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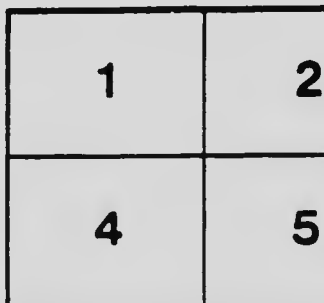
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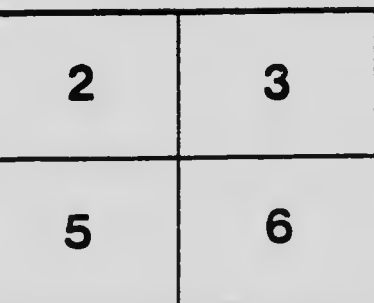
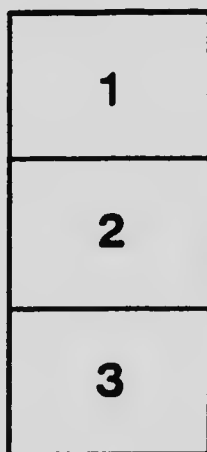
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*With Dr. Sedgwick  
kind regards*

## A Sermon,

PREACHED IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TATA-  
MAGOUCHE, N. S., ON OCTOBER 31, 1909,  
AT THE CLOSE OF A MINISTRY OF  
FORTY-NINE YEARS IN THAT  
CONGREGATION,

BY THE

REV. T. SEDGWICK, D. D.,  
SENIOR MINISTER OF THE CONGREGATION.

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*Printed for Private Circulation.*

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*To the  
Session and Congregation of Tatamagouche  
this Sermon  
is affectionately inscribed.*



# SERMON.

*Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.*"—Acts 26 : 22.

The words of the text, I need hardly tell you, are the words of the Apostle Paul in his defence before King Agrippa.

At the time he uttered them, his public ministry had, as he, perhaps, thought, neared an end ; at all events, a great part of it had ended. In any case, should it continue to be exercised at all, it would likely be under new circumstances and conditions. It was a time, therefore, for reviewing the past, and the result of that retrospect is to be found in the grateful acknowledgment of the text. "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.

But then, even in the Apostle's case a time would come when his ministry would have, in every sense of the word, to cease. Age and the weakness of age would lay their grasp on *him*, as on other men ; these would be followed, sooner or later but certainly, by death, and thus his earthly labors would, in due time, be curtailed, and at last brought to a final close. Divine help would not be withdrawn from him, but it would be given under different conditions and for other ends.

I am far, brethren, from desiring to put myself, even in appearance, on a level, in this respect, with the great Apostle. But still, I may be permitted to use his words, and the thoughts they suggest, as expressive of my own feelings this morning.

A little more than forty-nine years ago, on the nineteenth day of September, in the year eighteen hundred and sixty, I was ordained in this church to the ministry of the Gospel and inducted to the pastoral charge of this congregation, in which I have continued to this day.

I do not forget, but thankfully call to mind, that, for a

comparatively short time, some considerable change has taken place in the relation existing between us. Four years ago, you will remember, I intimated to you my intention of retiring altogether from the active duties of the ministry. What moved me to this conclusion was the weakness of advancing age and my consequent inability to do, as I thought it should be done, the needed work in a congregation like this. But at your request, and because of the very kindly arrangements which were then made, I was led to reconsider my decision, and to remain with you for a season, in the discharge of *some* active duty as your minister. I have felt, however, and I have already made this known to you, that the time has come, when, for the same reasons which existed four years ago, and which are far stronger now than then, in your interest, no less than in my own, my active service among you, must close, as it will do to-day.

I am not, brethren, accustomed, at any time, to say much about myself. But there are times to speak, as well as times to be silent, and, perhaps, the circumstances being what they are, this is such a time. It is, perhaps, fit and proper that I should make some reference at this time to my ministry of forty-nine years in this place, which this day comes to an end, and in this House of God where it began.

Let me call your attention, then, for a little this morning as suggested by the text, to some of the things which, on an occasion like this, may be mentioned in connection with my ministry in this congregation, and I will do so in a very simple way.

1. In the first place, then I would observe that my ministry here has been a *lengthened* ministry. Forty-nine years is a long time, and this has been the period of the exercise of my active ministry. It is a period which is meted out to few comparatively. The number of ministers on the roll of the Synod of the Maritime Provinces is about two hundred and fifty. Of these I am *ninth* in point of seniority, but of these nine, no one but myself is engaged in active work to-day.

But what I think is equally worthy of mention in this connection is the fact, which is rarer still, that my ministry has not

only been long in itself, but it has been exercised continuously in one congregation. I am the only minister in the Synod, and I think in the Church, of whom, at the present time, this can be said.

Into the question of the comparative merits of long or short pastorates I will not enter. At the time of my ordination the feeling was general that the pastoral relation was a very solemn and binding one, and should not be dissolved, except for very weighty reasons. So I felt myself, and continue to feel. In this and in other matters, I may, probably, be regarded as behind the age. But I am not sure that the change of feeling as to the permanence of the pastoral relation, has promoted the best interests of religion, though, in this matter, I may not be considered an impartial witness. But be this the case or not, the fact of my continuing here so long, and that in a time of confessed restlessness and change, cannot, it seems to me, be regarded as, in any way, dishonorable either to myself or to you.

I would say, too, in this connection, that so long a period could not but be a time of *change*. What changes have taken place, since I came here, in the congregations *around us*, in River John, Earltown, New Annan, Wallace, and indeed in all the congregations of the Presbytery. The fathers and brethren who ministered to these then, are all away, and many of their successors, Watson and Munro and Murray and Darragh and Macgregor—to mention no more—all good men and true, their warfare is accomplished, they have entered into their rest. Only one remains, the venerable and beloved MacKay of River John and Wallace, my neighbor during the greater part of my ministerial life, and who will not blame me when I say, "We took sweet counsel together, and walked in the House of God as friends."

What changes too, have taken place *among ourselves!* The elders who bore office at the time of my ordination, Currie and Nelson and Hingley, wise, devoted, faithful, godly men, and many of those who came after them, are all gone. There were then one hundred and twenty-five names on the communion

roll, but of these only seventeen are in the land of the living to day, and ten only still in connection with the congregation. It may interest you to give these names. Those still on our roll are :—Mrs. James Semple, Miss Isabella Ross, Mrs. James McKeen, Mrs. Robert Bryden, Miss Margaret Bentley, Mrs. William Blackwood, Mrs. David Williamson, Mrs. David Fraser, Mrs. William Donaldson, Mrs. George Reid : those living, but elsewhere : Mrs. A. Patterson, Mrs. J. S. McLean, Mrs. J. Millar, Mrs. E. Kent, Mrs. Sutherland, Mrs. J. McLearn, Miss Mary Hutchinson.

It is then an altogether different, a new congregation to which I have been ministering for not a few years. I wonder, sometimes, that I am myself alive, and have reason indeed to say "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day."

2. But, secondly, my ministry here has been a *laborious* ministry.

When I entered on it, I was very young, little more than twenty-two years of age, and, as I now feel, in looking back on that time, in the light of experience, very insufficiently furnished for my work.

The congregation, even then, was a comparatively large one, extending, as it does still, over a wide area and requiring a large amount of pastoral work, which, while strength lasted, I tried, to the best of my ability to overtake. At the outset too, difficulties existed, and from time to time emerged, which needed faith and patience and effort to deal with and to overcome. Then, for nearly all these years, I had to preach very often three times on the Lord's Day, and twice, as a rule, to the same congregation. No easy matter this, however little some may regard it. The "care of the churches," too, has time and again come upon me. I have been moderator of the sessions of all the congregations around during their vacancies, and this, not once only but repeatedly, involving much time and toil, much anxiety, many a long and cold and weary journey. Then in addition to all these, during the whole course of my ministry I have had, and still have, not a little public duty to perform in relation to the

Church at large. This, too, is the place to say, what, with great thankfulness, I think I am able to say, that in the fulfilment of these public duties, I have enjoyed, far beyond my deserts, in some measure, the confidence, and, perhaps, the affection of my brethren, and they have shown this in many ways, which I will not mention here.

3. But again, mine has been a ministry in which I have enjoyed *not a little comfort*.

Doubtless, throughout the course of it, difficulties have arisen, trials of one kind or another have been endured. But these have been few, very few, comparatively. By the help of God they have been surmounted, and they are not at all to be compared with the kindnesses I have received and the comforts I have enjoyed.

And this, perhaps, is the proper place to make grateful mention.—I can only speak generally here, of those who have given me much help and encouragement in my work. From the very beginning I have had a body of faithful and devoted elders, and not a few among the people of a like spirit, who did what they could during all these years, to hold up my hands. Many, very many, of them have passed away, but I will ever hold them in grateful remembrance. And not the least, I must here say, are my thanks due to her who has walked by my side during the greater part of this time, whose companionship and counsel have been my chief earthly support and guide and comfort, and to whom your interests have been, in many respects, not less dear than my own.

4. Once more, I would like to say that I have sought to carry on my ministry in the spirit of the prophet's words: "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." And I have done this not simply because the way is *old*, but because, in my judgment, it is *good*.

I will not deny, that the fact that a doctrine or an institution is *old*, affords to my mind presumptive evidence that it

contains some truth, at least, or has met some want. It should not, therefore, be cast aside without careful examination, or without anxious consideration of the merits of what is proposed to be substituted in its place. But I have never regarded antiquity, simply in itself, as any sure test of truth. If, then I have walked in the old paths it is not, I repeat, because they are old, but because, so far as I am able to judge, they are good.

These fifty years, I need hardly tell you, have been fruitful in change, more fruitful in this respect than, perhaps, any equal period in the world's history. There have been changes, important, far-reaching, industrial, economic, social, political, scientific, and many of them have been most beneficial, to be welcomed, to be matters of joy and thanksgiving. And all this being the case, why, it may be asked, may not religion—may not the religion of Christ, undergo the same process, and be in like manner improved? I reply, because *man* has not changed. In the Twentieth Century, he is the same erring, sinful, guilty, miserable, being, that he was in the First. *He* has not changed, nor for this reason can that truth change which the Bible, given by inspiration of God in its every part, and the Bible alone, reveals, and which truth alone, when understood and believed, can bring to him the redemption he needs. Convictions such as these, the reading, the reflection, the experience of these many years, have not shaken, but confirmed. I cannot help believing, therefore, that if Christianity is to maintain its healing, renewing, redeeming, power, it must be regarded, substantially, in the old light, based on the old grounds, defended by the old methods, and preached in the old way. Such has been the character, generally, of my ministry, and the reasons for it. Time will not permit me here to enter into any detail. I may mention, however, that my first sermon in this church, as your minister, was from the text:—"We preach Christ Crucified." and this has been the sum and substance of my preaching ever since, as I believe it to be the sum and substance of the Bible itself. In this, and in its related truths, is the great mystery of Godliness. Here and here only, I believe, and as I believe have I spoken, is the secret for sinful, guilty, suffering men,



of regeneration, of renewal, of forgiveness, here alone will they find the peace, the strength, the comfort, the hope which they need. O forsake not these old paths, they are paths of pleasantness and peace, and walking in these, you shall find rest for your souls.

I will only add, because I know I have been much misapprehended here, that I have ever tried to respect the work of other laborers in the vineyard, not to build on another man's foundation, and while never refusing needed help to those of our own or other communions, to confine my efforts, as a rule, to my own people.

5. But what of my *success* as a minister of Christ? After all, this is by far the most important matter. The great end of the ministry is to be instrumental in fulfilling the purpose for which Christ lived and died and now lives in heaven at His Father's right hand. What that purpose is, the apostle Peter tells us in substance: "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, *that He might bring us to God.*"

How is it, then, with me in this respect? A ministry may be long, laborious, faithful, in a sense, to truth, exercised in circumstances of some measure of comfort, and yet, for all that, may be unsuccessful.

But who is to speak with confidence here? There are those, I know, who think they can speak confidently, and who do speak confidently, in a matter of this kind, as if they possessed the prerogative—the awful prerogative of searching the heart. And so we hear of so many souls being converted, of religion flourishing, of the Church prospering, and the like. I think they err, who thus think and speak. Careful and humble language—it seems to me—is the language which should be used in dealing with a question like this.

But then, we may err on the other hand in failing to recognize and to acknowledge things, which may, perhaps, not unfairly, be regarded as proofs and indications of God's presence and blessing. Well, can I point to any such tokens? I think I can.

And here I will not enter into any minute detail. I will refer only to the *growth* of the congregation during my ministry, and to two things only in connection with that growth.

The congregation has grown *in numbers*. As I have said already, when I came here there were one hundred and twenty-five names on the Communion Roll. There are now three hundred and sixty-eight; that is, they have increased three-fold, and this, in a community where there has been no influx of population. And if you should think that this is an inconsiderable increase or number, I would point out—what you may not know—that in the two hundred and forty or two hundred and fifty congregations within the bounds of the Maritime Synod, there are only *nine* whose communicants exceed our own.

But the congregation has grown, not only in numbers, but in *liberality*. For the support of the ordinances of the Gospel among ourselves, we are contributing at least two hundred dollars, annually, more, than we did five years ago; while in the recent Blue Book, the congregation is reported as having given, during last year, eight hundred and forty-two dollars for Missionary and Benevolent purposes. *This*—I would impress on you—is one true test of a congregation's spiritual life—not what it expends on itself, but what it gives to others more needy than itself. But here, too, you should know, that the sum above mentioned—which I do not say is, in itself, any great matter for glorying—is, in like manner, exceeded by only *twenty-five* of the two hundred and fifty congregations of the Maritime Synod and these, for the most part, in cities or towns. It should be said, too, that, in this respect, the last ten or fifteen years have been the best years.

I would only add that, in my opinion, there has been a very great improvement in the outward face of society. Doubtless, evil still exists in our midst. Old evils re-assert themselves, and new evils make their appearance. Constant watchfulness and effort are, therefore, needed. But I cannot help thinking, that we are a more industrious, intelligent, moral and religious people than we were fifty years ago.

Let me not here be misunderstood. I am very far from taking to myself the only credit for the things of which I have just been speaking—the growth of the congregation and the improvement of the community. All I mean to suggest is, that, perhaps, they may afford some indication that my ministry among you has not been altogether barren or unfruitful, but has been marked by some tokens of the Master's presence and blessing. These, however, even if they exist, are not the things on which I wish, at this time, or at any time, to dwell. Rather does it become me, as I think of my failures, my imperfections, my shortcomings, my sins, to say with the Psalmist of old: "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me," and to look only for mercy, even as it is written: "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

It is time, and more than time to end—but a few words yet remain to be said.

I will not utter the word *farewell*, for I remember, that, in a sense, I will still be your minister, and I hope, for what time may yet be granted me, to live and go in and out among you. Whatever help, I need hardly say, it may be in my power to render you, as individuals or as a congregation, will be most cheerfully given. But still it remains true, that my relation to you—as it has hitherto existed—this day comes to an end. My desire and prayer for you is that of Moses for God's people of old: "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children; and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it." May "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all."

There is this other word, also, I have to say: There is much, very much—it seems to me—in your present condition, which should move you to thank God, and take courage, which should fill you with confidence and hope. Not the least of these, is this—that though I am leaving you, you are not thereby

left as "sheep having no shepherd." A time of vacancy is not seldom a time of trial to a congregation. When it occurs, it is sometimes the indication of trouble; it is sometimes the cause of trouble. It is frequently a season, not of advance, but of retrogression. From evils such as these, God has spared you and in your case the prophetic word has been fulfilled: "Yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers." It has taken away from myself not a little of the bitterness of this parting, that I am able—speaking after the manner of men—to leave you in such good hands. The coming to us of my beloved friend and brother—Mr. Forbes, to be my colleague and successor—has been a great blessing to you, as it has been to me, and our fellowship in the active work of the ministry—I am speaking only for myself—has been of the happiest and most cordial kind. But that fellowship comes, this day, to an end, and one result will be, that whatever changes may take place, his labors and responsibilities will be, for a time, I trust a short time, to some considerable extent, increased. In any case, however, let me impress on you as my last word—keep ever in mind what the Christian ministry is. It is not a human, but a divine institution. It is the ordinance of Christ, who, as the apostle tells us: "When He ascended up on high, gave gifts unto men, and he gave some (to be) apostles; and some (to be) prophets; and some (to be) evangelists; and some (to be) pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

With the ministry, of Christ, therefore, Christian men and women, your best and highest interests are indissolubly bound up. Do everything, then, to strengthen your minister's hands, and to encourage his heart. Give him, and give him cheerfully, as you are able to do, an adequate support, that thus, set free from worldly anxiety and care, he may be able to give himself entirely to his work. Pray for him. Come to the House of God regularly, and give earnest heed unto, and lay well to heart, what

you hear there. Come to the Communion of Christ's Body and Blood, whenever the Table is spread, if the fire of love is to be kept alive and is to burn brightly on the altar of your hearts. Come to the meeting for prayer. Associate yourselves *personally* with one or other or more of the existing instrumentalities of good. In a word, *let him help you*. This is the the great work of the minister of Christ, to help others, as God shall enable him, in the work of reaching the better, the heavenly country. And so, if he rebuke sin, it is because sin would keep you out of it. If he urge faith, it is because without faith you cannot reach it. If he call you to self-examination, it is because, if you would judge yourselves, you should not be judged. If he exhort you to liberality, it is that you may lay up treasure in heaven. O, let him thus help you, individually and as a people, and you will encourage him, indeed and of a truth. But more than that—you will be blessed yourselves, and you will become a blessing.

"And now, may the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen."



