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Miscellaneous Articles.

PREACHING AND PAPER-READING.

“Do you ever have any preaching down here?” inquired a colporteur once of a coalburner in the New Jersey pines. “Sometimes we have preaching over in the school-house;” he replied, “and once in a while a *paper-reader* comes along, but we don’t set much store by them, no-ways.” And the “Piner” was not far from right in his judgment. A man who could not utter his simple message in a rustic school-house without having recourse to a pile of manuscripts, might well question whether he did not lack at least one most desirable faculty for a Christian minister.

The distinction made by this illiterate collier between preaching and “paper-reading,” is one that is pretty deeply ingrained in the popular mind. The *masses* certainly prefer extemporaneous speaking, whatever may be the judgment of the learned and the refined. In fact we question whether there is a single minister of the gospel who can succeed to his satisfaction in extemporaneous preaching, that is willing to write out his discourses habitually. He is prompted to this decision, not by the dictates of indolence, but from a clear conviction of the superior freedom, gracefulness, and acceptability of the “off-hand” method. “I always find,” said the beloved Payson, “that when any good is done, it is my extempore sermons which do it.”

1. But in spite of such strong testimony as this from one who wrote many of his discourses, and of the popular preference too—it is very clear that a large number of clergymen *must* write their sermons, or else abandon the ministry. Those who are not gifted with any fluency of utterance, and who cannot possibly acquire it, and those who have a great fondness for close argumentation and

"Death is swallowed up in victory;" (1 Cor. xv. 54;) in the victory of Him "whom I have believed." O Death, deceitful, wily foe, where is now thy sting? Thy barbed pang, thy stern agony, thine excruciating sufferings, thine insupportable pains, what are they? All shadowy, transient, earthly! I mind them not, since over them all I have the victory, the glorious victory of my Redeemer.

O my soul, be thou stirred up with deeper love, with more exalted praise to that Redeemer, who for thine own sake, has already conquered death and the grave, and for thy sake still proclaims, "O Death, I will be thy plagues; O Grave, I will be thy destruction!" (Hosea xiii. 14.)

Come, weary soul, tired out with thy burden of sin and sorrow, with temptations, and trials, and afflictions, and corruptions, take courage, for "*Death is yours;*" your precious legacy, your conquered enemy, your faithful friend. Look no longer upon him with terror. Soon will he free you from this cumbersome tabernacle of clay, and give you angel wings that you may mount and fly away to your rest in heaven; soon will he unlock for you yonder gates of bliss, that you may for ever bathe in those everlasting fountains of joy at the right hand of your God; soon will he usher you into the company of that happy throng "which no man can number," (Rev. vii. 9,) that with them, before the great white throne, you may join in that new song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, who hath redeemed us unto God by his blood." (Rev. v. 9, 12.)

Yes, Death is mine, and "for me to die is gain." (Phil. i. 21.) And when God shall call me to lie down upon a bed of sickness, with cheerful submission will I endure every ill, and every racking pain, that when all is over, I may sweetly fall asleep in Jesus, and awake satisfied with his likeness. (Ps. xvii. 15.)

Come then, my weary soul, rejoice! Come, wonder, and admire, and praise, with triumphant exultation, the matchless love that has redeemed thee from death, that has ransomed thee from the power of the grave. (Hos. xiii. 14.) And when thou shalt have entered the dark stream of Jordan, though its waters be chill, and its waves swell high, forget not the voice of Him who has trodden the way before thee, "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." (Is. xliii. 1-3.)—*Selected.*

SATAN'S TEMPTATIONS.

THERE is no deeper distress of mind on earth than is sometimes felt by men who are sorely tempted with thoughts of unbelief, despair, blasphemy or unnatural wickedness. A few words to such may be seasonable:

1. Resist the devil and he shall flee from you.
2. Do not expect to out-wit and out-reason him; but, like Christ, quote the word of God against him. The metal of that sword is too high, and its edge too keen for him.
3. Lay firm hold on the promises made to the tempted, and encourage yourselves in the Lord your God. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."—He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear." These are but specimens of many sweet promises made to the tempted. There is another, sweeter, if possible, than both these. It was made to one of God's tempted people, who greatly desired that the messenger of Satan might buffet him no more. It is in these words—"My grace is sufficient for thee." Is not this enough?
4. Be much on your guard in times of high religious privilege and enjoyment. Pirates let empty vessels pass without molestation, but attack those well freighted.
5. Be on your guard in the day of sadness, whatever makes it so. Satan loves to terrify those already affrighted.
6. "When a Christian is about some notable enterprise for God's glory, then will Satan lie like a serpent in the way, or as an adder in the path, to bite the horse's heels, that the rider may fall backward."
7. Beware of attempting to comprehend things beyond your reach, to under-

stand things unintelligible, or to know things not revealed. "There are three kinds of straits, wherein Satan aims to entrap the believer; nice questions, obscure Scriptures, and dark providences."

8. "All temptations are laid in self-righteousness and self-excellency. God pursues these by setting Satan upon thee, as Laban pursued Jacob for his images. These must be torn from thee, how unwilling soever thou art. These hinder Christ from coming in, and until Christ come in, guilt will not go out."

9. Your adversary is "the lion of the evening." He may assault you even when dying a Christian death. He has thus assaulted many. When John Knox was dying, he had a fearful conflict, but gained a great victory by the words, "What I am, I am by the grace of God," and "What hast thou which thou hast not received?"

10. Our great refuge at all times, but especially in times of temptation, is the throne of grace and the blood of Christ. Christ is our life. Nothing but the blood of Christ can quench the fire of God's wrath, the fire of lust, or the fiery darts of Satan. That blood can be obtained at the throne of grace, and nowhere else.—*Dr. Plumer.*

"THE TIME IS SHORT."

A "shadow,"—"a vapour,"—"a dream,"—"a post,"—"a weaver's shuttle,"—"a vain show,"—"the grass which flourishes in the morning, and in the evening is cut down,"—every imaginable figure is made use of in Scripture to show how limited is the span of our present existence. And the knell of another fleeting year has just added its response to the same solemn truth.

"*The time is short*" for sorrow and for joy. Man of the world, whose portion is in this life, if you have "your good things," whither are they ebbing? and what wilt thou do in the end thereof? Christian, grieve not, your "heaviness" is only for a season, your severest affliction is "light, and but for a moment," and "not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed."

"*The time is short.*" It is indeed *short* to prepare for eternity. Thoughtless reader of these lines, you have a soul to be saved or to perish for ever; a heaven to win or to lose, with all that is comprehended in that dreadful alternative. You are called to consideration, to decision, to search the Scriptures, to prayer, to repentance, to faith, to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." You have golden opportunities now—you have every help you want, held out to your acceptance now. But how long will this last? Where are the thousands who, during the past year, were summoned to their last account at the notice of only a few hours? "*The time is short.*"

Again, it is *short* for improvement. We have all much to acquire—young persons more especially—if we would "serve our generation according to the will of God." The Christian, though pardoned and justified and accepted, is called to labour with the anxiety of one wrestling for a prize, to obtain nearer and nearer advances to his Saviour's likeness. He is called to do this in opposition to perpetual hinderances, and in the midst of unceasing conflict. He is directed to "give all diligence to add to his faith virtue and knowledge and temperance, and patience and godliness and brotherly kindness and charity." And, for all these things, "*the time is short.*"

Once more, it is *short* for usefulness. Every Christian has a work appointed him by the great "Master of the vineyard;" he has influence, the circle of which may seem small, but the real extent of which he cannot estimate; he has talents wherewith to occupy till his Lord come. It is in a suffering world that he is to go about doing good; it is in an ignorant, sinful, dying world that he is to hold forth the Word of life, if by any means he may save some. But if he should work the works of Him that sent him, he must do so "while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work." *Wherefore,*

"*Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*" (Eccles. ix. 10.)—*Churchman's Monthly Mag.*