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SERMON DCCIII.

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PRINCETON, N. J.

THE POWER OF CHRIST OVER HIS LIFE.

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.—JOHN x. 18.

OUR Lord here speaks of His human life. This no man had power to take from Him; but He had power of Himself to lay it down, and take it again.

The text was one of those sayings which led many of the Jews, who listened to the discourse to which it belongs, to affirm that He who uttered it was mad. Their ideas of the Messiah were altogether earthly. When therefore the true Messiah spake of laying down his life, and taking it again, they were ready to ask, "He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?"

But the text throws convincing light upon one of the most important doctrines of Revelation,—the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. A doctrine may often be established, perhaps more convincingly, by passages which were not uttered or written expressly to assert it, but which necessarily imply it, or are even so founded upon the doctrine that they have no intelligible import if that be denied. The doctrine of the Messiah's Divinity is interwoven with the teachings of the Bible. In the text it was not the Saviour's object to assert His Divinity; but, having declared that His Father loves Him, because He lays down His life for His people, He takes occasion to make express mention of His absolute power over His human life. Now the death of Christ has sometimes been alleged as an argument against His Divinity. Indeed the difficulty of reconciling his dying with his being God probably very often occurs to some

to bondage. Christ, my brethren, by His death, destroyed the power of death. Never was an enemy more completely vanquished. Christ laid down His life of Himself. As it was a voluntary act, and not a forced surrender, death was as effectually conquered as he would have been if Christ had refused to part with His life, and had actually come down from His cross, in view of His insulting foes, delivering Himself, as He had repeatedly done, from their power. If, then, the power of death has been destroyed, trust, O believer, in Him by whom it was destroyed. Make Him more and more precious, and you may lie down upon the pillow of death with composure, and look the last enemy in the face as a vanquished foe.

But the power of death was destroyed, not only when the Redeemer laid down His life, the victory was forever completed when he took it again, and His raised body became its demonstration and everlasting monument. In proof that His surrender was voluntary, and that he could set the last enemy at utter defiance, after three days, according to His word, He victoriously reclaimed that of which He had made a voluntary relinquishment. He arose triumphant from the grave. By the same power, at the last day, He will rife the tombs where His children slumber. Fear not, then, Christian, fear not the grave. "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Amen.

SERMON DCCIV.

BY REV. JAMES M. MACDONALD, D.D.,

PRINCETON, N. J.

CHRISTIAN MODERATION.

"Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand."—PHILIPPIANS iv. 5.

If the rejoicing to which we are exhorted in the preceding verse were earthly rejoicing, then moderation, in its ordinary sense, might seem to express the Apostle's meaning in this precept. But it is rejoicing *in the Lord* which needs no such special limitations, nor cautions against excess. There can be no undue vehemence in such rejoicing.

I propose, therefore, to consider to what this moderation refers, or rather to inquire to what disposition or temper of mind the language used by the Apostle really refers; and to notice the solemn and affecting reason by which the precept is enforced.

1. It refers to forbearance, or meekness under injuries. The believers whom Paul addressed lived at a period when they were exposed to calumny, contempt and persecution; just that sort of treatment from their fellow-men which was suited to provoke a spirit of retaliation. Their good was evil spoken of; their conduct misrepresented; their motives aspersed. The Jews professed to see, in their neglect of the ritual of Moses, an abandonment of all religion. The Pagans, in their refusal to worship or honor their idols, saw nothing less than Atheism, and accused them of practising the most degrading vices and shocking barbarities. They were set forth, as it were, appointed unto death, and were made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. They were looked upon as fools—were buffeted, and persecuted, and defamed, and made as the filth of the earth, and as the offscouring of all things. Enlightened apostles might possess grace, which would enable them, when reviled, to bless, when persecuted, to suffer it, when defamed, to entreat; but let us not be surprised if those who were ignorant, and, especially, who had never been early taught to put restraint on their angry and resentful passions, should sometimes fail to exhibit meekness and uncomplaining silence, under all this misrepresentation and harshness of treatment.

And though we, my brethren, may not live in an age of persecution, there are always things in the world calculated to try the temper; there are men possessed of such dispositions or manners, or who are so regardless of the feelings and rights of others, that unless Christians cherish a spirit of forbearance, they will be in constant danger of doing something inconsistent with the principles or spirit of the Gospel.

Again, the "moderation" enforced in the text, implies readiness to forgive injuries. If forbearance under provocation would not prevent the infliction of injuries; if men would be base and mean enough to insult and injure a weak, unresisting man, then Christianity requires that man to forgive the heartless injurer. Whatever may be the judgment of the world, such forgiveness invests him who exercises it with a moral glory, which amounts almost to a transfiguration, amidst the brutal and revengeful society of men of strife and hatred. The inoffensive lives, the meek and gentle spirit of such men as John and his fellow-apostles, as Timothy, Luke, Ephaphroditus, Clement, and their fellow-disciples, did not save them from unjust and cruel treatment. Nor will such lives or such a spirit, in our day, always save men from the unkindness and malice of the unprincipled among their fellows.

Indeed, in this moderation is included not only the duty of forgiving injuries, but of cultivating sweetness of disposition—that permanent temper of mind which not only meets distinct acts of aggression and personal offenders with forbearance and forgiveness, but which pervades, like sunshine or a salubrious atmosphere, the whole moral life. It might seem to be difficult, surrounded with sullen, morose, and cruel men, who are disposed to return evil for good, cursing for blessing, incivility for politeness; but so would they exhibit the spirit of the Gospel, in contrast with the spirit of this selfish, sinful world? Unfriendliness and churlishness ill become the followers of Him who was Love manifest in the flesh—who went about doing good—who had a kind word for the most unworthy—who poured forth prayers, wept tears, and shed blood for His enemies. We decide at once that a liar, a thief, a cheat, has no title to a place in the kingdom of Christ; what claim to a place there has the churl, the rude, surly, sullen man, who has no disposition to kindness, or the courteous interchanges of life? There is great difference among men, in respect to natural disposition. Some are amiable, social, and have a warm, fraternal side, which powerfully attracts their fellow-men. Their chief conflict, consequently, may be with a tendency to frivolity, and worldly compliances. They are exposed in many directions, and the cost of their safety is ceaseless vigilance. But the man who, upon self-examination, discovers that he possesses an unsocial, austere, sullen temper, should, with fervent prayer, and a constant repetition of friendly acts, however disagreeable to him at first, seek to correct and reform that temper. Such a man will be in little danger of ever being accused of levity and worldly compliances. It is grace, and grace alone, which can sweeten the sour tempers with which some men are afflicted, and which often cleave to them, long after they have professed to enter the school of Christ. It may have as difficult a work to perform in them as in others who have been led into all the gayeties and frivolities of the world. But it is a work that must be performed. “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” Let all men see what Christianity is, by its effect on you. A kind, friendly, charitable disposition is among its most grateful and wholesome fruits. It will give us meekness under provocation, and the spirit of forgiveness towards those who inflict on us the greatest injuries; it will give us calmness amid all the disturbing scenes of life—equanimity in all the extremes to which we are subject in our earthly lot. Such, in part at least, is the “moderation” which we are exhorted to be let known to all men.

But it is time, before proceeding further, to notice the solemn reason by which the precept is enforced: “THE LORD IS AT HAND.” Some have taken the sense to be, a God is at hand, or will soon appear for help, to scatter your enemies, and deliver you out of

all your afflictions. Others have supposed that the Apostle alludes to the coming of Christ to destroy Jerusalem. But it seems more proper to understand the expression, as referring to the advent of Christ at death, which, in a great measure, to individuals, is the same as the final advent of Christ to judgment. "As death cannot be far from any man, and the final consummation of all things is, when measured with eternity, as it were at hand, so the judgment may be said to be near, even at the door." Death is at hand; and the coming of Christ, and judgment, are just as near as death; therefore, let your moderation be known to all men. Nothing is better fitted to repress angry, revengeful, bitter feelings towards our fellow-men, than the thought that death is near. I must soon go into the presence of my Judge, against whom I have committed greater sins than it is possible for a fellow-mortal to commit against me. If I forgive not, how can I expect to be forgiven? How can I dare, or how can I bear to leave this world, while I have some quarrel unadjusted with a fellow-creature? Or, those who have injured me, or whom I may have injured, are just as mortal as I am. Their bodies will soon lie mouldering in the grave. They, too, will soon be called to give up their account to God. We may meet ere long before that dread tribunal. Oh, how does animosity subside in the presence of death, and in near prospect of the judgment-seat of Christ! Who will not forgive a dying man? and what dying man will not forgive his fellow-men? If we realized our nearness to death, and the judgment-seat of Christ, how little should we be disturbed by any of the vicissitudes of life, or excited by the favor or the hostility of our fellow-men. It is, when we look too much at the present, and too little at the future, that our equanimity is in danger of being disturbed by the smiles and applauses, or by the frowns and wrongs of our fellow-men. The coming of Christ obscures by its brightness all the interests and scenes of time, and reduces to their true proportions and level all the trials and sorrows, as well as joys of life. It shows how petty and insignificant are our altercations and feuds; and how unworthy of us as immortal and accountable beings. It shows how unbecoming are unfriendliness, and an indisposition to acts of kindness and courtesy, in those who shall need mercy so great in that awful day.

2. Christian moderation involves equity in all our dealings with our fellow-men, and in the management of our worldly business. Every man, to some extent, has the custody of the rights of those with whom he has any dealings, and is responsible for its proper exercise. It is not only true in respect to the Creator, but in respect to our fellow-creatures that no man liveth to himself. We have relations to others; we must depend on others for many services and favors; we can not always follow them, but must trust them as they must trust us. We are to look not only on our own things, but the things of others; i. e. we are to have regard not

only to our own interests and rights, but equally to those rights and interests of others that are, by the necessities of business, or the ordinances of civil society, linked with ours. The temptation to permit the selfish principle to assert the mastery over us, to the disparagement of the rights of our fellow-men, is often strong. A man perceives that he has it in his power to take advantage of some fellow-man, and that by so doing, he can enrich himself, and that there is no human law which will take cognizance of his act. The love of filthy lucre is strong within him; to be rich, has long been his great ambition; and now the opportunity of gratifying his desire is presented. He sees houses and lands,—stocks and equipages, and all the luxuries which wealth can purchase, almost within his reach. He has only to open his hand and grasp them. True, he must do his neighbor wrong, but then it is a wrong which the law of the land does not threaten with punishment. Now, I say, that to a man in whom the selfish principle is strong, and the love of filthy lucre, the temptation to swerve from the line of strict uprightness is strong, under these circumstances. Or, take another example of the same thing, on a smaller scale, but perhaps more frequently occurring, because the opportunities are more frequent: A tradesman misrepresents the value of an article which he knows the purchaser is unable to estimate aright; perhaps he discovers that he himself was deceived as to its value, when he purchased it, and thinks he has a right to make good his loss, by deceiving somebody else, as somebody deceived him. The temptation is strong. He tries to persuade himself that all is fair in the transaction, and that nobody is to blame but his customer, who is to blame for his ignorance. The temptation to err from strict integrity—and it might be illustrated in a thousand ways in all departments of business—being strong, we need a strong motive that we may not swerve a hair's breadth from the line, but may do justly as a part of that mercy we should love, and of a humble walk with God. Such a motive is set before us in the text. "The Lord is at hand; death is near; you must soon stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." O, how will dishonesty appear in the light of eternity? How will those little mean acts of overreaching, in which a few coppers only were sought to be gained, perhaps from a child, or from an ignorant servant, or some feeble-minded person, appear in that light? What comfort will it give to a man on his dying bed to reflect that he was sharp at a bargain, and knew how to blind the eyes of men and get the better of them in a trade. And O to think of meeting, at the judgment-seat, with orphans and widows who have been despoiled of their property and made to eat the scanty, bitter loaf of poverty. Let your "moderation (again I say) be known unto all men: the Lord is at hand."

3. Christian moderation argues a mind moderate in its desire for the things of this world.

But inordinate love of the world is prone to be the great master-passion of our nature. It was this that brought destruction on such men as Achan, and Judas, and Demas, and obscured with clouds of bitter sorrow, the latter years of "righteous" Lot. The love of gold is that "vile idolatry" which is as much opposed to the service of God, as the worship of graven images. When it becomes the master-passion, and so long as it continues to be, it effectually excludes the love of God. Hence we have the exhortation, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." There is no room for the love of God, where the love of gain has asserted supreme control. It often renders men unscrupulous as to the means which they employ for the increase of wealth; that is, leads to the commission of acts entirely inconsistent with Christian morality. Or if it does not so far debase the soul, it so engrosses the affections as to leave no room for the love of God. It exaggerates the importance of the things of this world, in their relation to, or their bearing upon, the peace and satisfaction of the mind. It is an evidence that the expectations of men are misdirected, and their hopes are wrongly based.

It proves that they are looking to the world for that solid, lasting good, which can come only from God. It is a perilous fascination of their minds,—a fascination which the defeat of multitudes in their golden enterprises, and the utter failure of the obtained prize, in the case of others, to afford the wished-for gratification, are not sufficient to dissolve. The glow, the splendor, the luxury which wealth throws around its possessors too often constitute a spell upon the senses of men. They walk in a vain show—by sight, and not by faith in things unseen.

We need therefore such a *memento mori* [*ὁ Κύριος ἰγγύς*] as the text contains, to break this fatal enchantment, to clear away the films of our darkened vision, that we may see things as they really are,—may estimate both the present and the future aright. The grave to which every man hastens utters a monitory voice to those who are devoted to the pursuit and attainment of worldly good. It bids them moderate their desires. How little difference it will very soon make whether they have possessed their hundreds, or only their tens of thousands! They can never make themselves rich enough to purchase exemption from disease, or lighten death of one of its pangs. The grave will show no more respect for their dust than for that of the beggar, who often stood at their gate. And oh! if their riches were obtained by fraud, by injustice, or grinding the faces of the poor, they will fail to make their dying bed any softer; nay, a bed "on borrowed straw, beside the leafless hedge," with an untroubled conscience and the presence of Christ, might in comparison be "soft as downy pillows are." The thought of going into the presence of the Judge, with the guilt of fraud, of covetousness, or the supreme love of gold upon their

souls,—ah! it is this which makes death terrible. Hear, then, this, O ye sons of men, engaged in the busy pursuits of the world, devoting all your thoughts and time to the attainment of the wealth that perishes,—**THE LORD IS NEAR**: His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men; in your many thoughts He may seldom or never be present, but you never escape the notice of his eye. **THE LORD IS AT HAND**. Death is near; and you are just as near the immediate presence of the Judge, as you are to death. Death will bring your spirits before His bar, to give an account of all the deeds done in the body,—to answer for the manner in which you have employed your talents in accumulating the treasures of earth; to give an account of your stewardship, whether, when you have seen the naked you have clothed him, or the hungry you have fed him. **THE LORD COMETH!** Behold He cometh in clouds. The final consummation of all things is, when measured with eternity, as it were, at the very door. Soon we shall stand with all nations gathered before the Son of Man; and if on His left hand the Judge will say, “Depart from me: for I was a hungered and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger and ye took me not in: naked and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison and ye visited me not. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me.”

4. “Let your moderation be known unto all men:” these words certainly require a temperate use of the things of this world. It is binding alike upon the rich and the poor. It might at first be thought that the rich having abundant means to surround themselves with the luxuries of wealth, and to gratify the sensual appetites, would be more exposed to the sin of an intemperate use of the things of this world than the poor. Observation, however, does not bear out or support this opinion; but rather, if there be ground for any distinction here, the contrary. Intemperance in eating and drinking is what makes and keeps many families poor; whereas economy, and especially the avoidance of expensive vices, have made many rich. But whether men are rich or poor, it is a precept of Christianity, that they should avoid being led astray by sensual indulgence, and should maintain a strict government over all the passions and appetites. There is a lawful method and extent of indulging the appetites which God has implanted within us, and every creature of God is good and may be so used as to minister to our rational enjoyment. The exhortation of the text points to this lawful method and extent of gratifying the appetites in the use of the creatures of God. Especially is it binding on Christians to set an example of the moderate use of those things which minister to the gratification of the sensual appetites. “So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incor-

ruptible." "I," adds the Apostle, "keep under my body and bring it into subjection." He points to the temperance of the heathen combatants, whose preparatory training in a severe course of abstinence, lasted for months. They did it to obtain a corruptible crown, a wreath of fading leaves; but we have an immortal crown to win. And shall not we, by temperance, keep under the body, and bring it into subjection to the soul, to help on its work and purification? Intemperance does but aggravate the corruptions and evil lusts of the body. The visible effects of it in eating are not so soon perceived, nor so disreputable among men, as drunkenness; yet according to its degree, it is equally offensive in the sight of God. It pampers the body; it enslaves and stupefies the soul; it extinguishes and quenches the Spirit of God. The reason why there is so little hope of the conversion of a drunkard, and why drunkards can not enter into the kingdom of heaven, is because no man can be filled with the Spirit of God and with wine, at one and the same time. Intoxication from wine is wholly inconsistent with the presence of that Spirit, in his renewing, sanctifying power. There is an opposition in being drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit. Our Saviour, in warning the men of His generation of his advent at the destruction of Jerusalem, says, "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." Surfeiting and drunkenness would render them peculiarly liable to overlook the signs of that coming,—would becloud the understanding, harden the heart, brutalize the passions, call off the watchmen of the soul from their towers, and make them despise warning and reproof. And intemperance has not changed its nature; if it would blind men's eyes to the signs of that approaching day, signs which should be in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and cause the hearts of observing men to fail with fear, it will now just as effectually blind their eyes to the evidences of the near approach of that advent referred to in the text, **THE LORD IS AT HAND.** We may not see "the clouds like burning billows flash and burn beneath his feet"—we may not see attending spirits "brandish their glittering banners round His throne"—we may not see His car of lightning, "rolling from the unfathoméd depths of heaven;" but lo! He cometh. He is just as near at hand as the day of our death. The hearts that are overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness may not notice the flight of years,—the gradual decays of nature in themselves,—the ravages of disease around them, the falling of one after another of their companions; they may seldom come to the house of God, and listen to the warnings of His word. Alas! how true is it that such persons are prone to disregard both the admonitions of Providence, and the warnings of the Gospel, and the day of their death cometh upon them as a snare. "As the fishes that are

taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them."

The rapid flight of time, my hearers, the passing of one year after another, should admonish us how fast our lives are drawing to a close. Each closing year cries out to us, "The Lord is at hand." Let then our moderation be known to all men. Let the world see in us meekness under provocation; a readiness to forgive injuries; gentleness of disposition; uprightness in all our dealings with our fellow-men; moderate desires after and a temperate use of the things of this world; such holy living will prepare us for a peaceful, holy dying. Blessed is that servant whom his Master when He cometh shall find so doing. He can not be taken unawares; he can not be surprised by the advent of his Lord.

SERMON DCCV.

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THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESENT AND FUTURE.

"For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face."—1 Cor. xiii. 12.

However greatly some men may pride themselves on the extensiveness and variety of their attainments, certain it is, that in the present state of being, the mind of man can acquire comparatively but a small portion of knowledge. All his stores of information must be exceedingly limited, when contrasted with the ocean of knowledge in the worlds of matter and of mind. True it is, he may obtain an acquaintance with the science of the heavenly bodies; their majestic forms, and wondrous revolutions; he may know something of the earth with its mysterious strata and vast treasures. He may have learnt something of the material and immaterial natures of man, and of the numerous laws which govern creation. He may have travelled in the multiplied and diversified fields of science, and philosophy, but if he has become really wise, he will be willing to confess, that his knowledge is as nothing, and that now he "sees through a glass darkly."

The same reasoning is applicable to the student in divine mysteries. He may have passed through a series of years in the