entreat you to pause and consider, Whether or not you be in the number

of those sinners Christ Jesus came into the world to save ?
Attend to the words of the Redeemer :—

III. *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth.”*—John iii. 36. Free as is the offer of salvation, then it is manifest that none can be saved but those that believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith it is that we are *“justified and have peace with God.”* Great and marvellous was the love of God in sending His Son to be the Saviour of a lost world, yet that love extendeth not to all ; but is restricted to a certain character :—*“Whosoever believeth on the Son ”*—he, and he-only, *“shall have everlasting life.”* Every one, then, who sees the prominent place that faith occupies in the plan of salvation, must be anxious to obtain it. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”* How then is this pearl of great price to be procured ? Is it by any inherent energy or effort of your own ? No : faith is the gift of God. It is not produced by your wisdom, or influenced by the strength of your arm, but like all other good and perfect gifts, it cometh down from above, from the Father of lights. Since, then, you cannot be saved without faith, and since faith is not in your own power, but is the gift of God : if salvation be not obtained, it is the leading sentiment of the day, not to lay the blame to man’s account but to God’s, who did not confer the gift of faith. But would these blind zealots reason thus in other circumstances ? Are they not daily receiving bread from the hand of God, which He might withhold if He saw proper ? And might He not leave them, if He pleased, without a drop of water to cool their tongue ? But would they consider themselves justified in sitting down idle,—folding their arms on their bosom, till God would put the bread and water to their lips which the cravings of nature required ? Were starvation to ensue would they blame God or themselves ? Though their daily bread is the gift of God, they must be diligent in the use of the means God has appointed for obtaining it. And after they have done all they can, the gift must still appear to be of God, and not of men. For

though the husbandman cast the seed into the ground, unless God send the former and the latter rain, his labour would fail, and his fields yield no meat. Is God to be styled an unjust Judge. Should He once more seal up the Heavens and make the earth as brass? Is God to be styled unjust and partial, because He sends a wasting mildew over one land, and cuts down the food of thousands? Is God to be called partial or unjust when He visits another portion of the earth, with the fell stroke of the awful plague? Or will those inquirers into the secret counsels of the Almighty, say whether God be not as partial in bestowing on them the light of the everlasting Gospel, and withholding it from others, as he is in bestowing the gift of faith on one and not on another? For we are told most emphatically in 2 Thes. iii. 2, that "*all men have not faith.*" Who then shall be saved? We answer in the words of Christ Jesus.

IV. "*All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*"—John vi. 37-39. Christ here signifies that all that were given unto him by His Father in the eternal covenant of redemption should come unto Him. The work is the work of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the glorious Trinity. His it is to make men partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ. In the admirable words of our Shorter Catechism, "He convinces us of our sin and misery, enlightens our minds in the knowledge of Christ, renews our wills, and persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the Gospel." And believing on the Son we are pardoned, sanctified and saved. Thus were the eyes of the blind men opened; and thus was the deaf and dumb spirit cast out of the child that was brought unto Christ by his distressed father. Thus was Paul converted, and the awakened jailor at Philippi saved. And now my friends you will here perceive the extent of the Father's love. Had God merely given full liberty for man to come unto Him and be saved: yea had he proclaimed a will and a free salvation to all who should

full

come unto him, as is the current opinion in the present day, we must have considered it an inestimable token of love.

But to stop here robs God of His glory, and strips him of His attributes of love and mercy. It would make Him, to speak with reverence, a God of insolence and mockery: For God knows what is in man, and is well assured that to rest salvation on such a basis, no man would ever have come unto Him. For every man in his natural state hates his God, and prefers the vile servitude of Satan to the glorious liberty of the Sons of God. But God was determined to have sons and daughters born unto him, he was resolved to draw many thousands who would not otherwise have come. This Christ foresaw and knew,—and the thought of it refreshed his soul when he beheld the perverse rebellion of men. When he could find no comfort from the men of the world, he retired into the secrets of his Father's counsels for a moment's joy; and in the depth of that amazing love, he bathes his soul; crying out, "*All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me.*" These he was sure of, and he saw them all; and as he viewed them he saw the Father's image in them every one. Abel with his bleeding brow reclining on his Father's arm. The Preacher of righteousness before the Throne. The meek and the much tried son of Amram; and the sorely afflicted man of Uz—Abraham and the faithful ones with Isaac and Jacob, in the holy place—Paul the good soldier, and Peter surnamed a rock—John and James—Martha and Mary,—the few in Sardis, and the souls under the altar,—the faithful witnesses, martyrs, and contenders for truth—Knox and Calvin, Wishart and Hamilton, Rutherford and Halyburton, men of renown—stout warriors in the everlasting cause. These with all the others that God had given unto him, he viewed as the travail of his soul, and knew that they would come unto him. God had set his love upon them, and he did it freely, and he did it determinedly: and it is not possible that he could turn from his purpose. Christ claims them as the gift of his Father; (John 17, 6, 9, 11, 12, 20, 24.) And this doctrine the Apostle Paul maintains; and well he might:—"*plucked as he was, like a brand from the fire.*"

(Ephes. i. 4). "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved. 11th verse—"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things, after the counsel of his own will:" Christ is clothed with all authority and power to give "eternal life to as many as God hath given him;" (John xvii. 2.) Having this power given unto him, it is impossible that any can perish, or be "plucked out of his hands." Earth and hell may rage, evil spirits in the body and out of the body may combine together, and assail with their fiery darts, but sooner shall the heavens pass away, and the everlasting hills be torn from their deep foundations, than a single soul given to Christ as the fruit of his purchase, can be lost. When the season of conversion comes, the corruptions of nature can no longer hold out against that spiritual and Divine power which is able to bend the most stubborn will. The natural blindness of the understanding must yield to the heavenly illumination, and the affections of the heart be inclined to the spiritual love of Divine things. And now your own conscience will tell you whether or not you be brought into that state called "eternal life," "for as many as are ordained unto eternal life shall believe. (Acts xiii. 48). How necessary then the advice of the Apostle:—

V. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves," (2 Cor. xiii. 5.) The duty of self-examination is, of all others, perhaps, the most momentous and important. Standing, as you are, on the brink of an awful and unseen world, and waiting the pleasure of the Almighty, when he shall see fit to remove you hence, it becomes you earnestly to inquire "wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the most High God?" Have I believed on the name of Christ, and am I in a saving union with him? This last question you will be able to answer, not by ascending up into heaven, and

scrutinizing the Divine decrees, but by descending down to the earth, and, in the dust of moral defilement, inquiring whether or not you have been brought to a sense of your own spiritual vileness and guilt—whether or not you have fled for safety to the blood of Christ, or are still in your natural state, seeking safety “*through the deeds of the law.*” It is not enough for you to make a general acknowledgment of guilt, and look to the blood of Christ for the removal of that guilt, you must make conscience of searching out and bringing to light your particular offences, you must appeal to the Great Searcher of hearts, as David did, saying—“*Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts.*” But you must not stop with an examination, you must “*prove your own selves,*” make the Word of God the standard, compose your character and conduct with its immutable dictates. Deal impartially with your own souls. See whether Jesus Christ be formed in you. Do you delight in secret prayer? A hypocrite takes no delight in such an exercise, nor in any duty but what is seen of men, and will gain him a name. But if you are sincere, you will consider that God’s eye is upon you in private as in public. Consider, moreover, that prayer is not a duty, but a privilege. And if there be any of you still strangers to God, and aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, let me beseech you to consider your condition, and be thankful that you are still spared, and hearken diligently unto God’s Word. If you remain barren and unfruitful, the decree may at last go forth, “*cut them down,*” they cumber the ground.

VI. “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,*” (John xiii. 35.) Therefore, “*if ye love me, keep my commandments,*” says Christ, “*And this is my commandment, that ye love one another.*” “*This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God loveth his brother also. If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*” Again, “*every one that loveth him that begot, loveth him also that is begotten.*” The connexion between

the father and the child is such, that he who loves the one, loves the other; also, moreover, there is a community of sentiment between the children, being "*all members one of another,*" and having all the same views and interests, and united to the same head. They likewise "*esteem one another very highly for their works sake,*" being all engaged "*in labours of love.*" Thus is their love to him, expanding itself and taking in those who are the members of his body, and who are united to him. Hence, whosoever loveth God, loveth his neighbour also. Consider, my friends, what a dishonour it is to the Gospel that those who profess themselves sons of the same God, and members of the same Christ, temples of the same Spirit, heirs of the same glory, should be contending one with another. It is strange and unnatural, that they who are saints in profession should be devils in practice one to another! For wolves to devour the lambs is no wonder, but for lambs to devour one another is a wonder and a strange anomaly.

And now, in conclusion, while I again thank you for your valuable present, let me remind you that you are under the condemning sentence of God, in that you have transgressed his law; but be not discouraged, "*you have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;*" and by believing in his name ye shall have eternal life. But, remember, it is the Holy Spirit that must first awake you to a sight and sense of your sin and danger, for naturally you are blind and dark, and have no understanding, and will perish in unbelief if not drawn by the Spirit. For "*No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*" "*For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.*" "*What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded,*" (Rom. xi. 7.) "*Oh that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end!*"

Is the prayer of,

Your affectionate

PASTOR.

KEMPTVILLE, October 24, 1846.

The following is a list of the names of the
 persons who have been appointed to the
 various offices of the Board of Directors
 of the City of New York, for the year
 ending on the 31st day of December
 1897.

Office	Name
President	John A. B. ...
Vice-President	...
Members	...



