





EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D.D.

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A

# FAREWELL SERMON,

PREACHED MAY 28, 1809,

AT

NEWARK,

NEW-JERSEY.



BY EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D. D.



NEWARK, N. J.

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1809.



Dear Sir,

*The Session and Trustees of our church have appointed us a committee to request of you a copy of your farewell sermon, delivered this day, for publication. We are your sincere friends,*

JAMES TICHENOR,  
MOSES ROBERTS.

Sabbath evening, May 28.

*Rev. Dr. Griffin.*



Dear Brethren,

*Whatever may be my opinion of the sermon preached to day; I cannot, in this interesting hour, refuse you what you ask. About to leave the town in the morning, I resign it into your hands, and give you leave to do with it as you please.*

*Affectionately yours,*

E. D. GRIFFIN.

Sabbath evening, May 28.

*Mr. J. Tichenor & Mr. M. Roberts.*

# A SERMON.

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ACTS *xx*, 32.

AND NOW, BRETHREN, I COMMEND YOU TO GOD, AND TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP, AND TO GIVE YOU AN INHERITANCE AMONG ALL THEM WHICH ARE SANCTIFIED.

This was a part of Paul's valedictory address to the elders of Ephesus. Animated with the love of Christ and of souls, this holy man had planted the gospel in the province of Asia, of which Ephesus was the chief city; and, for three years, had there poured his divine eloquence amidst the effusions of the Holy Ghost. He had often stood in the synagogue, and *in the school of Tyrannus*, while the Spirit of Jesus swayed and melted the whole assembly. In the house of God, and in the humble school-room, multitudes had begun their eternal song. He had begotten many spiritual children whom he loved as his own soul.———Those scenes

were past ; those ties must all be broken ; the parting hour had come.

The blessed man had left Ephesus, and made an excursion into Greece. From Greece he was now returning to Jerusalem, whence he foresaw that he should go to Rome ; and he expected to see his Ephesian converts no more. He could not sail by them without taking a last, a mournful leave. Touching, therefore, at Miletus, a city eight leagues to the South, he sent for the elders of Ephesus. *And when they where come to him, he said unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you, at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations which befel me by the lying in wait of the Jews.-----And now behold, 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.-----And now behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.-----And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you*

*up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.———And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more.*

Very different is the man who addresses *you*; and very different is the occasion. But it is with emotions never before felt in your presence, that I stand here to-day. I am no longer your minister; and you are no longer the people of my pastoral charge. We are forever separated, until we meet at the bar of Christ; I to give an account of my ministry, and you to give an account of the manner in which you have received an embassy from God. What then, dear brethren, can I do for you the few short moments that I am permitted to stand among you? What better, than to commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified? To whom, or to what can an anxious minister choose rather to commend a dear people, lately his pastoral charge, in the solemn hour of part-



ing,—in the last accents with which he is ever to address them?

Brethren, *I commend you to God.* You will find Him a friend in need, a refuge in times of trouble. He has *been our dwelling place in all generations*; and He will live to protect His people when all the nations die. In His mercy and care,—in His power and faithfulness, you will find resources which will never fail. *The Lord will be the hope of His people.* By Him alone *the counsel of peace* was established. By Him alone the Church was erected, and has been preserved to this time; and by Him it will be preserved forever. The Church is the object of His tenderest love,—the center of all His cares,—His most precious treasure. *The Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.* He has no employment so delightful to His heart as the protection and care of His Church; and this He will never abandon. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.-----I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight,---I have*

*loved thee : therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. He would blot out all the nations, He would crush a thousand worlds, before one hair of her head should fall to the ground. The kingdoms of the nations shall fall ; the earth itself shall be dissolved ; the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll ;— but this kingdom shall stand forever.*

To God, then, I commend you. I commit you to His protecting arms ; I resign you to His faithful care. I lay down my pastoral office, and commend you to *the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls*. My ministry here is closed : and now, O heavenly Father, I come before thee, and solemnly give back the charge which I received from thee. Be thou a shepherd to this beloved flock ! O let it be nourished in thy bosom when these limbs shall be cold in the grave !

I have thus committed you to God. In His hands you are safe while you remain faithful. *The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him ; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you ; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you.* This was the address of the prophet to the men of Ju-

dah, as they were returning from the slaughter of the Ethiopians,—as they were returning, with songs of triumph, from a scene of divine wonders,—from the field of victory, where *one had chased a thousand, and two had put ten thousand to flight.\** And this is my address to you, as I meet you returning from a scene of equal wonders,—from a field of equal triumph. You have seen what God can do for you while you cleave to Him. How to cleave to Him, His word alone must teach you. *To the word of His grace, therefore, I commend you.*

I commend you to the *hopes* and *consolations* which that word presents. I commend you to the *doctrines* which that word contains ;—doctrines which, you have seen, have been *mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds*. I commend you, especially, to the *duties* which that word inculcates. Shall I remind you of some of those duties ? The occasion does not indeed admit of a complete enumeration ; but it calls for a partial recital of those which appertain to you as a congregation.

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\* 2 Chron. xv. 32.

For your own sake, and for your children's sake, cherish and revere him whom you have chosen for your pastor. Already he loves you; and he will soon love you as *bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh*. It will be equally your duty and your interest to make his labours as pleasant to him as possible. Do not demand too much. Do not require *visits* too frequent. Should he spend, in this way, half of the time which some require, he must wholly neglect his studies, if not sink early under the burden. Do not report to him all the unkind things which may be said against him; nor frequently, in his presence, *allude* to opposition, if opposition should arise. Though he is a minister of Christ, consider that he has the feelings of a man. Those talebearers who to ingratiate themselves with their minister carry such things to his ear, that they may boast of the zeal with which they have defended him, are sure to excite disgust where they would conciliate esteem.

The success of the gospel among you will greatly depend on the preservation of harmony with your minister, and brotherly love among yourselves. *Follow after the things which*

*make for peace.* You have been, for many years, so distinguished for the practice of this virtue, that I have the less need to press it upon your attention. I will only say, *Let brotherly love continue.*

Persevere in your attachment to the publick worship of God. As often as the welcome light of that sacred morning shall return, which released our Lord from the sepulchre, hasten with your families to the sanctuary of God, where you have often seen His glory. Encourage your minister to preach by your eagerness to hear. Always remember that *the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.*

If you wish to be fed by your minister, by your prayers you must supply him with matter. If you wish his ministrations to be accompanied with saving efficacy to your children, your prayers must ensure the effect. I have reason to expect that yours will be that happy minister whose hands are held up by a praying people.

Continue in the practice of *family religion.* This inheritance of your fathers, preserve with

rious care. Let not a house in this favoured town ever want a domestick altar, on which is offered the morning and the evening sacrifice.

Nor can I forget those weekly associations for prayer and religious conference, in which we have enjoyed so many happy hours, and which God has so remarkably owned and blessed. Let them never be discontinued. Hand them down to the generations of the millennium; and then they will be continued to the end of the world.

I have a few things to say to the *elders*,—the fathers of the church.

I shall long remember, my dear brethren, the aid which I have received from you in conducting the affairs of God's house; the harmony of our counsels; and that tried fidelity on which I could always rely. I remember our common prayers, and our common tears, at those interesting examinations, when, in the affecting tones of piety and of nature, our new-born children told us what God had done for their souls. That joy to me is ended. To you, dear brethren, under God, I commit the

interests of this beloved church, with all these future examinations, and all the cares of gospel discipline. That which we have held in common as a precious estate, I now resign wholly to you. Exercise, I beseech you, the tenderest care over it. If you neglect a church so dear to Christ—but you will not neglect it, dear brethren: I know you well.

It may not, however, be improper to *stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.*—*Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock.* Never lose sight of the importance of preserving the purity and discipline of the church. Your past fidelity in this matter has, I doubt not, been intimately connected with those spiritual blessings which have been profusely shed upon the congregation. *Be not weary in well doing.* Guard the avenues of the church against the approach of unhallowed feet. *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.* Let not the sacramental water be profaned. Give not the symbols of divine peace to the acknowledged enemies of God, nor the badge of citizenship to those who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. It has been said that this line of separation between the

clean and the unclean, will drive men from our churches. But this church is among the many monuments erected by heaven to repel such a reproach. It is the largest church, perhaps, in our country; and in few congregations have an equal number of children been baptised. Do you ask the reason of this? One reason is found in that fundamental principle of the kingdom of Christ; *Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life, for my sake, shall find it.*

There is one more subject, brethren, to which I wish to call your attention: I mean the pains which ought to be taken with baptised children. This is, I believe, the only matter in which the churches are agreed that something ought to be done, while, with equal unanimity, they practically agree to do nothing. Is there not a fault here? If all the baptised children of a congregation were collected together, two or three times a year, *under the eye and authority of the church*, and there examined, instructed, reminded of their obligations, and solemnly exhorted to early piety, might not the effect be great? Something of this kind I should have attempted, had



not every plan been deranged by that course of events which has issued in our separation.

On none of these topicks do I wish to enlarge, and others I am willing to pass over in silence, on account of the entire confidence which I have in my beloved brother, under whose pastoral care you are soon to be placed.

On such an occasion I might be excused from remarks of a more private and particular application. But such is the interest which I feel in the younger members of the church, that I cannot take a final leave of them without suggesting some hints of this nature.

You have, my beloved friends, entered upon a delightful service, under a master most generous and faithful, with a reward in view glorious and eternal. But inexperienced as you are, and with so many difficulties and dangers before you, it is natural for a pastor who loves you, and is on the point of leaving you thus exposed, to feel some tender and melancholy solitudes about you.

You have set off from Egypt with your faces towards Canaan. You have sung out your

song upon the banks of the sea ; and now you must address yourselves to the trials of the wilderness. Long regions of trackless desert lie between you and the land of promise. Many a weary day must you wander, before the delectable mountains of Canaan will lift their heads to your view. Many a foe will assault, and many a serpent will sting, before your wanderings end. But you will not measure over the wilderness alone. The Angel who was imbosomed in the pillar of cloud and of fire, will go before you. He who contains in His person all the virtues prefigured by the brazen serpent, will be ready with His healing power, when the stings of sin enter your souls. The Captain of the Lord's host, under the wavings of whose blood-stained banner you are marching against earth and hell,—— are marching to break through embattled worlds to reach the heavenly city,——He will stand with you in the day of battle. Only do not grieve Him. *Beware of Him, and obey His voice ; provoke Him not, for the name of the Lord is in Him.* Much care and circumspection will be necessary on your part. There is a great work before you : you must run, and wrestle, and fight, and

*endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.* Some few directions for your conduct, then, may not be unimportant. Treasure them up, as though they were my dying advice. Review them in future years, and hold them sacred as the legacy of one that loved you.

First, then, my dear friends, strive to obtain a deep and discriminating knowledge of God. Rest not contented with that superficial religion which is ignorant, and proud, and burns only with the fervours of animal affections. Strive after advancement in solid, judicious, humble piety. In order to this, be daily conversant with your closets. As soon as you forsake your closets, God will forsake you. Let no day pass without reading some devotional piece, however short. Set apart stated seasons for self-examination and meditation. Learn thus to live at home, and you will have a refuge from all the storms of life. Let it be the the occupation of your lives to commune with God. For this purpose, remember what stress our Saviour laid upon watchfulness. Watchfulness is as necessary to your safety, as prayer is to your life. You must watch the operations of your own hearts ;

you must watch the approaches of a subtle adversary ; and it is not the least part of vigilance to watch the motions of the divine Spirit. Settle it in your minds every morning that the chief business of the day is to make advances towards heaven. Never forget that you are on a journey, and that this is not your home. Never forget that the chief end for which you were sent into the world, was to prepare to enjoy and glorify God in heaven. Be this preparation, then, your chief employment,---the central object around which all other objects shall revolve.

Would you find a religious life either easy or happy, you must be earnestly devoted to it. In spiritual, as in temporal matters, the man who keeps his accounts in disorder, and his business behind him, has harder work, and finds less accomplished. It is easier to keep the enemy at a distance, than to dislodge him when he has entered your citadel. And the christian who lives above the world, and walks with God, has easier work than the christian who carries the world in his heart, and fights it there.

This, too, is the only way to *enjoy* religion. Some men seem to have just religion enough to make them wretched; enough to spoil the world, but not enough to draw comfort from God; enough to make conscience sensible to the stings of guilt, but not enough to relieve its anguish by the application of the blood of Christ. Be *you* either unwavering atheists, or decided christians.

Beware of those objects that would draw your hearts from God. Avoid unnecessary connexions with worldly men. Some intercourse with them, unless you would *go out of the world*, cannot be avoided: but ensnaring intimacies are not necessary. Choose your friends among those whose faith will animate, whose love will warm, whose counsels, prudence, and prayers, will help you forward towards heaven.

Beware of an undue attachment to *the things of the world*. To be industrious in some lawful calling, is your indispensable duty. But so addicted is the heart to idols, that dangers lie concealed in every department of business. Every thing which interests the heart, has

power to draw it away. But wo to the christian who, for one day, *forsakes the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns*. No one can foresee what wounds he may receive in a few short hours of wandering. If you ever lose your present relish for religion, and get plunged into months of darkness, or years of gloom, it will be because the world has seduced you from God. Men do not wander from God *without an object*. They go in pursuit of *idols*. *Indolence* may do something, but *idolatry* does more. *Indolence may let a Saviour go; but idolatry runs from Him*. Avoid indolence; but beware, beware of idolatry.

These hints, though specially intended for the younger part of the church, are affectionately recommended also to the attention of my elder brethren and fathers. I hope that they may be acceptable and useful to you all.

Thus, brethren, I have briefly *commended you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*.

My work is now fast drawing to a close. When the light of another morning gilds the

cast, I leave you, to go into a land of strangers, *not knowing the things that shall befall me there.* A thousand tender recollections are awakened at the thought. For almost eight years I have been with you in fear, and in much weakness, *with many tears and temptations.* I have seen some of you in affliction. I have stood with you in the chambers of sickness. I have walked with you into the field of graves.—Scenes of everlasting interest have passed before us since we have been together. I have seen you in the house of God, when the Spirit of Jesus moved the assembly as the trees of the wood are moved by a mighty wind. I have seen many of you trembling on the borders of eternal wo, when there seemed but *a step between you and death.* I have seen some of you open your eyes on a heaven revealed, and have heard you begin your immortal song. I have seen the tears of parental joy while *the children in the temple* have sung, *Hosanna to the Son of David? blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! hosanna in the highest!*

These seasons are past and gone, never to return; but they cannot be forgotten.

Eight years ago this church consisted of 202 members, of whom 146 still remain. We have since admitted 434 to our communion, of whom 376 still remain. Of those whom we have admitted, 62 were received from other churches, and 372 from *the world*. Of the latter, we admitted 113 in one year, and, at another time, 174 in six months. All the members which have belonged to this church, within that period, amount to 636: of whom 114 have, in various ways, been removed; and 522 still remain.

This number, I trust, will not decrease. I believe that God has greater things in reserve, at no great distance, for our American Church. While He is breaking those kingdoms which have given *their power and strength unto the beast*, He is *nourishing the woman* fled hither *into the wilderness*. On this continent, which was discovered by the light of the Reformation, He seems to have opened an asylum for His Church, while He is accomplishing His dreadful predictions upon mystical Babylon. Else, what mean these extensive revivals of religion, greater in power and purity than have been known since the apostolick age? What mean



those noble efforts for the cause of truth, in which the different sections of the American Church are uniting, with a zeal unknown before? And why is Satan's rage so violent, but because he knows that his time is short? May we not hope, then, that the darkest time with us is past; that while, in the old world, tempests of wrath are sweeping away all the ancient landmarks of society, in this corner of the earth the sound of the distant storm may die upon our ear; and that here, under a brighter sky, *Zion may arise and rejoice, because her light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon her?*

In all these blessings you, my brethren, will, I trust, have a part. I trust that Jesus will again and again walk these streets with power and great glory; and that those children, who, by their early piety, have filled their parents' hearts with joy, will, in their turn, rejoice, with equal transport, over a new-born offspring. Should I live to hear this account from you, how would my heart throb with desire to come and see the repeated triumphs of Immanuel on ground endeared by so many tender recollections! I will anticipate the joy, and it shall gladden the hour of parting.

Yes, my brethren, I am persuaded that God has blessings in store for you. As a congregation you have not forfeited your privileges ; and they will not be taken from you. That which you esteem a loss, will be more than made up in him whom, by a happy unanimity, you have chosen for my successor. It is a great satisfaction to me that I can leave you to the care of such a pastor. I pray that his connexion with you may be long and happy ; and that at last he may present many of you, and of your children, before the throne of glory, and say, with unspeakable joy, *Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me !*

I had hoped to be permitted to go hand in hand with you to the grave, to attend some of my brethren in their chambers of death, to die at last in your arms, to be buried among my dear church, and to rise with them in the resurrection. One year ago I thought that nothing but death could divide us. But God had a different purpose. By evident indications of His will, He has pointed me to another part of the vineyard. His hand has manifestly shaped all the circumstances of this separation. You have seen it, and owned it,

and submitted to it, with a spirit of meekness which has done honour to your profession, and to that work of divine grace which has gladdened the churches of our Lord. Through the whole of this trial you have given me no other reproaches but your tears. I thank God, and I thank you, that we part in love.

I thank you, also, for all the affection and respect with which you have treated me during the whole period of our connexion. From you as a congregation I have never received a single instance of unkindness. On the contrary, you have protected me when I have been assailed. You have spread yourselves before me as a shield. You have carried me in your arms to the throne of grace. There you have stood and wrestled with tears, and would not be denied. If I forget this kindness, *let my right hand forget her cunning!* I doubt not that it was by means of your prayers that I have been sustained under every trial, and have been enabled to triumph over every difficulty. In return, may the best of heaven's blessings rest on you, and on your children, and on your children's children, to the latest posterity.

When my mind turns to another view of my ministry, it is filled with solemnity and awe. That ministry will affect every soul of you to all eternity. Every action which we perform,—every spiritual privilege which we enjoy, extends its influence to eternal ages. Many have already gone from their seats in this house, within the period of eight years, to feel the everlasting effects of a preached gospel. Some of them, I trust, are now in heaven, contemplating the glory of the doctrines which they heard, and praising God for the displays of his grace in our assemblies. Others, I fear, have gone from streets consecrated by the impress of a Saviour's feet, to feel the dreadful conviction of truths which they opposed, and to mourn at the remembrance of privileges which they slighted. O that none of my living hearers were pressing forward to the same end! But when I look around on this assembly, *mine eye affecteth my heart*. I perceive many left out of the church whom I had hoped to see *planted in the house of the Lord*. Alas! must I go away and leave you out among the world? Why is it so? Is it because you have not been entreated with

tears? Is it because you have not been remembered in the midnight hour? God is witness, But all the prayers that have been made for you, and to you, have not availed. I came to you with a message from God;—I have delivered it;—I am now departing; and you have not obeyed the message. I came with hopes to do you good; but some of you, I fear, I shall only be the means of sinking lower in hell. O my God! must this be my unhappy instrumentality! Why was I born for this! I have not *desired the woful day, thou knowest.*

—————My poor, dying hearers, make me not a witness against you in that tremendous hour which is to decide the destinies of men. O spare me in this thing! Force not these ears to hear you crying to rocks and mountains to cover you, and cursing the day that you ever saw your minister's face. I beg and beseech you. I plead with you as though I were pleading for my own life. By all the concern which this solemn hour awakens; by all the future agonies of a ruined soul; by all the terrors of that day which will quench the sun, and shake the world to atoms, and pour the omnipotence of God upon every eye; and

more than all, by the compassions of Christ, I beseech you to spare *me*,-----to spare *yourselves*. Some of you will go to the land of silence before I visit you again, and will see my face no more,-----will hear my voice no more. For the *last* time, then, I entreat you, I charge you in the name of the everliving God, not to draw me into judgment against you,-----not to let me hear you *mourn at the last, when your flesh and your body are consumed, and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof!*

God has given me spiritual children here. These must receive my parting blessing. But here my heart begins to fail me.-----If the gospel, which has proceeded from lips unworthy to proclaim it, has been blessed to the salvation of any, time will come, if my hopes do not deceive me, when we shall meet again, to enjoy a union more dear than we ever felt before, and to review, with eternal gratitude, the scenes which have been acted on this ground. Ten thousand ages after all earthly ties shall cease, pious ministers, with their spiritual children, will be joined in affections and sympathies known only to the inhabitants of heaven.

While I look around on this assembly, and behold faces so dear, which I may never see again in this world, I will press this hope to my heart. When we meet there, my dear children, and grow to each other like one soul, these parting tears will fall no more. God Almighty comfort you, my children, and wipe all your tears away.

I look forward, with pleasing anticipations, to the time when some of you will be distinguished among the most beautiful pillars of the church. But I shall not be with you. I shall be withdrawn to another part of the vineyard, to endure the toils and trials which God shall there appoint. But let me still live in your remembrance and prayers. In future years, when wide regions divide us, if any tenderness should be awakened by the recollection of one who loved you much, and once was not an alien from your hearts, let it carry you to your closets, and vent itself in one prayer that shall strengthen him in a strange land. And when, in some later day, you shall hear that the tongue which now addresses you has ceased to move, and the heart which loved you is still in death,———when a few friends

shall have performed the last office for this worthless body, and the cold turf shall lie heavy on this breast,---you then will utter one sigh, and drop one tear, for him who bore you in his heart to the grave.

And now the last moment has come. With emotions not to be expressed, I bid you all a long, a last farewell. Farewell-----forever!

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*



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**ERRATTA.**

*In the 8th Page, for Chron. xv, 32, read*  
*Chron. xv, 2.*

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