

ORIGINAL SERMONS;

BY

Presbyterian Ministers,

IN

THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY.

Now, I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.

PAUL.

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his hearers, will not be the means of saving them; and he himself shall be a cast away. Nor does he who is not prayerfully vigilant as to the matter and manner of his ministrations, so take heed to the ministry which he has received in the Lord as to fulfil it. O then, let all the ambassadors of the King of saints, the head of the church, imbibe the full spirit of the gospel, and of its author, and go forth to the blessed work of entreating sinners, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God. Thus, though by far the greater part of those whom he warns and exhorts, treat his message with scorn and indifference, yet he shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and God shall be his strength. How magnificent, how stupendous are the objects to which the whole mind and soul of the gospel minister ought to be ever directed!

SERMON VII.*

BY THE REV. JAMES BLYTHE, D. D.

GOSPEL DOCTRINE AND CHRISTIAN DUTY.

Finally, brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 11.

To recount the past struggles, temptations, and felicities of our Christian course, and, with confidence in God, to look forward to those that may come, form at once the duty, the happiness, and safety of the Christian. Says

* Delivered to the church and congregation of Pisgah, on the resignation of the pastoral charge, after a connection of forty years.

Paul, "And now I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry that I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Let the apostle's conduct be our example to-day.

While we take a hasty review of the way in which God has led this church and myself, we will be of good comfort. Let us also recount some of the duties which lie before us; and thus close that delightful relation which has subsisted between this church and myself for forty years.

The remembrance of the first day I came among you has always been to me a delight, and the cause of gratitude. I found this church in a divided and distracted condition. Though but a youth and a stranger, God so blessed my feeble efforts, that peace and concord were restored. At that time, I had not the most distant idea of ever being a citizen of this state, yet perhaps the events of that day led ultimately to the union between this church and myself, which has been so protracted and so delightful.

I became your pastor. For forty years I have labored to know nothing among you but Jesus and him crucified. While I speak I trust I feel deeply penetrated with a sense of the innumerable short-comings

and imperfections of my private and ministerial life, still God's grace must be magnified, and I hope is magnified, in me. If I have ever preached one sermon, or ever made one effort that has proved beneficial, it has been all of grace, and I humbly hope I shall rejoice in the day of Christ that I "have not run in vain, neither labored in vain."

I feel desirous that this, my last sermon among you, should not be a mere effusion of feeling, but should contain something that, when I am no more with you, may serve the people whom I love more than any other people on earth, as *a criterion of truth and a guide in duty*. Therefore,

I. I shall in the first place briefly state what I have labored to preach among you; and

II. Throw together a few directions, as to your future duty.

I pursue this course, that you may be of good comfort, of one mind, and that you may live in peace.

I. I hope you can bear me testimony that I have *labored to depict human nature as it is depicted in the Bible*.

I have deemed this of primary importance. It is known to us all, that the church, in every age, has been afflicted by divisions, and often by palpable departures from the truth. In every instance of this kind with which I have been acquainted, the first step of errorists has been, to deny in some form, the total, native depravity of man. The second, and indeed the necessary consequence has been, the ascription of some kind of power to man, by which the sinner's salvation is not wholly of grace, communicated by God, but, in some way, of human origin, and the putting forth of human

power. In these things, I have labored to teach you as Christ and his apostles have taught us. Avoiding vain jangling and philosophy falsely so called, we have bowed down to the overwhelming truth, "that as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; that the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; that that which is born of the flesh is flesh," &c., &c. From these principles we have not hesitated to deduce the solemn truth, that condemnation is written upon every child of Adam from the moment of his birth; that if he be spared but for a day, it is an extension of mercy; that if he be taken in infancy to that place, where so large a proportion of the inhabitants are children, it is but an exhibition of *his* mercy who said, "suffer little children to come unto me;" that if he should grow up to maturity and despise the Saviour, his ruin would be of his own working; but that if he should be converted and brought to Christ, it cannot be ascribed "to him that willeth, nor to him that runneth, but to God that showeth mercy." We have not hesitated to teach you, that Adam's posterity are as amenable to God's law as was the first transgressor; that all mankind by their fall have lost communion with God, and are under his wrath and curse. We have not attempted to evade or hide from your view that doctrine so abhorrent to human reason, and deathful to all the hopes of the carnal mind and vain philosophy, viz: "that as our first parents were the root of all mankind, the guilt of their sin was *imputed*, and the

same death in sin and corrupted nature, *conveyed* to all their posterity."

We are aware this is but a gloomy picture; but be assured it is the only just portrait of man that can be drawn, if we dip our pencils in Bible truth. Fancy may decorate, philosophy may panegyryze human nature, and metaphysics may bewilder the pastor and his flock, but still revealed truth and stubborn fact will fasten upon the heart and conscience of every candid inquirer; and he still asks, with a sigh, "what is man, that he should be clean, and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?"

2. *The doctrine of imputation has claimed much of our attention.*

When dwelling upon Adam's sin, and all its tremendous consequences, I have often asked myself what would a ruined world do if there were but one Adam, one imputation, one confederated head. Blessed be God, the supposition finds no place in our system. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Dear brethren, we have taught you that men are justified, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them; they receiving and resting on him and his

righteousness “by faith, which faith they have not of themselves,” it is the gift of God; “For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Does the weary traveller lean upon his staff? does the thirsty pilgrim eagerly look round him for some cooling fountain? does the dungeon-dweller sigh for the light of heaven? does the condemned criminal long for the news of pardon? So does the poor awakened sinner breathe after the justifying, enlightening, regenerating, and sanctifying grace of God. So does he desire to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ,” who is to him “the way, the truth, and the life.”

3. We have taught you, *that intimately connected with man's total depravity, and necessarily growing out of it, is his utter inability to help himself.*

We shall have less occasion now to dwell upon this subject, as I did a few years ago publish my sentiments on human ability, to which I refer you. Suffice it at this time to say, in the language of Payne's *Elements of Mental and Moral Science*, “Though the fall of man effected no change in the original susceptibilities of his mind, though it created none, and extinguished none, it perverted all.” We have no doubt that one great cause of error on this contested subject, arises from confounding the *susceptibilities* and *capabilities* of our natures. To be susceptible of love, and to be able to love a particular object, are two different things. For example, fallen men are susceptible of the exercise of love, but until they are created anew in Christ Jesus, they are utterly incapable of exercising love towards God, holy beings, or good doing; because as fallen natural men, they are “enmity against God.”

They neither see him, nor can delight in him or in his service. "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." Can a rational being love that which has in his view no loveliness in it? Is God a lovely object in the estimation of an unconverted man? Certainly not. On the account of our original corruption, we are utterly *indisposed, disabled, and made opposite* to all good, and *wholly* inclined to all evil. This is the language of our standards. I hope it will not be forgotten by my dear friends of this church, that the question is not what *kind* of ability the sinner has, but whether he has ability of *any kind*, to obey God's commandments, if by ability be meant any thing more than the susceptibility of being wrought upon by divine grace. It is surely high time the Christian world should learn to avoid and pity that sophism by which we are made able by one kind of ability, and unable by *another* kind of ability, to repent, believe, and love God.

I cannot dismiss this subject, without making two remarks, which I hope the unconverted part of my audience will ponder well. *Our inability to obey God forms no part of a plea for remaining in disobedience.* First, because "God has laid help upon one who is mighty to save," to whom it is the sinner's bounden duty to apply; and secondly, because our inability is our crime, not our excuse. It is part of the ruin brought upon us by our fall; and no proposition can be more untrue, than that it would be cruel and unjust for God to command us to do that, which, by our sin, we have rendered ourselves unable to do. A second remark is this: Solemn, eloquent, and moving appeals

made to men, accompanied with assurances that they have power to repent, believe, and surrender themselves to God, is the direct way to fill the church, but to fill it with self-converted persons. I awfully fear, when that decisive day comes, the grand object of which will be to magnify the grace of God and to stain all human pride and power, such will be found to be the character of many of those conversions which have been fondly hailed as genuine.

My dear friends, have it deeply impressed upon your own hearts and upon the memories of your children, "*That man's ability to do good works is not at all of himself, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ.*" "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath ordained that we should walk in them." Let it never be forgotten by any person that hears me to-day, that the gospel is a blessed system of means, ordained of God. That there is a *door* of mercy, an *ear* of mercy, a *mercy seat*, and a promised spirit. O! Is not this enough? Who need despair, when Christ has died? Who will linger, when Christ says "come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Who will not melt, when the Saviour weeps? Who will not tremble before him "who is declared to be the Son of God with power?" And O Christians, who among us will not lift up our heads, for our redemption draweth nigh?

4. We have labored to present the Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, as operating a part as important and distinctive in the economy of grace, as that performed by the Saviour himself.

I have long been convinced that great despise is done to the Spirit, by the manner in which his agency is

sometimes spoken of. It is no uncommon thing to hear a company of sinners urged and commanded to come to God, to believe and repent, without the least reference to the Spirit. Indeed the agency of the Spirit is highly spoken of by such divines, in the work of sanctification, but not at all in the production of faith and repentance. These primary steps, according to them, appertain to the creature, and are of creature power. Now, my dear brethren is this the gospel? or is it not a device of vain philosophy? Hear the Saviour: "But if I depart I will send him (the Spirit) unto you, and he will reprove the world of sin." The world, not the apostles, not Christians, but *the world*: that is, unconverted persons. Now, what is it to be reprov'd of sin in an evangelical or effective manner? Can any person be reprov'd or convinc'd of sin, who does not see it, as committed against a holy God? Can any man who is not enlightened and regenerated, apprehend either God or sin in a proper light? Hear what the apostle says on this subject: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." The beginning, yes, dear brethren, the very beginning of the sinner's return to God, is of the Spirit, not of the choosing or working of the blind, deprav'd "natural man." It is the impartation of that power which the apostle calls spiritual discernment. This spiritual discernment cannot be predicated of the natural man, for he "cannot discern the things of the Spirit." Brethren, however humbling it is to human pride, the Bible is full of this doctrine. If we love him, it is because he first loved us. It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do

of his own good pleasure. But you are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

I have not, I hope, to-day, the infelicity of addressing a single person, who would not shut his ears, and turn away from any man who would attempt to preach the Gospel, and yet deny the proper divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Does he do less dishonor to the Gospel who denies to the Spirit his appropriate work, in enlightening and regenerating the heart of the sinner? The one denies the personality, and justifying work and righteousness of the second person of the Trinity, the other the personality and distinctive work of the third. The one dishonors God the Saviour, the other dishonors God the Spirit.

5. I have labored *to draw you near to the cross.*

To hold up before you the cross on which the suffering Saviour died, the great vicarious sacrifice, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," has been my leading object. My dear friends, if I have ever retired from this pulpit, without in some distinct form presenting this precious Saviour to you, I have reason to ask your forgiveness, but especially the forgiveness of that sufferer who bore our sins in his own body on the tree.

I have labored *to present Christ Jesus to you as a servant.* "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." What a life of servitude did he live! Wherever poverty bore the

sufferer down, there was the Saviour found, as poor as the poorest citizen of Judea—"that we through his poverty might be rich." He was ever ready for the labor of the carpenter's son, or the more appropriate service of whole nights of wrestling in prayer with the Father, whose "righteous servant" Isaiah says he was. Wherever there was disease, there was this sympathizing physician found, causing the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dead to be raised up, and the gospel to be preached to the poor. Is bereavement and sorrow to be soothed? Jesus wept. Are the people to be instructed? We find him who taught as never man taught, pouring the words of truth upon the ears of listening multitudes.

I have held up Christ before you as a sufferer. Such a sufferer! Was it ever known before, in the government of a righteous God, that innocence, perfect innocence, suffered? Twice had it been proclaimed, not by the instrumentality of angels, but by God himself, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Says the apostle, "Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;" and yet he suffered. "His visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." Well might the holy inhabitants of heaven pry into this mystery. It was a wonder that never had been exhibited, or even conceived of before. Has justice forsaken the eternal throne? Is that being who laid the foundations of the earth doomed to moisten the ground which he had formed, with his sweat, his tears, and his blood? Is that arm which stretched out the heavens, to be bound, and he whom angels adore to be led away to Pilate's

bar? Is that hand to which all power and dominion are confided by God, to be nailed to a cross? Is the prince of life to become the prey of death? Yes, dear friends, yes, all this, and more. The cup of trembling is not yet full. Into that cup is to be poured a mysterious ingredient, of which men and angels know nothing, or but very little. It was the fulfilment of that dreadful denunciation, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and smite the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd." The hand of man was upon him; the powers of darkness were assembled around him. But what were both? "He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." But O! the smiting of that sword wielded by Omnipotence, the gathering of that cloud which veiled at once the face of nature, and of nature's God: it was this that extorted from the lips of the innocent sufferer, the bitter lamentation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I see many in this assembly press closer to the dying man; they throw around the arms of faith and embrace the expiring sufferer. I hear them say, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

Brethren, when reading the prophets as they detail the sufferings of Christ, when tracing the history of our Saviour's painful life, and the God-afflicted agony of his death—when walking, in retrospect, through the garden of Gethsemane, and when gazing on the cross, are you not amazed, that any man, not utterly infatuated, not left to a strong delusion to believe a lie, should speak of all this as a mere show, a kind of tragical pantomime? With what tears ought you and the church to weep over those who deny the Saviour the

glory of enduring the penalty of that law which sinners had violated—of bearing our sins in his body on the tree—of pouring out his life, *especially* for those of whom he says, “I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me”—of bringing in an everlasting righteousness, which is to be imputed to his people for their justification? Alas! that these things should ever have been made a question. But you have not so learned Christ. Hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints—the form of sound words handed down by your fathers since the Reformation.

I cannot dismiss this all-absorbing subject, without a thought or two more. All agree that Christ suffered. Why did he suffer? Because he in his own person was a sinner? It would be blasphemy to say so. The question returns, why did he suffer? The only answer that can be given is, that he suffered for and on the account of his people. He suffered, being innocent. His people were the real offenders. He was “wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.”

• Again, if this obeying and suffering Saviour were no more than a created being, what effect could his *obedience* have had to magnify God’s law, which every creature is bound to obey, for himself, to the utmost of his ability; or his *suffering*, to render it possible for God to be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus Christ?

Dear brethren, you have been taught to consider the above doctrines as parts of one indivisible scheme, as stones in the same building, Jesus Christ, the co-equal Son of God, being the chief corner stone.

II. I am to leave with you a few directions which may aid you in future duty.

1. *As members of the church at large.*

Many of the dispensations of God's providence during the last half century, but especially those which respect the church, appear to me to have been projected upon the scale of the world. The church is no longer that isolated, uninteresting object, the world esteemed it one hundred years ago. It is evidently now a city set upon a hill. To it every eye is turned. Its friends hail its triumphs, and its wide spreading conquests. Its foes tremble lest they should be broken to pieces by the smitings of that stone, cut out of the mountain, which is destined to fill the earth. However much deformity is still about the church, she is evidently putting on her beautiful garments. Her chief adornments are charity, love, and good doing. Sectarian exclusion is ceasing to be her character. Calvary is becoming "the mountain of the Lord's house, and is established upon the top of the mountains." The cross is ceasing to be the exclusive claim of a party. *These* cheerfully award it to *those*. It is at once the *test of truth*, and the *standard of the church*; the blood of the vicarious sacrifice is henceforth to be the sacred cement of our order. Dear brethren, awake and keep up with the spirit of the age. Be not discouraged. It was to have been expected, that when the church should awake out of her slumber, some should see things as by twilight. That they should be in danger of mistaking men for trees walking, and truth for falsehood; and that some even of her own sons should in the ecstasy of their first wakeful moments, mistake the exploded heresy of eight or ten centuries for the invention of their own matchless powers. I say again, be not discouraged. When the church shall have put on her most beautiful form, the doctrines of

the Reformation will be as new and delightful as they were to Luther and Melancthon; and Christ and him crucified as precious to every minister, as they were to Paul. While you mark those who cause divisions, and avoid them; and while you watch over and turn away from those who would preach another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or another Gospel which you have not accepted, wake up to all the grand substantial doctrines of Christian charity and benevolence, Identify yourselves and your children with the church. Let every child who is large enough to sit at your bountifully covered tables, be taught to commiserate the poor; and all who are old enough to know what is meant by the word heathen, be made, with their own hands, to aid in sending the Bible and the Gospel to heathen lands. Let no good work go on without lending a helping hand. Let charity which abideth, characterize you as a church and as individuals. You know me too well to suppose, I hereby mean to inculcate that sickly and false charity which palliates sin, or affiliates with error. No, brethren, be holy as your Father in Heaven is holy, and ever contend *earnestly* for the truth, never *bitterly*. Buy the truth and sell it not, no, not for peace.

2. *I am to speak to you as Presbyterians.*

I am one of those who believe, that the different sects of evangelical christians in the world, so far from being a curse to the church, have, on the whole, been a blessing. That they are the means of sustaining each other in the grand fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, might, I think, be abundantly proven. The justness of this principle will be seen, from the acknowledged fact, that there are four or five Christian denominations in America, upon all of which the blessing of God evi-

dently rests. They each form a part of the bulwark of the land. The moment any one of the fundamental doctrines of our religion is assailed, they all rally round the Cross. When any great work of Christian charity is to be put forward, they all meet in the same hall of counsel and of prayer. Upon these principles, I am not ashamed to be called a *sectarian*, nor to impart to you my last counsel, as a *Presbyterian*.

I would first warn you against that project, which proposes to abolish all creeds, to throw all the churches into one grand crucible, to fuse them by some undefinable process, and then empty them out upon the world amalgamated and refined. I object to this scheme, because it is evidently impracticable, unless the Pope, or some other individual, be made the infallible interpreter of the Scriptures. Also, because each of those church alchemists expect, when the whole process is closed, and the new-formed church comes out of the furnace, it will possess the exact likeness of that to which he belongs. Let it be enough for you, that the churches to which you extend the hand of brotherhood, cleave to the Cross with its vicarious sacrifice. That they rely upon Christ, with his justifying righteousness, the enlightening, regenerating, and sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, and possess his spirit of holy living. If we mistake not, this is all the *oneness* the church in her best estate will ever exhibit.

You also ought to be reminded, that the present is a peculiarly critical time with the Presbyterian church in America. Though far from being as active as she ought to have been, she has been enabled by divine grace, to stand nobly forward, among her sister churches, in most of the grand good-doings of the age. She has

commiserated the heathen. She has labored to obey the Master, and to preach the Gospel to all the world. She has bestowed her thousands to circulate the Bible. She has taken children into her arms. She has wept over injured Africa. She has labored to pour instruction through many of our colleges. She has mourned over the desecration of the Sabbath. And all this, without meddling or caring to meddle with the kingdom of this world. And what has been the reward she has received, at the hand of many whom the world gladly bless? Let the mantle of charity cover up the slander.

Dear brethren, what effect ought this to have upon us, as Presbyterians? Nothing more nor less, than to produce redoubled effort. Not from a spirit of meeting opposition with opposition. But remembering, that we shall reap, in due season, if we faint not—that necessity is laid upon us, yea, wo is unto us, if we publish not the Gospel, each of us as we can—that the eye of the Master is upon us; and he says to each disciple, “watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”

It is known to you all, that the Presbyterian church has for a few years, been in a state of lamentable division and disorder. The attentive eye might have discerned the gathering storm years ago. This is no more than what might have been expected, when we remember that enterprize, the love of novelty and distinction characterize the age. In the days of the Apostles and ever since, there have been men in the church who have preferred themselves to Christ; their own distinction, to the peace of the church. All this is but the fulfilment of Christ's prediction, “offences must come.”

While we would mingle our parting tears to-day, over these afflictions of our church, we would take courage, when we remind you that the disease has risen to its crisis. The tempest is fast subsiding. It is our deliberate opinion, that the unity and purity of our church are safe.

Had I all the eldership of our church before me to-day, I would say to them, the keeping of the doors of God's house is especially committed to them, and that their power, in administering its government in ordinary cases, is as three or four to one. The church cannot therefore be filled with persons who have been excited but for a day, or who do not embrace our standards, except the eldership consent to it; and in all our church courts they have, and they ought conscientiously to claim and exercise equal rights with their ministers. It is true, some of the best men, both of the ministry and eldership, have been strangely fascinated, but we trust it has been but for a day. They are beginning to pause; to "stand in the ways, to see and ask for the old paths, and walk therein." I would leave it among my parting counsels to this church, to adhere in a spirit of meekness, but of *firmness*, to the standards of the Presbyterian church. Let no man "beguile you with enticing words." You are one of the oldest churches in the West. You have been one of the most united and peaceful. You will, I trust, be so still. For forty years, dear brethren, what has been my hope, my crown of rejoicing? And in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, will you not be my "glory and joy?"

I am, though far advanced in life, going to a new country, and to engage in a new field of labor, though not in labour to which I have been unaccustomed. I am

going not in quest of ease or emolument, but because I have long preached the duty of self-denial, and endeavoured to awaken in others a missionary spirit, and especially because I have consecrated myself to the cause of the church, of truth, and of literature, and my all, to the cause of God's Providence. It is no small consolation to me to believe, that when I am no more with you, and when you are collected in these consecrated walls, where we have so long assembled together around the MERCY SEAT, I shall not be wholly forgotten in your prayers.

3. *I am in the last place, to say a word to you, as private Christians.*

Personal piety is the glory of the church. It is the light of the world. Domestic religion, at once graduates and characterizes the worship of the great congregation. Dear brethren, in the language of our text, I would say to you, *Be perfect.*

As this is a Scripture injunction, it means something. What does it mean? When our Saviour said, "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect," does he mean to inculcate that absolute perfection, which can appertain only to underived existence? Certainly not. He intended to enjoin a perfection in *kind*, not in degree. And when the Apostle says to the Corinthians, "Be ye perfect," he does not mean that perfection, peculiar to immaculate Angels or to glorified Saints, but to Christians in this mingled world of good and evil, of light and shade, of conflict and warfare. If I am asked, in what does Christian perfection consist? I would say, chiefly in two things. First, in a perfect resignation to the will

of God; and secondly, in the attainment of the grace of the assurance of hope.

Brethren, "Be perfect." That is, be ye able to say from the heart, "Thy will be done." Could the richest streams of Christian felicity that have ever gladdened the church, or the heart of the humble child of grace, be traced, this quiet resignation to God's will would be found to be their common fountain. Christian friends, remember God's power and faithfulness—the dying love of the Saviour, and the countless promises of his word. These are all engaged for your comfort and security. Why not be perfectly resigned to Him, when we "know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Brethren, labor for the grace of the full assurance of hope. Some have attained to it, and why not you? Make it a part of the work of every day, to lay your heart, as it were, along side of God's word, that thus you may know that the "Spirit itself beareth witness with your spirit, that ye are the children of God." One of two things will certainly be effected by this daily investigation. If you have only a name to live, and are dead, the important discovery will soon be made. But if indeed you are a child of God, the grace of full assurance will speedily grow up in your heart, and the whole of your Christian life, will, thereafter, be as an antepast of Heaven.

Be of good comfort.

It is a law of our rational nature, but especially of the Gospel, that *activity* in duty, and *tranquillity*, or "good comfort," go together. Brethren, if you would be happy, be dutiful.

Remember the duties of the closet.

I am afraid there is no duty so much neglected. Certainly there is none, from which springs more immediately the richest Christian comfort. How delightful to shut out the world; to commune alone with God, when the pure desires of the heart are addressed to him, uncontaminated with the pride of being heard of men, which so often mingles itself with all social prayer. Therefore, how wise and how imperative is this injunction of the Master, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

Remember the duty of family religion.

God long ago commanded the offering of the morning and the evening sacrifice. The duty of unremitting family religion seems to me to be so indispensable to the keeping up a sense of our daily dependence upon God, and of the obligations of parental, and social life, that we cannot conceive of real piety, where there is no assembling of the family, morning and evening, around the mercy seat. What must our children think? They have seen us at the Lord's table. They have heard us solemnly covenant with God, and the church to renounce the world, and to walk daily as in the sight of God. What must our children think, and what will our hesitating and stumbling neighbors think, when they see us so much devoted to the world, as to be unwilling to redeem a moment, for family devotion? How shall we be able to meet the collisions of this jarring world, to exercise that forgiveness, which is of daily requisition, unless we have our hearts imbued with the spirit of our Lord's prayer, and have solemnly

covenanted on our knees, and in presence of our families, that in all things we would labor to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour? It has been well said, that house is without foundation, or covering, where the evening and the morning sacrifice is not offered up.

Remember the duties you owe to your children and servants.

What tongue can paint the responsibilities of parents and masters? God's church, when first organized, embraced a whole family; Abraham, his son, and all his household. And twice in the New Testament, the same grand principle of household religion is recognized. Why? Because, what the germ is to the future oak, what the foundation is to the future edifice, such is the family to the church. Would to God I could this day impart to you some of my convictions, and blessed be God, some of my early and later experience on this subject. I am convinced, there is nothing in which the church of God is so far behind her duty, and her privilege, as she is, in the fulfilment of the obligations she is under to the children of her members. We cannot now dwell on this subject. But I must be permitted to ask all Christian parents, if they are not guilty of dishonoring God, when they, for a moment, doubt (provided they do their duty) that every child they have shall be given to them, as companions in the way to glory? Are God's promises made to you? Are they not also made to your children? We have, all, it may be, unconverted children. Why are they so? Is it because there was no covenant relation formed between God and them, on their baptismal day? Or is it because God is slack concerning his promises? No, no, dear brethren. It is because we have failed

in parental prayerfulness, piety and wisdom. I would call upon myself and upon you to be stirred up on this subject. To take fresh hold of that God, who has said, "I will be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee."

We may talk about revivals, and about the dawning of the Millennium as we please. We may send our missionaries to the heathen. We may multiply Bibles by millions, and Sabbath Schools by thousands. We may engage in all these grand and glorious enterprises; but the work will not be done, the world will not be converted, the fruit of the hand-ful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountain, will never shake like Lebanon, till parental *obligation* and *faith* are in full exercise. The church must receive her finished glory from the hand of family piety, and parental confidence in a covenant-keeping God, as she had her first foundation in the family of Abraham.

As it respects the duty of masters, as they are in this country, I know not what to say. I find in the Bible abundant instruction, as it respects the duty of masters and *servants*, none as it respects masters and *slaves*. Therefore I know not what to say. I have long struggled with these duties, and have utterly failed; and can only pray God, speedily to commiserate the church and the land, as it respects this matter.

Remember the duties you owe to this church in particular.

All may be included in one word. Be of one mind, live in peace. I leave you a loving and peaceful people. There is among you no root of bitterness, or heart-burnings, known to me. And it is not the least of my consolations in parting with you to day, that you are about to pass to the pastoral care of a man, who

has much of the meekness of his Master about him, and who is sound in the faith, and whose heart, I trust, burns with the love of God, and who will devote himself to the salvation of your souls. I have no doubt you will transfer to him that love and confidence which you have so kindly extended to me.

To the eldership I would say, you have been, some of you, for many years, my friends and counsellors. You have all been fellow-laborers with me in the gospel. I now solemnly charge you, "take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers." Much of the well-being of this church depends upon you. Much of the purity and peace of the Presbyterian church in America depends upon the eldership. They who only rule well in the church have fewer temptations to meet, fewer partialities to gratify, fewer subtleties to propose and to explain. It is a rare thing that an elder commits himself upon paper, or in a public discourse. Nor are they so liable to be heated by the fervor of party, or inflated by the breath of popular applause. I therefore say again, the purity and the peace of the church is, by God, and our excellent form of church government, deposited with the eldership. I believe it has been deposited in faithful hands. They are the sheet-anchor of the church's safety, in as much as they hold up the hands of their ministers, by prayer, and throw in their counsels, and interpose the weight of their standing and influence to check innovation and error.

Finally, dear brethren, can you tell what is included in that consolatory assurance with which Paul closes his epistle to the Corinthians, "And the God of love

and peace shall be with you." It includes all things, under all circumstances, and at all times. The God of whom Paul so confidently spake to the Corinthians, is the same God in whom you and I confide to-day; and may I not say to this dear church, "the God of love and peace shall be with you." Amen.

SERMON VIII.

BY DAVID MONFORT, V. D. M.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law. ROMANS iii. 28.

THE scriptural definition of the faith of God's elect is, "Faith which worketh by love." The term itself signifies the belief of testimony, or a confidence in the veracity of another, as well as in his ability to accomplish some particular thing. In the first sense it is used where it is said, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater," and this witness is defined to be God's testimony of his Son. A thing may appear in view of the mind to be simply true, without any circumstance of interest pertaining to it. In this case our belief is of an indifferent kind, or purely speculative. Or, a thing while it appears true, may also appear good and excellent, presenting something for our approbation and reception, which in its own nature is very desirable. We easily perceive that in this