

T H E
AMERICAN PREACHER;
O R, A
COLLECTION OF SERMONS
FROM SOME OF THE
MOST EMINENT PREACHERS,
NOW LIVING,
IN THE UNITED STATES,
O F
DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS
IN THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

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GALATIANS vi: 9.

*Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season
we shall reap, if we faint not.*

THE intimate knowledge of human nature,
that shines through the whole religion of
Jesus, deserves to be numbered among the evi-
dences of its divinity.

It hereby appears that its author is none other
than the author of our nature. This knowledge
is conspicuous among other things, in that apti-
tude there is in the doctrines, the precepts, the
promises, and the threatenings of the gospel, to-
gether with the facts recorded in the sacred ora-
cles, to govern the will and regulate the passions,
as well as inform the understanding. For this
purpose, every power of the human mind is ad-

ressed, and every principle of action in the soul is touched in the manner best calculated to accomplish these ends.

Among these principles, none more powerful and operative, than the desire of happiness. A principle planted by the author of nature in every human breast; and which, therefore, is a rational and scriptural source of action. It is not, indeed, the principle from which true love to God flows, nor ought it to be the primary source of our obedience. These are the transcendent excellence of the divine character, and a conscientious regard to God's governing authority.

But though a regard to our own happiness ought not to be the primary source of our obedience, yet it is *a* source, and we may, we ought to be influenced by it, in the whole of our Christian deportment. It ought to have a chief place among the motives of our conduct, though not *the* chief. This is evident from the address to it in the words of our text. *Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

There are two things in the text that deserve our special notice.

An *evil* against which we are guarded. *Be not weary in well-doing.* And the *argument* whereby we are guarded against this evil; and the contrary temper and conduct recommended and enforced, which you have in these words; *for in due season*

we shall reap, if we faint not: Reap a harvest of eternal joy. There is a manifest allusion in our text, and the two preceding verses, to those remarkable seasons of the year, seed-time and harvest. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.—Here the apostle compares this life to the season in which the farmer sows his seed, and the future state, to the succeeding harvest. He, hereby, teaches us this important truth; that our temper and conduct in this life, bear the same relation to a coming judgment and an eternal state, that the farmer's sowing his seed does to the following harvest. This life is the seed time, eternity the season for reaping the fruit of our doings, whether they be good or bad.

What I propose from the words, by the aids of the spirit of grace, is,

- I. Briefly explain the evil against which we are guarded in the text.
- II. Shew why we should guard against this evil, and pursue a contrary line of conduct.

Let us enquire, *first*, what is the nature of the evil against which we are guarded in the text—*Be not weary in well-doing.* And for this purpose it

is not improper we should briefly touch upon the nature of the *well-doing* here intended, that we may be enabled the more easily to understand, what it is to be *weary* of it.

By well-doing here, we are to understand, in general, the duties we owe to God, our neighbor, and ourselves. These are of great extent; they are many in number, and important in their nature. There is not a single relation we sustain to God, or to each other, but what is fruitful of a variety of these duties. You will not expect I should enter into a particular consideration of them in this place. This would constitute a system of practical divinity. Let it suffice, at present, to observe, that they include all that the sacred oracles mean by piety towards God; by justice, benevolence, and humanity towards our neighbor, and by sobriety and temperance in our conduct towards ourselves. These the gospel of Christ teaches us with great care. It teaches us, *that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

These duties are called *well-doing*, because in a conscientious observance of them we do well; we comply with the approving will of God. But, though this phrase may be taken in this large extent, the connexion of our text with the preceding part of the chapter, would seem to point us to

some particular duties, as more especially designed by the term; those that have for their more immediate object, the happiness of our fellow-creatures: Such as mutual love and forbearance one towards another; compassion to the distressed; humility of deportment and acts of beneficence to all. The apostle also appears to have an eye to those duties, which more immediately tend to the advancement of the cause of God in the world; particularly the support of the gospel of Christ. Thus in the sixth verse of our context; *Let him, that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.* And it is not improbable but that the apostle may distinguish these duties by the title of *well-doing*, because of their influence on the order and happiness of society; and the particular honor they reflect upon the religion of the divine Redeemer.

The *weariness* in well doing, against which we are here guarded, ordinarily begins in the loss of that relish for divine things, and that pleasure in the ways of God, which the person may have had in days past.

In proportion as we take pleasure in any duty, we are guarded against being weary in it. And this want of relish for the ways of God, flows from the loss of those views of divine things, with which he may have been blest in the preceding course of his life.

The native consequence of this is, the frequent omission of the duties of religion.

Thus, when the person who has accustomed himself to secret or family prayer, frequently neglects these great duties; he has become weary in well doing. And thus the man who has been wont to attend the public ordinances of God's worship, and contribute to their support, when he becomes negligent of them; when every trifle will keep him from the house of God, or serve as an excuse for his refusing to support the gospel, he is weary in well-doing. Or suppose a person who has given himself away to God at his holy table, to become negligent of this ordinance; and repeatedly omit an attendance upon it; that person hereby shews he is weary in well-doing. God holds such conduct as a practical contempt of him, his Christ, and his gospel, whatever those guilty may think of it. This also is the case of the man who relaxes in the practice of any virtue, especially if it be a virtue in which he may have studied to excel in days past. And it is eminently the case of the man, who is less careful to be useful than once he was, by filling up the duties of the station which God has assigned him in life. In a word, the allowed omission of any known duty, to God or man, especially the frequent omission of it, is an evidence of being weary in well-doing, too decided to admit of a doubt.

The like may be said of the person who renounces the great doctrines of the gospel, and either embraces those errors which corrupt their simplicity, and defeat their efficacy, or discarding

all religion, avows the principles of infidelity. This prepares the way for that profaneness in life, which but too frequently follows upon such apostasy from the truth. The man who having made a profession of religion, and had in some measure escaped from the pollutions of the world, when he associates with the profane; drinks with the drunkard; throws off the restraints which were wont to guard his lips from impious language; indulges to the gratifying his criminal passions; prostitutes holy time to the purposes of worldly business or amusements; and indulges himself in any species of iniquity, be it what it may, that man gives the most fatal evidence of his being weary in well-doing. This is in the fullest sense of the term, *having put his hand to the plough, to look back*, and therefore, *he is not fit for the kingdom of God*. Thus much, briefly, for the nature of the evil, against which we are guarded in the text. And you see from what has been said, there are several degrees in it; against the lowest of which, we are carefully to guard. Which leads us to enquire,

II. Why we should guard against being thus weary in well-doing, and pursue the contrary line of conduct.

I. Because this evil, as described, is a fatal symptom of an unregenerate state.

True grace is a living principle, and wherever it is found in the heart, it always tends towards perfection. Thus we read that, *the path of the*

just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. I do not mean to tell you that true grace does not admit of decays; that God's people may not decline far from their former life, and activity in the ways of holiness; or that they may not fall into sin to the great dishonor of their profession.

We have many melancholy evidences that this may be the case. Witness a Joseph swearing by the life of Pharaoh; a David, in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah; a Solomon, in turning aside after strange Gods, when he had grown old; a Peter, in denying his Lord; with others on sacred record,

And have no instances of this kind fallen under your own observation? Therefore, though the first degrees of weariness in well-doing, do not certainly evidence the want of grace in the heart, yet the last do; and the first suggest just cause of fear that the heart may not be right with God; and if they be indulged and persisted in, they assuredly evince the person to be *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.* For though the true believer suffers his decays in grace, he has his times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and though he may fall into sin, by the strength of his internal corruptions, or the power of temptation; yet he rises again, repents of his iniquity, and doubles his watch; as you may see in the several cases I have just mentioned,

Would you then, my brethren, assure yourselves of the truth of grace in your hearts; would you make your calling and election sure, see that you guard against this evil in all its several stages. For even where the truth of grace is; yet in proportion as you grow weary in well-doing, and that in the lowest degree, the evidences of your grace diminish, and you loose the comforts of the divine life.

2. Those who grow weary in well-doing, so as to forsake the ways of practical godliness, loose all their former labor and pains in religion. It is not enough that we begin in the ways of God, that we set out in the paths of piety; but we must *persevere* in them—we must endure to the end; for he alone *that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved*. And our Lord assures us, that *no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*. And God himself elsewhere declares that, *if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him*. To the same purpose you read, Ezek. xviii. 24. *But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: In his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die*. And is there no backslider in heart and way, in my audience this day?—None who having begun in the spirit, are

now ending in the flesh? See the folly of your conduct, and attend to that awful threatening. *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.* And this is just; for your conduct while it brings assured ruin upon yourselves, highly reflects on the honor of God, as a master.

The language of your conduct is, that you have tried his service, and found by experience, that it is unjust, impracticable, or destructive of your comfort. But can there be a representation of God and his ways, more false in itself, or dishonorable to the Supreme Jehovah?

3. We ought not to grow weary in well-doing, for God is not weary in doing good to us. He not only gave us our being, but he holds our souls in life. By his visitation alone we are preserved. In him we live and move; by him we are fed, and cloathed, and preserved. *He daily loadeth us with his benefits. He giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*— In a word, he is a God *full of compassion and gracious; long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.* Nor are these mercies purely of a temporal nature; they not only supply the wants of our bodies, and provide for our comfortable accommodation in life; but they provide for the comfort, the holiness, and the eternal happiness of our precious souls. Of this kind is all the rich provision of the gospel, with all its ordinances and graces.

O! the rich plenty and variety, the divine profusion with which Jehovah pours his blessings, spi-

ritual and temporal, upon us, and that with all the unremitting care, tenderness and assiduity of a God! It is base ingratitude then for us to be weary in well-doing.

4. We have many bright examples of patience and perseverance in well-doing, to encourage us not to be weary in it. This argument is urged by the apostle, in this very point of view, in the following words. *Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.* Many have trod this path in every age of the world. It hereby appears to be practicable; and when we are exhorted not to be weary in well-doing, we are only exhorted to be *followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.* It is a duty in which many have gone before us, and some of them in circumstances unspeakably more difficult, than those in which we are called to it. Witness the many martyrs who have bled and burnt for Christ in one age and another of the world; but we are not called to *resist unto blood, striving against sin.*

5. There is a glorious reward before us, if we do not grow weary in well-doing. This is the argument urged by the apostle in our text; *for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* This reward is not unfrequently conferred upon the peo-

ple of God, in some degree, when they come to lie on a dying bed. Of this nature is that composure of spirit, and that serenity of mind, which they often enjoy in that solemn hour. Of this same kind is that holy triumph over death and the grave, with which many of his people have taken their leave of time.

These arise sometimes from the review of a life humbly devoted to God; at other times, from a sweet sense of his love shed abroad in their souls, or it may be from both; but more generally they flow from a lively and a sure hope of everlasting life, through the atonement and intercession of their divine Redeemer. Thus David, when lying on the verge of time, could say: *Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.* And have none of you witnessed the triumphs of a dying disciple of Jesus?

But this reward principally consists in that glorious immortality, which commences immediately on our departure from the body. Then it is the believer's experience demonstrates the truth of that declaration; *Verily there is a reward for the righteous.* This reward shall be conferred in part in the resurrection of the just. All true believers in Jesus shall then rise in honor and great glory; but this is not all; there will be degrees of honor conferred upon them, according to the nature of

the services they have done for their Lord in this life. For as *there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, and as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead.* It will be no less conspicuous in the judgment of the great day. *Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.* Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, *Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer, and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

This reward will not, indeed, be conferred upon the score of merit. Our best services are deeply stained with guilt, and wholly unprofitable to the Most High; but it will be nevertheless sure. It is rendered so by the unfailing promise of the God of truth. *And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.* It is on this account, that it is re-

presented as an act of *righteousness* in God. Hebrews vi. 10. *For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.* Nor can any thing more strongly evince its certainty, than its being urged as a motive both to obedience and diligence in the ways of God; as in the following words: *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.* To which we may add the words of our text. *Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

Again. It will be a full reward.

Never did the most plenteous harvest reward the labors of the husbandman more certainly or fully, than the joys and glories of the future world shall reward the faithful, persevering and diligent disciples of Jesus. They shall enter into the joy of their Lord: the joy unspeakable and full of glory which he purchased for them upon the cross, and of which he took possession in their name, when he ascended up on high, and sat down at the right hand of God: *And they shall ever be with their Lord.*

Once more. This reward will bear some proportion to our faithfulness and diligence in our Lord's service here. It is one evident design of the

parable of the *ten* pounds, entrusted by their Lord, to the *ten* servants, to teach us this truth. You have this instructive parable, Luke xix. from the 13th to the 26th verse inclusive. *And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, occupy till I come. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.— Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, well, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou laidest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he said unto him, out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds. For I say unto you, that unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be*

taken away from him. You will perceive the sums entrusted by their Lord to these servants, were the same—to each man one pound; but the improvement is represented as different. By one it is tenfold—by an other five; and you are carefully to remark, that the difference in the reward is proportioned to the difference in the improvement.

The man who had improved his one pound into ten, was made ruler over ten cities; and the man who had gained five pounds, was made ruler over five cities. Seeing then there is such a glorious reward in sure reserve for us, *let us not be weary in well-doing.* We have only to await God's appointed time for the full enjoyment thereof: for our text assures us, that *in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

I shall conclude with the few following directions.

1. As ever you would desire not to be weary in well-doing; beware of sloth in the ways of God. This is a sin natural to us; but there are few greater enemies to vital godliness than it is.

2. Beware of venturing on known sin; especially the sin to which you are most inclined. This we are particularly cautioned against in the fore-cited—Heb. xii. 1. This is what David calls by way of eminence, *his iniquity.* *I kept myself from mine iniquity.*

3. Keep close to God in the way of duty. God deals with us as rational creatures, and, therefore,

requires that we should cleave to him in the various duties of his appointment; this is the gracious institution of heaven.

4. Endeavor to keep the end of your course full in view. Be much in the exercise of that faith, which *is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen.*

Lastly. Look to Christ for strength to preserve you from being weary in well-doing. Remember that *it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell:* therefore, we may of *his fulness receive grace for grace.* Be strong, therefore, in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And thus strengthened, may you be preserved from fainting, endure to the end, and in due season reap a rich harvest of eternal joy.

