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S E R M O N I.

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THE USES AND LESSONS OF DISAPPOINTMENT.

“My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away; which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid: what time they wax warm they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place. The paths of their way are turned aside; they go to nothing, and perish. The troops of Tema looked; the companies of Sheba waited for them. They were confounded, because they had hoped; they came thither, and were ashamed.”—JOB 6: 15-20.

THE meaning of this passage, as uttered by Job, is, that he had been *disappointed*. He was in deep affliction, and had reasonably hoped, when his friends came to him, that they would have comforted him in his sorrows; but all the expectation which he had cherished from that quarter had failed. They had not taken any such view of the causes of his sufferings, or addressed to him any such words of comfort, as would be adapted to cheer his heart, and alleviate his woes. He looked for the language of condolence and compassion—for something to cheer his heart, and to uphold him in his trials; but for this he had looked in vain. This thought he illustrates by one of the most beautiful comparisons

ever employed. He had been like weary and thirsty travelers in a desert, who came to the place where they hoped and expected to find water, but who, when they came, found that the streams were dried up, and had vanished away. Those streams were swollen in the rainy seasons, or when the ice dissolved on the mountains; but in other seasons, they were absorbed in the sands of the desert, and left their beds entirely dry. A comparison of a man who thus deceives and disappoints, is common in Arabia; and the comparison would be appreciated no where better than there, where the thirsty and weary caravan approaches the place where such streams were supposed to run, or where it had found refreshment formerly, and now finds only a dry bed of stones or of sand. Job speaks of such a caravan; speaks of their hopes, and their disappointment: "The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed." They had confidently expected to find water there; they came, and found none; they were downcast and sad that the waters had failed, and they looked on one another with confusion and dismay; they were ashamed as if there had been something foolish and wrong in cherishing such expectations—a feeling which we are all apt to associate with disappointment; and Job represents himself as having such a feeling when he thinks of the vain hope which he had cherished of consolation from these persons whom he calls his "brethren." Perhaps the meaning of the passage may, after these explanations, be better understood by repeating the text, translated a little more literally:

My brethren are faithless as a brook,
 Like the streams of the valley that pass away;
 Which are turbid by means of the [melted] ice,
 In which the snow is hid, [by being dissolved.]
 In the time when they become warm, they evaporate;
 When the heat cometh, they are dried up from their places.
 The channels of their way wind round about;
 They go into nothing—and are lost.
 The caravans of Tema look;
 The traveling companies of Sheba expect to see them.
 They are ashamed that they have relied on them;
 They come even to the place, and are confounded.

The general subject, therefore, on which I propose to address you is, *Disappointment*—its uses and lessons. All afflictions—and disappointment may be regarded as one of the greatest and the most common of them, and as in some measure entering into all others—have their own uses, and teach their own lessons; and it is our business, as well as we can, to learn those uses and lessons, and to profit by them. In a world where disappointments so often occur, and may occur in respect to any hope cherished, or any anticipation entertained, and where they seem so much to

be ordered by some presiding power, baffling our schemes, and blasting our most fondly cherished, and, as we think, our reasonable hopes, it is well to inquire why they occur, and what ends they are designed to answer. As there are few, if any, who have not in some way been disappointed, and none who may not be, the subject will have a practical interest for us all. It will be convenient in the arrangement of the subject, to notice the forms in which disappointments occur in the world; the reasons why they occur; and the lessons which they should teach us—or their uses as a part of a divine moral administration over human affairs.

I. In the first place, I propose to notice the forms in which they occur.

They are always in reference to some hopes or expectations which we had cherished, and, of course, may be as numerous as our hopes, or may extend to any thing in regard to which we cherished hope. There are two uses of *hope* considered as a mode in which the mind acts, or considered with reference to the arrangements of the divine government under which we live. One is, to stimulate us to exertion by the prospect of some good to be obtained and enjoyed; the other is to be held in the divine hand as a means of checking, restraining, humbling, recovering, and controlling us. In the former aspect, it is a device super-added to reason and conscience in stimulating us to honorable effort; in the latter aspect, it is held in the hand of God as a means of rebuking us if we are wrong, of humbling us if we are proud, of recalling us to a right path if we go astray, and of turning our thoughts to other objects if we have fixed our expectations on those which would not be for our good.

Considered, as they must be, with reference to the hopes that we cherish, and the plans which we form in life, the disappointments which we meet with may be grouped under certain classes.

(1.) They are, first, such as relate to the acquisition of property. Perhaps the most universal of all plans that men lay, are those which pertain to this; the most general of all desires, is the desire to be rich. That the great mass of those who, under free institutions, aim at competence merely, are successful, need not be doubted, but the majority of those who form plans for the acquisition of property are by no means satisfied with simply aiming at competence, and are therefore disappointed. They desire not only to have a competence, but to be richer than others; not merely to obtain enough of this world's goods for their families as to any reasonable demands, and to do good to others, but to "join house to house, and field to field, that they may be left alone in the midst of the land;" seeking wealth with reference to another and quite a distinct object from any thing connected with utility—the *reputation* of being rich. That the great mass of those who

with such ends seek for property are destined to be disappointed, no one can doubt. There is not property enough in the world to gratify the rapacious desires of all who thus seek it, and the large prizes are conferred on the few. There is some influence which counteracts the efforts of the mass; and while here and there one—whether for his own good or not, is another question—obtains the prize, the mass of scramblers for gain go down to their graves having failed of the object; many of them with much less than they begun life with, and many, literally applying to themselves the language of one of the richest men of his age: “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither.”

(2.) Equally subject to disappointment is a second class of persons—those who aim at distinction in honor and office. The class of those who seek this is less than the former; the proportion of the disappointed is not less. The desire of distinction is one that is deeply seated in our nature as it is now, and is the perversion of a desire that existed in the bosom of man in a state of innocence, and that will be found in the bosoms of all holy beings. The original desire, as it may exist in the bosom of angels, as it was implanted in Adam, and as it may attend us hereafter in a high and holy world, is the desire of excellence—of virtue—of the cultivation of our powers—of making as much of ourselves, and of doing as much in the sphere where we are placed, as possible. This is proper; but it is easy to see that when the mind is turned away from original rectitude, and brought under the influence of perverted feelings, it may become quite a different thing. Instead of being a mere desire of excellence in itself, or of the highest cultivation of our powers, it becomes a desire of *excelling others*; and thus becomes the foundation of the hope of distinction, of the aspirings of ambition, and extensively of the wish for office. Perverted thus, it becomes in many in early life, and characteristically through life, the ruling passion; and as such it lays the foundation for envy, and intrigue, and political cabals, and far-extended arrangements of doubtful morality to reach the end; in multitudes of cases contemplating desolation and blood. It is sad to reflect how many of these aspirants have been disappointed; how few have won the prize that they sought. It is humiliating to all thoughts of ambition to reflect, in regard to the numberless millions who have lived, in whose bosoms this feeling, to a greater or less extent, has existed, how few of them are successful. Of those who have sought to be conquerors and consuls; of those who have sought the prize for eloquence and poetry; of those who have sought for coronets or crowns; of those who struggled at the Olympic and the Isthmean games; of those who have sought the button that distinguishes a high mandarin, or a star to designate a rank of nobility; of those who sought to excel in the use of the chisel in the days of Phidias, or the

pencil in the days of Rubens; of those who sought to be good farmers or mechanics in the days of Augustus, or to be chief among the shepherds in Arcadia, how few are there whose names have reached us, how few who reached the prize in their own days. Of the multitudes in our land who may be now laying their plans to secure to themselves the office of President of the United States, some half a dozen successively will reach the prize; of the scramblers for that office now, one or two will reach it, and while they occupy it, their disappointed rivals will have passed away.

(3.) Equally subject to disappointment is a third class — those who attempt to build up their family name, and obtain distinction in their children, either as founders of families, or as training their children for elevation of rank, or talent, or science. There is almost no hope in the bosom of a parent so strong as this; almost none that is so likely to be disappointed, or where an overruling Power interposes as he pleases. The rich, the great, princes, nobles, professors, statesmen, are set aside in the distribution of honors of this kind; a blight rests on the efforts to found a family name, or to gain celebrity in our children, and honors are scattered by a rule that no one can study out. Newton is taken from humble life, and not from a family ambitious of a family name; Luther, a poor and penniless monk, is made to fill a space in the world's history which princes would seek in vain; Shakspeare is the son of a dealer in gloves, Chalmers the son of a petty merchant, Foster the son of a poor weaver, Burns a plow-boy — and where should the test stop? — while, in the ranks of nobility, many an ambitious father has seen his sons grope along beneath mediocrity, or sink into disgrace. Napoleon attempted to perpetuate his name as the founder of a dynasty; added to all the crimes of ambition and war, the crime that makes us weep more than any thing that he did, in divorcing his faithful wife — for there is no blaze of glory that can gild such an act in domestic relations. God frowned upon that wicked act, and the weak and imbecile heir to the most splendid throne of the world, sunk in early years undistinguished to the grave, and the name and dynasty is extinct. The author of Waverley, himself truly great in his proper sphere, sought to lay the foundation of an illustrious family, and aimed to perpetuate his name by a title which weaker men seek as their sole distinction; but the title has passed away, and he lives only in his own department — his works. An ancient prophet saw a man endeavoring to place himself among the great, to lay the foundation for permanent remembrance. He was building for himself and family a splendid sepulcher, as if his situation in an honored office which he held was secure, and his family would long remain after him. God sent the prophet to the man. "Go," said he, "and get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say, What hast thou here? and

whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulcher here, as he that heweth out a sepulcher on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock? Behold, the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee. He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house. And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down." (Isa. 22 : 15-19.) Of all the plans and hopes of men, there are few that are more subject to disappointment than those which are founded on the hope of perpetuating an honored name in a family, or raising a family to eminence. Your children will be rarely what you hoped they would be in your ambitious feelings, when your hopes reached beyond respectability and usefulness, and some boy from a mechanic's shop or a humble farm will bear away the prize which you hoped would be theirs. There are more disappointments that occur in regard to children than probably arise from any other source. There are more expectations that are not met, more hopes that are blasted; for sickness, or death, or inefficiency, or inferiority in any respect, or an evil course, often, alas! how often disappoints long and tenderly cherished hopes.

(4.) Equally subject to disappointment is a fourth class—those who seek for happiness solely in the things of this life. I mean permanent, solid, satisfying happiness. Multitudes seek it; a few profess to find it to an extent that rewards their efforts; the man disappointed in one thing, and at one time, hopes to find it in another. When a child—credulous in believing every thing—I ran toward a rainbow to find the pot of gold, which I was told I would find if I came where it touched the earth; and older children are always doing the same thing. The rainbow recedes. The boy can not fix it to one place. He comes where its arch seemed to rest on the earth, and now it rests on a spot equally remote. You run through pelting rain to reach it, but it always recedes. You seek for pleasure in the world; and, as the good that your soul needs, you will not find it. Here and there one will say at the close of a ball, that she enjoyed all she hoped; but how many feelings there are which are not expressed there! All who become Christians say that they never were sure of finding happiness in the world; and Solomon, and Goethe, and Chesterfield, and Malibran say the same thing of themselves. Never was there a more beautiful image to express this than that in my text. The weary and the thirsty travelers in the desert come to the place where the streams of water were supposed to run, and haste to slake their thirst. They look, and the bed of the torrent is dried up. "When the heat cometh, they are dried up from their place. The channels of their way wind round about; they go into nothing, and are lost. The caravans of Tema look, the traveling

companies of Sheba expect to see them. They are ashamed that they have relied on them; they came to the place, and are confounded."*

II. I proposed, in the second place, to consider the reasons of these disappointments. I wish to place myself and you in an attitude where we can look at them, and to inquire how it is to be explained that they so often occur, or why so many are, in fact, disappointed. This part of our subject is not difficult.

(1.) The first reason is, because the plans and expectations which were formed, were beyond any reasonable ground of calculation, based on the ordinary course of events, or what ordinarily happens to man. They are not made by taking into view what usually occurs in the course of human affairs. There are many illusions that play upon the minds, and around the hearts of men, and no where do they more frequently occur than in regard to the very matter under consideration. Those illusions arise from several sources. We are either ignorant of or forgetful of the usual course of events, and do not take that into our calculation; or, we anticipate in the future what does not commonly occur, forgetting how many fail in their expectations, and how few are successful; or we trust in our "star," or our destiny, and suppose that ours is to be an exception to the common lot; or, we are merely *presumptuous*, relying on what we suppose is our talent, or something in us that will exempt us from the common lot of mankind; or, we feel that there is a charm around us and our family, and that we must be exempt from the common failures and calamities of the race. The consequence is, that we form our plans with only the slightest impression of the possibility that we shall fail or be disappointed, and engage in their execution with as sanguine a feeling as if we were certain that they would be all successful. As a law of our nature it is wise that this should be so, if we would only admit the *possibility* that we may be disappointed, and if we would not murmur when disappointment comes; for life would soon be stagnant, and the hands would droop, and the knees tremble, and the sinews of effort be destroyed, if we either saw what disappointments actually await us, or even if fear, in regard to the future, had as close a correspondence with the reality as hope has; or, rather, if fear, magnifying any thing, took the place which hope now does. Hope goes far beyond the reality in most instances, and gilds the future with bright beams, and makes the unknown more cheerful to us than the present and the known and draws the thoughts along from the gloomy present to what may be more cheering in time to come. He who made our frame *could* have given to *fear* the

* See also the result of the best experiment ever made on the subject, to find happiness in the world, in Ecclesiastes 2 : 1-11.

place which *hope* now has : and as hope now sheds a cheerful light on the future, so fear might have shrouded all that is to come in gloom. That he has not done that, is to be traced to nothing else than benevolence : to make us happy in the cheerful or the cheerless present, and, in any disappointment that may occur, to draw our thoughts along to a better world

(2.) A second reason why we are disappointed in our hopes is, that our expectations were such as were improper in themselves. They related to things in which we ought not to have cherished hope ; to objects in which benevolence to us required that we should be disappointed. We cherished the hope because we wished our pride to be gratified ; or because we secretly supposed we had some claim on God ; or because we wished to indulge in some sensual propensity, which it was well should not be gratified ; or because, if we had been gratified, we should have desired nothing better and higher. We have laid plans which are really against our own interests, and which in every point of view were wrong, and we could reasonably expect only that we should come in collision with some law of nature, and impinge on something in the course of events that would demonstrate the error of the course.

(3.) A third reason may be stated for the fact that we are so often disappointed. It is from the reference of disappointment to our own good. It may not be that the thing hoped for is in itself absolutely wrong, or because, all things considered, there were not enough prospects of success to justify us in forming the plan ; but it may be that He who sees all things, perceives that success might be perilous to us in every way. What would be the effect on most persons, formed as we are, if every thing went on smoothly through life ; if every plan were successful ; if every hope were realized ; if all our plans for gain uniformly turned out well ; if our children were all that we hoped they would be ; if we found in the gay circle all the joy which we anticipated ; if we had as many flatterers and admirers as we wished ? Who can be ignorant of that effect ; and who can be ignorant in how much better state one may be in regard to his own best good hereafter when disappointed, than he might be if he had been entirely and completely successful ? The state of mind at the very point when our fairest hopes are blasted, may be a better state—considered with reference to the whole of our existence—than the state of mind at the very moment of highest prosperity. The wealth that we sought—how do we know how much injury it might have done us ; into what perilous circles it might have drawn us ; what new and dangerous acquaintances it might have led us to seek, or that would have sought us on its account ; the bad passions that its possession might have engendered and fostered in the heart ; the self-complacency which it might have

produced in our bosoms and the unconcern in regard to the life to come of which it might have been the cause? There is One that knows us better than we do ourselves, and that can better at-temper and arrange in regard to us the things which occur in this present world.

III. I proposed, in the third place, to notice some of the lessons which disappointments should teach us, or their uses as a part of the divine moral administration over human affairs. The remarks under this head will be brief, and will constitute all that will be said as an application of the subject.

(1.) The first which I shall notice will be, that our plans pertaining to this life should all be formed with this possibility in view. I say *possibility*; I do not say with gloomy foreboding. I have already adverted to a wise and benevolent provision in our nature, by which we are much more inclined to look on the bright side of things in the future than the dark side; much more to hope that our plans will be successful than to fear that they will fail. *Life is thus rendered cheerful rather than gloomy; for life would be a burden, and we should all sink down to inaction, and should soon pray that Death might hasten his lingering footsteps, if fear had the same place in the economy which hope now has. But while nature prompts us to look with cheerful hope on the future, and while it would be against the laws of our nature and the whole influence of religion to exchange that for gloom, the thoughts to which I have adverted may be allowed to moderate our anticipations, and to enter as an element into the formation of our plans; to mellow the too dazzling light by the intermingling of rays less perilous to the vision, and to produce the effect which, perhaps, time may on a picture, bringing it nearer to reality. Many whom I now address have experienced disappointments, and the effect should be, and will be, greatly to moderate our expectations from this world, in reference to the remainder of our course. A much larger number—for the young always outnumber the aged—are forming their plans and expectations in regard to the future. Nature prompts to cheerfulness and to joy in the hopes which are held out, and the future is redolent of sweets, and glowing with beauty. Flowers springing up in the path, and silvery fountains, and an unclouded sky, and balmy breezes, and sounds of music, and domestic bliss, and returning cargoes protected from storms, and increasing wealth, and the joyous flow of the spirits, and the exulting beating of the heart in the fulfillment of every desire—these things gild all the future, and make it as bright as a vision of Arabic fancy. But these things may not be; and though gloom and despondency are not what I aim to produce, yet I would produce moderate and chastened desires. Flowers may spring up in the path, but so may thorns; fountains may bubble, and purling*

streams may run along, but "the streams of brooks may pass away, when the heat cometh they may be dried up from their places, and the caravans of Tema, and the traveling companies of Sheba, be ashamed and confounded," when they come, weary and thirsty, to find them; health may fail, and rivals be successful, the tempests blow when you expected the balmy zephyr, and there may be the voice of wailing while the harp shall be laid aside, and the ship may be stranded, and the wife that you take to your bosom may grow pale and die, and the little boy, so bright and so lovely, your hope and joy, may be borne to an early grave, or may live to break your heart. Every thing teaches us, and the disappointments which actually occur, most effectually — that the expectations which we form respecting this life should be subdued and moderate; if there are any where there is no doubt, they can be derived only from the life to come.

(2.) A second, and a material lesson, therefore, is, that we should form such plans, and cherish such hopes, as will not be subject to disappointment. Those to which I now refer are such as relate to religion, and are founded on that. Those which are based on religion, on the sought favor of God, on the hope of heaven, are the only expectations which are sure not to be disappointed, and not to fail. Others *may* be, indeed, successful; these certainly *will* be. Around others there can be no certainty of calculation; in this, there can be no peril of a failure. He that has a well-founded hope of heaven, has a permanent security for happiness; and in whatever else of a subordinate nature he may be disappointed, he will not be in this. This is put beyond the reach of tempests and storms, of fire, famine, and flood, of pestilence and war, of blight and mildew, of the loss of life or health, of the rivalry of competitors, and the malice of enemies; beyond any danger of a failure from the want of strength and skill of our own, or the malignant skill of our foes, for it is in the hand of a covenant-keeping and a faithful God.

If you ask me, as perhaps you would be disposed to, here, What is the *evidence* that there is no disappointment in this; what proofs that the hopes fostered by religion are successful; what demonstration that the Christian actually reaps the reward which religion is supposed to promise?—there is much that could be said in reply. You admit—for you can not deny it—that all *other* plans and purposes are liable to disappointment. You ask: What is the evidence that this is not also? I have no time to go into an extended reply to this obvious and proper question; but I will state in a few words, what is the *nature* of the evidence on which we rely. There is, then—

First, the fact that they who become true Christians are *not* disappointed in regard to what religion promises in this life. They often give up much in order to obtain it; they sacrifice

worldly pleasures; they abandon the hopes of earthly distinction; they part with beloved friends; they turn away from these things not because they are more unsuccessful than others, or have less brilliant prospects, but because they feel themselves called by their Saviour to seek higher ends and aims; and they declare with one voice that religion has *not* thus far disappointed them; that it has furnished all, in regard to peace of mind, and joy in the prospect of heaven, and support in trial, which it promised. There is—

Secondly, the fact that as far as we can trace the influence of religion attending those who leave the world, it does not disappoint them. We have not yet, ourselves, gone into the dark valley, but we have seen those who have; and as far as we can accompany them or learn their feelings, we have every evidence that religion does not disappoint them there; that when they come to die, it is all that they ever hoped it would be in illuminating the dark valley, and shedding a cheerful light on the regions beyond. Why should we not believe that it attends them quite *through* that valley, and meets them with its rich promised blessings beyond the "swelling flood"? There is—

Thirdly, the conviction of the mind itself, that religion will *not* disappoint. Every man feels this and knows it. Every man is assured that if he had true religion he would have an unfailing source of consolation; that wherever else there might be disappointment, there would be none in the happy influences which he would hope from religion on his own soul. And there is—

Fourthly, the promise of God. That promise is sure, and is an anchor of the soul. There is no promise from heaven of success in an endeavor to gain property; there is none that cheers the scramblers for office; there is none that greets the lovers of pleasure when they enter the theater or the ball-room; there is none which can be a basis of calculation to him who has retired from business, and who seeks to find ease and comfort in old age in worldly gratifications. The only thing of the nature of *promise* that shines on the path of man is that which is found in religion; and, as it is a truth which no one can dispute, that the promises of God in regard to the happy influences of religion are verified in this life, why should we doubt that they will be in the life to come?

Those, therefore, and they are many, who have felt what disappointment is in regard to worldly hopes and prospects, religion invites to herself, with the assurance that she will never disappoint them. She points them to their own lives; reminds them how often they have failed in their hopes, and seen their fairest prospects blighted; and in view of all this, she comes to them and instructs them that disappointment was suffered to meet them in these things, *in order* that they might be led to seek a better portion for their souls, and she now points them to heaven as to a

place where disappointment never comes. Happy would it be if the failures in worldly hopes should lead men to seek that where their hopes will all be fulfilled!

To those who are in earlier life, who have not yet experienced disappointment, or scarcely known what it is, religion comes, and placing herself before them, would spare them the pain of bitter disappointment altogether. She would tell them not to form their plans solely or mainly for this life, but to cherish sober and chastened views of what this world can give, or to admit the possibility of a failure in what it promises as an element in their calculation; and, admitting this, to seek the crown that is unfading—the reward that does not glide away when you seem to have laid your hand upon it. Before hopes fondly cherished shall have been blasted, before a cloud shall come over your bright anticipations, before a cold and withering hand shall be stretched out to palsy what seems now full of hope, seek that which will never be blasted; on which a cold and withering hand shall never be laid; and which, fresh with immortal vigor, shall never be palsied by age, or smitten down in death. Be a sincere and humble Christian; and though you may have trials, you will have learned how to turn away the most cruel edge of disappointment; though you may not be rich, or honored, or admired, or prospered here, you will be rich in more valued wealth, honored by those whose esteem is of more value than earthly laurels, admired among the saints as the redeemed of the Lord, and prospered with a prosperity such as shall make the highest success in worldly schemes not worthy to be named.

S E R M O N I I .

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THE SPIRITUAL BODY.

“So is also the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”—1 COR. 15 : 42, 43, 44.

In the present discourse, I shall treat, not of the fact or the doctrine of the resurrection, but of the product of the resurrection. The fact of the resurrection of the body I assume—and not altogether assume it, but prove it by one text of Scripture which no exegetical torture can make to speak any thing else: “Marvel not