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CONSISTING OF

SERMONS BY THE MINISTERS

OF THE

FOUR SYNODS OF THAT DENOMINATION.

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REV. JAMES PRESTLEY.

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## S E R M O N X V I I .

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### THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL PIETY IN THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

BY REV. ROBERT D. HARPER,

*Pastor of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Xenia, Ohio.*

"He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord." *Acts, 11: 24.*

THE primitive disciples of our blessed Redeemer were in many respects a type of his ministering servants in all subsequent ages. Some of them were young, and some of them were old. Some were educated, and some illiterate. Some rich and some poor. Some were from the higher walks of society, and some from the lower. Each, however, had his own constitutional peculiarity distinct from every other, and each acted out in the service of his Master, his own distinguishing temperament and disposition. Peter, we find, was rash. John was amiable. James was aspiring. Simon was zealous. Judas was avaricious. Thomas was sceptical. And Paul was bold and indefatigable in the cause of his crucified Redeemer. Religion does not change the natural temperament of the man—it merely sanctifies and renovates it. Every man is in religion what he is by nature, and his piety will borrow its peculiar complexion from the disposition with which he was born.

The first disciples of our blessed Redeemer, however, were not only characterized by peculiar dispositions and temperaments, which qualified them for the different spheres in which they were called to move, but they were also remarkable for the positions of prominence and obscurity which they occupy on the page of revelation. Of this we have a striking illustration in the history of Barnabas and Saul. These two individuals were called to the service of Christ at the same time—were sent forth on the same mission to a

Gentile world—and were companions together for many years; and yet how different is the position which they occupy on the sacred page. Paul is the author of fourteen inspired epistles, and not less than two-thirds of the writings of the New Testament are from his pen. While Barnabas, on the other hand, is barely mentioned a few times in the sacred history as a companion and fellow-laborer with this distinguished Apostle. Paul appears in the astronomy of Revelation as a star of the first magnitude, while Barnabas appears by his side merely as a satellite. Why these distinctions were made among the first ambassadors of the cross is best known to Him who made them, and who will always assign to his servants the position which they are best qualified to fill.

But while it is true that Barnabas occupies but a humble position on the page of Revelation, he has not been left without some high testimonials to his intrinsic worth. He was, it appears from the sacred narrative, a Levite by birth, a native of the island of Cyprus. He is first introduced to our notice among those who sold their possessions and distributed them for the common good after the conversions of Pentecost, and from this it has been supposed that he was at that time converted to the Christian faith. He is one of the few illustrious examples upon record who gave up all for Christ. He was called to be one of the first heralds of the cross to a heathen world. He was sent forth to encourage the hearts of the new converts to Christianity at Antioch after the persecution that arose about Stephen. He was a delegate with the illustrious Paul to the Council at Jerusalem to settle the question of circumcision. He afterward, returned to Antioch and separating from his companion, Paul, sailed for Cyprus, his native place. Here his sacred history closes. How long he labored—with what success—how he died—and where he was buried, are questions which the world is unable to answer. No towering pyramid marks the spot where his sacred dust slumbers in peace! No monumental pile is reared over the grave of this humble soldier of the cross! No hand of mortal has graven his virtues with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever! Earth knows him not. But God has not left him without a memorial. The finger of the Almighty has written his epitaph and left it on a monument more imperishable than the great globe itself—even on the page of revelation. There God has said of this unnoticed and unhonored ambassador of Jesus, what

has not been said of any of the other apostles, and what every minister of Christ should most desire to have said, that "*He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.*"

The two distinguishing traits in the character of this devoted servant of Christ appear to have been *eminent piety* and *unwavering faith*. In the few remarks, then, which we propose to make upon this passage, we would direct your attention to the following particulars:—

I. The importance of experimental piety in the christian minister.

II. The necessity of faith to the proper and successful discharge of his duties.

I. The importance of experimental piety in the christian minister.

That it is important that every minister of Jesus Christ should be a man of practical and experimental piety is a truth which needs only to be named to be admitted by all. It is indeed an axiom in theology. It is self-evident to every individual who has proper conceptions of the duties and responsibilities of the ministerial office. All persons, however, have not proper conceptions of these things, and sometimes it is the case that truths which are most self-evident are most neglected, because they are not called in question. It may not be amiss, therefore, to present a few considerations illustrative of the importance of personal piety in the christian minister.

1. In the first place, then, we observe that it is important that the christian minister should be a man of personal piety, from the very nature of his office and the sanctity of the work in which he is engaged.

Personal piety and purity ever have been regarded as indispensable qualifications in those who have ministered in sacred things. If we direct our attention to those venerable seers of Israel who held converse with God in visions of the night and communicated his will to the people, we will find that they were holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Israel's prophets were good men—men of eminent piety—men who walked with God—men of strong faith—men who, while on earth, seemed to soar upon the wings of the Spirit far above the vain and transitory things of time. Hence we find that when John the Baptist

appeared in the wilderness of Judea, an humble, godly man, calling upon them to repent, the people supposed from the holiness of his life that he was either the Christ or one of their holy prophets, and therefore they sent messengers to ascertain his true character. And again, when the Savior himself appeared in the land of Judea, so immaculate in character and so far removed from the degeneracy of that corrupt age, the general opinion which prevailed among the Jews, who believed in the transmigration of souls, was, that Elias, or Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets, had come back again to earth.

If we turn our attention to the priesthood of the ancient dispensation, we find the same personal purity and piety required as essential to their ministering in holy things. Aaron and his sons, who were set apart to the office of the priesthood by divine appointment, were dedicated to the service of God in the most solemn manner. Everything connected with the awful and imposing ceremony of consecration, by which they were inducted to office, bespoke the sacredness of their vocation and re-echoed the sentiment which the High Priest was to bear upon his forehead—**HOLINESS TO THE LORD.** And when we pass on from the prophets and priests of the ancient dispensation to the apostles and disciples of our Savior, we still find that the great majority of those who were employed by him in the work of the ministry were men of devoted piety. Even Judas *professed* to be a good man. The great majority of them were good men—men indeed compassed about with many sins and infirmities, but still regenerated in heart: and with all their infirmities they loved the Savior ardently and affectionately—as they loved no other being on earth. Their hearts were consecrated to him. They were filled with the Holy Ghost. And as the result of that principle of piety which lived and burned perpetually upon the altar of their hearts, they followed in the footsteps of their persecuted Master, even unto death; not counting their lives dear unto themselves, that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the grace of God. Nor does it at all militate against the truth of these observations, or the principle inculcated, that there have been, under every dispensation of religion, persons invested with the sacred office whose deportment has demonstrated the falsity of their profession. Such persons have been and may still be found clothed in the livery of

heaven, while they are really the servants of the devil. But such persons were never called of God to minister in holy things, and shall certainly receive the reward of their unholy imposition when the character and destinies of all are determined.

We find, then, that under every dispensation of religion, personal piety has always been regarded as an indispensable qualification in those who minister in sacred things. Nor is it less indispensable at the present day than in past ages. Every minister of Jesus Christ, therefore, should be pre-eminently a man of genuine and experimental piety. If he is not, he may rest assured that he comes *uncalled* and goes *unsent* in the work in which he is engaged. He may be what the world denominates a fine scholar—an eloquent speaker—a profound reasoner—an amiable man and a pleasant companion, but if these splendid accomplishments are not graced and sanctified with a spirit of living piety which will consecrate all to the glory of God—which will lay every faculty at the foot of the cross—which will rejoice most in doing good to the souls of perishing sinners, he is not qualified to be an ambassador of Christ. No man should ever consider himself called to the service of Christ, I care not what his other qualifications may be, if he has not clear and satisfactory evidence of his own goodness of heart.

2. In the second place we observe, that it is important that the minister of Christ should be a man of experimental piety, that he may be able to direct sinners in the way to everlasting life.

It is not going too far to say that no man can be a good minister of Jesus Christ, or can hope to be successful in directing sinners to the kingdom of heaven, who has not an experimental acquaintance with the way of salvation himself. He may have the theory of religion. He may be familiar with the science of Theology. He may be well versed in all the technicalities of his profession. He may be able to preach learned and eloquent discourses upon many of the doctrines of Christianity. He may be able to fathom the deep things of God's word, or to soar aloft as upon an angel's wing and open to you the paradise of God with all its ineffable splendors. He may be able to do all this. But still there is one thing which is wanting, and for the lack of which no theological erudition and no power of eloquence will ever compensate. *He cannot give his own experience.* He cannot speak that which he has *known*, nor testify that which he has *seen*. And consequently he must be una-

ble with any degree of certainty to direct the faith, and the hopes, and the hearts of perishing sinners.

One great duty devolving upon the minister of Jesus Christ is to teach sinners how to believe on Christ. But how is it possible that *he* can teach sinners to believe in Christ who has never believed himself? How can he explain to others the nature of regeneration, who has never experienced a change of heart himself? And how can he direct the poor lost sinner to the cross, who has never been to that cross himself? Again, another department of ministerial duty is to confirm the people of God, and to build them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation. But how can he impart to others the joys of God's salvation, who has never experienced these joys himself? How can he comfort those who mourn in Zion, who has never been comforted himself? How can he enter the chamber of sickness and dispel the fatal delusions which oft times gather around the bed of death, or administer to the dying believer those precious truths which will strengthen his faith and animate and cheer his heart as he goes down into the valley of the shadow of death, if he has never tasted that the Lord is good and gracious? Ah! my friends, it is under circumstances like these—in the chamber of sickness—by the bed of death—in full view of the grave, and the bar of God, and the retributions of eternity—when the trembling spirit, as it journeys to the vast unknown, asks a parting word of comfort—when the spirit tearfully and prayerfully looks to heaven's ambassador for a last blessing—and he has none to give. Oh! then it is that the *inexperienced* minister realizes his own miserable, wretched poverty of soul, and the poor, lone spirit, feels that it has no spiritual guide and comforter. We may set it down as an established fact, that no man can direct sinners with certainty in the way to everlasting life, who has not traveled that way himself. We cannot direct an individual from one part of the country to another with certainty unless we have made the journey ourselves. True, indeed, from charts and representations of others we may be able to give some general directions with regard to it, but the particulars we cannot give. And just so it is with the sinner who is inquiring the way to everlasting life. From the writings and experience of others we may be able to give some general directions. But unless we have traveled that way ourselves, we will not be able to point out its windings and its

crossings—its dangers and its difficulties—its beautiful plains and its dark valleys—its rugged steeps and its safe and final termination in the city of the living God.

We say, then, that the christian minister should be a man of experimental piety, in order that he may be able to direct sinners with certainty in the way to everlasting life. Happy that minister who as he points sinners to the cross, can say, "Behold *my* Savior!" Happy that minister who can say to his people, Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for *my* soul! Happy—ay, thrice happy—that people whose spiritual guide is familiar with all the windings and journeyings of the "pilgrim's progress" to the kingdom of heaven!

3. In the third place, we observe, that it is important that the christian minister should be a man of eminent and experimental piety because he is made the standard of religion by others.

When we say that the christian minister is *made* the standard of piety, we wish it to be distinctly understood that he is not thus constituted by the word of God. It is nowhere said in the sacred Scriptures that the Minister of Christ is to be 'the *measure* of our religion. There is a model presented in the word of God which is infinitely more perfect than the most devoted servant of God—even the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He is the christian standard of piety. He is the Bible model of christian character. He is to be our divine exemplar in all things. "The disciple is not above his Master; but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master."

But while it is true that the christian minister is not made the standard of piety for professing Christians, yet from the position which he occupies in the Church, and from the fact that he is the spiritual instructor of the people, many are disposed to make him the standard of their religious feeling and action. They seem to think that if they can be just as good and zealous and spiritual as *their minister*, that this is all that is necessary. Multitudes, we fear, never aim at anything higher or better. Hence we find that the proverb is just as true at the present day as ever it was in the days of Hosea, when Israel had universally departed from the Lord—"Like priest, like people." Where, indeed, does the maxim not hold true? If we look to the priesthood of heathenism, we find that it is a fair representation of the degraded character of the people. If we look to the priesthood of the Church of Rome, we find



that just in proportion as they are debased, just in the same proportion are the people degraded. And if we direct our attention to the christian ministry of Protestant countries, we still find that they are a fair index to the spiritual character of the people. The christian ministry in their collective capacity give tone and character to the Church in the aggregate, and each minister gives tone and character to his own congregation in particular. The people are seldom found in advance of their spiritual guides, and they will always hold themselves excused for being a little inferior.

And not only so—but the world also fixes the same standard and forms its opinion of Christianity by the same rule. The world knows enough about Christianity to understand that its ministers *should* be men of eminent piety. It expects them to be the living embodiments of Christianity. It makes them the standard of religion, and from their deportment judges of the truth or falsehood of its claims. Would that every minister of Christ could fully realize his true position and responsibility,—that he could bear in mind that he is ever a spectacle to the Church and the world—and that, whether he knows it or not, whether he intends it or not, they are making him the standard of their piety and religion. Now we say that such a standard is unscriptural and improper. The minister of Christ is to be an *example* to believers, but not the *measure* of their religion. Christ is their model.

But since it is a fact that the Church and the world have made the christian minister the standard of their piety, there is in this very fact increased obligation laid upon them to strive for personal piety; nor should they rest satisfied with low degrees of piety, but seek for the highest possible attainment, that those who look up to them as examples may be led to make similar attainments.

4. In the fourth place, we observe, that it is important that the christian minister should be a man of experimental piety, in order that he may consecrate himself entirely to his Master's service.

That it is the duty of those who engage in the great work of the gospel ministry to consecrate themselves to this work is a truth which will be admitted by all; but the nature and extent of that consecration are not, perhaps, so well understood. Is it a consecration merely so far as it shall subserve our own pleasure or convenience, or profit? or is it a consecration of ourselves to serve Christ, like good soldiers of the cross, to the utmost of our abilities,

at all times—under all circumstances—even unto death itself? This is a question of importance to us all. When the soldier enlists in the service of his country, he devotes himself exclusively to that country; he forsakes his family and the endearments of home—he goes where duty requires him to go—he suffers when duty requires him to suffer—and he is ready to bleed and die whenever his country may demand the sacrifice. He feels that he is not his own, but that he belongs to his country, and therefore his duty is entire consecration. And thus it should be, we conceive, with the soldier of the cross. Having accepted a commission from his Savior to go and preach the Gospel to every creature—having enlisted under the great Captain of salvation—he should put on the whole armor of God, and serve Christ first, Christ last, Christ always. He should make every power of body and of mind tributary to the cross of Christ—he should forego with readiness every earthly emolument which he might have obtained, and he should endure cheerfully all the trials and privations incident to his life of suffering and self-denial. Such we understand to be the entireness of that consecration which is required of every individual who enters upon the work of the christian ministry: a striking illustration of which we have in the primitive disciples of our Savior, and particularly in the history of the Apostle Paul. After he had been arrested in his mad career of wickedness and crime, with what entireness did he devote himself to his Master's service! His whole after life was a perpetual, living incense to God; and while he grasped the cross as his standard, and went forth burning with enthusiasm in the salvation of immortal souls, he could say in the language of a good and honest heart, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

But a still more beautiful and striking illustration of entire consecration we have presented in the history of our blessed Redeemer himself. Who ever consecrated himself so completely to any work as did our Savior to the great work which his Father sent him to perform? Who ever sacrificed so much happiness—endured so much pain—practiced so much self-denial—and persevered so unceasingly as did our Savior in repairing the ruins of a lost world? Well and truly did he exemplify the truth of his own testimony, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him

that sent me." His whole life, from the manger to the cross, was a life of consecration. And in this respect, as well as in all others, he has left us an example for our imitation.

Such, then, we understand to be the nature and extent of that consecration which is required of us as the servants of Jesus Christ. What then will incline us to make this consecration, and enable us to carry it out in our practice? What will enable us to bring all that we are and all that we have to the altar of God:—our physical powers—our mental faculties—our earthly possessions—our time, pleasure, talent, reputation, and even life itself, if need be, and offer them as a sacrifice to him? What will enable us to do this? Nothing but that holy and heavenly principle which burned within the heart of a consecrated Savior. Nothing but true and genuine piety. All else must fail. It is this, and this alone, that will enable us to feel that we are not our own—that we have been bought with a price, and therefore that we should glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits which are his.

5. In the fifth place, we observe, that it is important that the christian minister should be a man of experimental piety, in order that it may impart earnestness and feeling to his instructions.

It has been said by a distinguished Roman orator, that to be eloquent we must *feel* the importance of the subject upon which we speak. This is a truth which commends itself to every reflecting mind; and it is just as true in theology, and in matters which belong to men's souls, as in matters of mere temporary importance. No man can be in earnest in the great work of preaching the Gospel, unless he *feels* the importance of the subject upon which he is speaking—unless he has such a realizing sense of its bearing upon the souls of others, and of his own responsibility in declaring it, as to make him speak like the Apostle, in weakness and fear and much trembling. Our own hearts must be moved if we expect to move the hearts of others. We must feel ourselves, if we expect others to feel. And it is, we firmly believe, because there is so little emotion felt and manifested by those who are engaged in the christian ministry, that so little effect, in many instances, is produced by their labors. "Theology," says Dr. Griffin, "affords the best possible field for tender, solemn and impressive eloquence. The most august subjects are presented to view; the most important interests are discussed; the most tender motives are urged. God and angels;

the treason of Satan; the creation, ruin, and recovery of a world; the incarnation, death, resurrection, and reign of the Son of God; the day of judgment; a burning universe; an eternity; a heaven and a hell—all pass before the eye. What are the petty dissensions of the States of Greece, or the ambition of Philip; what are the plots and victories of Rome, or the conspiracy of Catiline, compared with this? If ministers felt their subject as much as Demosthenes and Cicero did, they would be the most eloquent men on earth, and would be so esteemed, wherever congenial minds were found." Ah! yes, my friends, if ministers only *felt* their subject! That is the great difficulty—they do not feel—nay more, they do not even *seem* to feel, the importance and solemnity of the truths which they present to the minds of others, and the consequence is that nothing but congenial feelings of indifference are awakened in the hearts of others. "How is it?" said a minister to an actor, "that your performances, which are but pictures of the imagination, produce so much more effect than our sermons, which are all realities?" "Because," said the actor, "we represent our fictions as though they were realities, and you preach your realities as though they were fictions." Oh! how much truth there was in that simple reply. How many there are who discuss the most solemn realities of an eternal world with as much indifference as though they were lecturing upon natural philosophy, and speak of Christ, and salvation, and heaven, and hell, with as little concern as though they were discoursing about things in which no mortal man, on this side the grave, had any interest!

It will be admitted, then, that if the minister of Christ desires to do good in his public ministrations and in the private duties of the pastorate, he must not only be in earnest, but he must *show* that he is in earnest. How, then, is this earnestness to be produced, and how is this feeling to be kept alive within his heart, so that it will develop itself in his public ministrations? He can not always be under the influence of an external excitement created by circumstances, like men in other professions. His place, his pulpit, his theme, and his audience, are usually the same. Consequently there is danger of coldness and indifference from the very monotony of the circumstances in which he is placed. What then will counterbalance and overcome this sameness of circumstances, and impart earnestness and fervor, and energy, and life to his instructions?

Nothing but a holy unction of the Spirit within his own soul. Nothing but an abiding conviction of the importance of the truths which he proclaims. Nothing but an intense realization of the power of genuine piety in his own heart.

6. In the sixth place, we observe, that it is important that the christian minister should be a man of experimental and elevated piety, to meet the wants of the age in which we live.

We are not among the number of those who are disposed to berate the present age as characterized by everything that is bad and despicable; nor are we disposed to inquire foolishly, with others, why the former days were better than these? From such a misanthropic and complaining spirit we shall ever pray for deliverance. In many respects the age in which we live is in advance of any that has preceded it. In improvement in the arts and sciences—in the cultivation and diffusion of a sound education—and in the great work of evangelizing a lost world, the age in which we live is truly aggressive. Particularly in the work of missions, the Church of the present day is far in advance of all past ages. While the venerated Reformers of past centuries labored so untiringly for the purity of the doctrines of the Church, they seem to have overlooked to a wonderful extent their diffusive nature—they seem to have forgotten that while the former was a correct creed, the latter was the practical application and extension of that creed; and as evidence of this, in glancing at the writings of these venerable men, from the period of the Reformation down to the last century, we find little in all their productions inculcating the necessity of extending the blessings of salvation to all nations, and exhorting to the performance of this grand department of christian duty. Nearly all that has been done in the work of missions has been done within the last half century. In this particular, the Church of the present age seems waking from the slumber of ages—shaking herself from the dust of antiquated institutions—girding herself for the combat and going forth conquering and to conquer. And I doubt not but when ages shall roll before the Ancient of Days, with all their deeds, that it will be found an honor in this respect to have lived in the nineteenth century of the Christian Era.

Still, however, the age in which we live is somewhat peculiar, and calls for distinguished and pre-eminent piety in those who are its spiritual teachers. It is an earnest—impetuous—utilitarian—

money-making—money-loving age. We say this not out of disrespect, but because we believe it to be literally true. Look where you will and to what department of business you please, and everywhere men are breaking loose from old and antiquated customs and are rushing on with electric speed to the consummation of their desires. Fortunes must now be realized in a day. Honors must be grasped with the desire. Places of distinction must be reached at a step. Money must be made at a venture. The world is moving on with accelerated speed, and its inhabitants are living faster than they did a century ago.

And what is the influence of all these things upon the religious character of the age? If men's hearts were right with God it would have a most happy influence; for just in proportion as they were diligent in business, in the same proportion would they be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. But their hearts are corrupt, and the consequence, therefore, of this increased worldly excitement is to produce coldness and indifference in the service of God. Religion is made to partake too much of the spirit of the age. The Church is made to follow too closely in the wake of the world. And religious duties, instead of being performed with calmness and solemnity, are in danger of being rushed through with electric speed.

What, then, we ask, is likely to counteract or to control this onward and impetuous spirit of the age, and to make men, amid all the hurry of business, and politics, and science, and refinement, and fashion, faithful and devoted to God? We answer, the power of religion. And how is this religion to be brought to bear upon their minds, and who shall call their attention from things that are seen and temporal and earthly, to those things which are unseen and spiritual and eternal? We answer, the christian ministry. Men whose business it is to stand upon the heights of Zion and mark the signs and watches of the night. Men whose business it is to hold intimate communion with God, and then to go forth with hearts deeply imbued with the spirit of living piety, and direct the minds of their fellow-men from earth to heaven—to teach them to look far beyond these busy scenes of earth to a land of everlasting rest—to weigh before them in the balances of eternity the things of this world and the things of another world, and to pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God and to lay up for themselves treasure in heaven. This is the duty of the christian ministry; and

just in proportion as they are men of living, experimental piety, just in the same proportion will they be qualified for the performance of their duty, and just in the same proportion will the influence of their labors be felt in time and in eternity.

II. In the second part of our discourse we are to direct your attention to the necessity of *faith* in the christian minister, to the proper and successful discharge of his duties.

Of Barnabas, you will observe, that it is not only said that he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost—a man of pre-eminent piety—but also that he was a man full of FAITH. And it may also be reasonably inferred that his piety and faith were intimately connected with his success as a minister of the Gospel; for immediately after the record of his piety and faith, it is said, that “*much people was added unto the Lord.*”

It has been well and beautifully said, that it is always by having faith in ourselves, in others and in God, that men have accomplished great things. The truth of this observation is confirmed by examples almost innumerable, both in sacred and profane history. What a striking illustration of the truth of this sentiment and of the power of faith have we presented before us in the history of that intrepid mortal who had the honor of discovering this western world. To his mind enlightened by true genius, it was self-evident, that to harmonize with the known world in which he dwelt there must be a land beyond the wide western sea. He felt confident of its existence—as confident as though he had already trod its shores and wandered through its wilds. And from the moment that this conviction took full possession of his soul, with what untiring assiduity did he pursue his bold and hazardous adventure? What was it that sustained him amid the ridicule of his countrymen—the repeated rejection of princes—the mutinous threats of an unbelieving crew—and the winds and waves of a pathless ocean? It was faith. Oh! it was faith that animated his heart and guided his bark, until the dream of years had been realized, and freedom found a new home for millions yet unborn!

How is the power of faith also most clearly illustrated in the history of that most wonderful man—the most extraordinary, perhaps, to which the world has ever given birth—and of whom the world was always afraid—Napoleon Bonaparte! What was it that led this fearless man on from victory to victory, until the world, aston-

ished at his success, trembled at his command as though he were superhuman? It was simply faith in himself. And what was it that induced his soldiery to follow him so unhesitatingly into the midst of the most frightful perils, and that rendered them in his presence almost invincible? It was simply faith in their commander. This was the secret of the almost miraculous success of this poor exile of St. Helena. And thus we might go on and give you examples, almost innumerable, illustrative of the power of faith. Indeed, we find everywhere on the wide page of profane history, inscribed on all the glorious achievements of earth, this truthful testimony, "THIS IS THE VICTORY WHICH OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, EVEN OUR FAITH!"

And when we open the page of sacred history, how many grand and beautiful illustrations of the power of faith come crowding up to our view? What was it that sustained the great Father of the faithful when he forsook his home and kindred in the land of Ur and journeyed into a strange land?

What was it that sustained the leader of Israel's host, amid all the dangers and vexations of the wilderness? What was it that animated the dauntless heart of the apostle Paul, who was in the Church what Napoleon was in the world, and that made him the great champion of Christianity? What was it that sustained that long list of martyrs who have followed in the footsteps of the immortal Stephen, by the stake and the gibbet and the cross, to the kingdom of heaven? And what was it, in more modern days, that sustained a Wickliff, a Zuingle, a Luther, a Melancthon, a Huss, and a Knox, in the great work of reforming a corrupt and degenerate Church? We answer, that in all these examples the sustaining and life-giving principle was simply the power and principle of faith.

And if you ask what it is that will ever sustain the christian minister, and enable him to discharge with fidelity and success the arduous and responsible duties which devolve upon him? We answer further—nothing but faith. It is this, and this alone, that will support him amidst the discouragements and difficulties of his calling. It will brighten his hopes—it will warm his zeal—it will dispel his fears, and it will encourage his fainting heart in all his works of faith and labors of love.

Every minister of Jesus Christ, therefore, who would be a good servant of his Master, should be a man of strong faith.



1. He should have faith in his own goodness of heart and integrity of motive.

2. He should have faith in his being called of God to engage in the great work of the Gospel ministry.

3. He should have faith in the commission which the Savior has placed in his hands—that it is God's power and instrument for the conversion of sinners.

4. He should have faith in the purpose of God that it is his unchangeable decree that the world shall be saved.

5. He should have faith in the promise of the Savior, that he will be present with him—that he will reward him at last with a crown of glory—and that ere long that glorious day shall dawn when the name of Jesus shall be known in every land and the praises of redeeming love shall sound from shore to shore.

These are some of the things with regard to which the minister of Christ is to exercise his faith; and he who has faith in himself, in his work, in his duty, and in his God, must triumph, whatever may be the difficulties with which he is called to contend. He has taken hold upon God's strength and therefore in weakness he shall be made strong.

Such a faith will enable him to consecrate himself to his Master's service—it will make him earnest in his work—it will make him fearless in the path of duty—it will yield him support under every discouragement—it will throw a pleasing charm around the duties of his sacred office—and it will give him even on earth a foretaste of the happiness of heaven. Without such a faith the minister of Christ must ever fail. His heart will become discouraged—his path will be clouded—and his work will be a bondage more irksome and terrible than the slavery of Egypt. Oh! how important, then, for ourselves—for the people of God—for sinners—for time and eternity, that every minister of Christ should be like Barnabas—a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith—that much people might be added unto the Lord.

And now in the conclusion of our remarks, methinks I hear some one muttering secretly in his heart the question, Why should such a subject as this be presented on such an occasion? Does the speaker think that his brethren are not good men and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith? Does he doubt the piety of his brethren? Or does he wish to arrogate to himself an affected sanctity

that might excuse him in addressing exhortations to others? No! my brethren, nothing of the kind. God forbid that we should ever entertain or have occasion to entertain such feelings. It is neither a meager conception of the piety of his brethren nor an exalted opinion of his own which has induced him to present this subject, on the present occasion, but an humble and sincere desire to do good.

1. We have presented this subject, in the first place, that it may lead us all to self-examination and to the attainment of higher degrees of personal and experimental piety.

While we have no occasion to doubt the goodness of any one with whom we are associated in the work of the ministry, yet we all know that it is possible for an individual to deceive others, and to be self-deceived with regard to the real condition of his own soul. It is possible for him to preach the Gospel to others and direct them to the kingdom of heaven, and after all, never reach that kingdom himself. It is possible for him to be an eminent minister of Christ—to be esteemed a great and good man—and even more than all this, actually to be the means of doing much good, and yet live and die an ungodly man. His Church may mourn over him when he sleeps in the dust; his fellow-laborers in the work of God may stand around his grave and say, "Alas! my brother!" and many a well-meant eulogium may be uttered in commemoration of his fidelity, while he himself is "lifting up his eyes in hell, being in torment." He has appeared in the presence of his Judge and uttered that last plea of a forlorn hope, "Have I not prophesied in thy name," and has received the final answer, "I never knew you; depart from me, thou worker of iniquity."

That all this is possible is evident from the language of the apostle: "I keep my body under and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be cast-away."

And can we conceive of anything more truly awful and appalling? I know not how it may appear to others, but to my mind such a case appears to be the most hopeless and pitiless that shall ever be arraigned at the tribunal of God or tried in the great chancery of heaven. In view then of the possibility of such a destiny, surely it is but right that we should examine ourselves honestly in the sight of God, and that we should be excited to greater diligence in the

cultivation of personal piety in our own hearts. Even the minister of the Gospel, unless he is guarded, will grow cold in the midst of the most holy duties of his office and fall asleep while he is bearing before others the ark of God. He may sink into such a state that his studies, his preaching, his conversation, and his prayers will degenerate into a cold formality, and be the result of a mere habit instead of a regard for the glory of God and the welfare of immortal souls. There is no height short of heaven itself where the minister of Christ will be free from the contaminating influences of a sinful heart and a sinful world. Even when he stands upon the heights of Zion there is great need of the exhortation, "*Watch and pray.*" And surely the importance and necessity of this exhortation is pressed upon us by the mournful dispensations of God's providence toward us during the past year. Many of our brethren and fellow-laborers—and even some who assembled with us under similar circumstances one year since—have been called to their long home. From the vacant pulpits and the lonely graves and the widowed congregations of these departed brethren there comes a voice to the living, telling us that the time is short—that we should do whatsoever our hands find to do with all our might, and that we should give all diligence to make our calling and election sure.

2. In the second place we have presented this subject with reference to the increase and education of young men for the work of the ministry.

The attention of that portion of the Church with which we stand more immediately connected has been directed, for the last few years, particularly to the increase of her ministry. This has arisen from the increased demand for preaching in all parts of our country, but particularly in the West. The Church has never yet been able to supply one-half the calls which have been made upon her. It is necessary therefore that the Church should employ active and efficient means for the increase of her ministry and for the supply of the destitute. But we should beware of seeking to swell the numbers of our ministry at the expense of thorough intellectual and theological acquirements—and specially at the expense of genuine and experimental piety. In this respect the Church should be faithful to herself and to immortal souls. *A numerous ministry may not be an efficient one.*

While, therefore, the Church is seeking to meet the wants of the age in a numerous ministry—in an intellectual ministry—and in a theological ministry, she should never lose sight of another want equally important, and without which numbers, and intellect, and theology will ever be in vain—a *pious and godly ministry*. The Church needs men like Barnabas—good men, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. “I trust that our Church will ever consider piety as the first and most essential qualification in their pastors, for which talents, genius, learning, and eloquence, would and could be no equivalents. It will be a dark and evil day when personal godliness shall be placed second to anything else in those who serve at the altar of God; for of all the curses which God ever pours from the vials of his wrath upon a nation or Church which he intends to scourge, there is not one so fearful as giving them up to an *unholy ministry*.”

3. In the third place, we have presented this subject with reference to our missionary operations and particularly our foreign mission to the Jews.

We have entered upon this work by *faith*. The Church has sent of her missionaries to that Holy Land in humble reliance upon God's promise and prediction that his ancient people shall yet be brought back from their infidelity and shall embrace Jesus of Nazareth as their promised Messiah. It has entered upon this work believing that through it the fulness of the Gentiles is to be brought in—that nations are to be born in a day—and that it is intimately connected with the millennial glory of the Church of God on earth. But we should bear in mind that faith is not only needed in the commencement of this mission, but also in its support and prosecution. We must not expect to reap and gather as soon as a few scattered seeds have been sown. We do not expect thus unwisely in the natural world, nor should we in the spiritual. We must wait patiently and *prayerfully*. God's promise will be made good. God's people will be converted. But how soon cannot be certainly determined.

Here, then, is room for the exercise of faith—strong and living faith, which will fasten itself down on the purpose and promise of Israel's God. And this faith must pervade the whole Church if we expect the work to prosper. But particularly is it important that the ministry in this matter should be men of faith; for just so soon

as they begin to doubt the people will begin to disbelieve. Having then commenced this work in faith let us prosecute it in faith—believing that according to God's promise "enlargement and deliverance will arise to the Jews; and who knoweth whether *we* are come to the kingdom for such a time as this."

Finally—we have presented this subject because we believe that a dispensation intimately connected with the regeneration of the world and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom has come upon us.

It will require no prophet's vision to discover that a great and important crisis in the history of the Church and the world, is not far distant. In the political horizon the storm has evidently been gathering and darkening for many years. And just as certainly as the darkening clouds and the muttering thunder, in the natural world, betoken the coming storm—so certainly do the deep, portentous mutterings of the political strife, tell us, as they come "across old ocean's flood," of a storm that shall agitate and renovate the earth. Even now we find scattered everywhere over the face of sea and land, of earth and ocean, the silent and unappreciated means which are rousing the nations from the spell of years and hastening on the eventful furtherance of the kingdom of God. The improvement in arts—the discoveries of science—the increase of commercial enterprise—the improvements in navigation—the application of electricity to purposes of practical utility—the opening up of new countries, bringing together people from every clime—the rapid and unprecedented spread of the English language—and last, but not least, the cry for *freedom* from every oppressed and down-trodden nation under the whole heaven, which is causing thrones to shake, and kings to tremble,—these, these are the great subordinate agencies which are concentrating their forces into one mighty effort and tending toward one central point. Can we look upon all these things and foolishly imagine that they are all the chance on-drivings of a mad and restless world, all aimless and uncontrolled! Oh! no, my friends. They are something higher and better. They are the great machinery of a world designed for the extension of knowledge—the diffusion of light—and the salvation of man. Who so blind as not to see through these feverish stirrings and agitations of men, a *hand* that is weaving out the web of a world's destiny, and inscribing thereon God's eternal decree, "The

kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. As watchmen, then, upon the walls of Zion, it is ours not only to inquire, What of the night? but to mark the hours—to observe the times—and to watch the breaking light of the morning's dawn. Let us, then, mark well the lines of God's providence which always run concurrently with those of his grace. Let us consider carefully the signs of the times that we may know what Israel ought to do. Let us strive to be men of *strong faith* and *eminent piety*, that we may act well our part in this eventful age in which we live. Let us be faithful to God, to ourselves, to others, and to the Church of God. And may God ever say of our beloved Zion, "*This is my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it; I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread: I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.*"