

THE LIVING PULPIT,

OR

EIGHTEEN SERMONS

BY EMINENT LIVING DIVINES

OF

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

WITH

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE EDITOR,

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EFFICIENCY OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE.

BY

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Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.—ROMANS vi. 13, 14.

THE first thing which demands our attention, in unfolding the meaning of this passage of the Word of God, (which is so pregnant with meaning that we must pass by any introductory observations,) is the duty which is here laid down as binding upon all men. This duty, to which we are all summoned by the authority of this inspired and divinely commissioned ambassador from the courts of heaven, is expressed both affirmatively and negatively. We are admonished what that is which we are required to do, and also what that is from which we should abstain.

It is commanded that we shall not yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. The word translated "yield," means to give up to the use and control of another. "Your members," include not only the organs of the body, but also the powers, faculties, and capacities of the mind, and is

used as a periphrasis for *yourselves*, that is, the whole man, as composed of a living body and a reasonable soul. These members we are not to yield as instruments unto sin. Sin is here personified as a monarch, ruler, or guide, and we are forbidden to allow to sin, in any of these capacities, the use or control of our mental or physical powers. When so employed, they are perverted, abused to a purpose contrary to their original design, and alienated from that service wherein they ought to be employed. If they are so devoted, voluntarily, and by our own choice, we are guilty of robbery, treachery, unfaithfulness, and disobedience, since we are stewards of these heavenly gifts, and responsible for their proper and intended use to the righteous Judge of all. Thus to yield them, therefore, as servants to sin, is a crime of inexcusable turpitude, for which we shall be held justly responsible at the bar of heaven. On the other hand, does sin lay siege to our hearts, and by the open assaults and fiery darts of grievous temptations, or by the secret wiles of more insinuating artifices, seek to gain possession of our citadel, and reduce us to a state of subjection and of vassalage? then are we to regard him as an usurper and a rebel, as without any right or title to such authority, and as one to whom on no conditions, and under no possible extremity, are we permitted to render our obeisance. Whatsoever may be the severity of his threatenings; whatsoever the strength and power with which he storms our hearts, and to whatever straits we may be brought by his long protracted warfare, yet at the peril of our soul's salvation let us not yield unto him. He that so yields

becomes the servant of sin, the captive of Satan, and the enemy of God.

It is our duty, therefore, as subjects of the moral government of God; as having been created, preserved, and redeemed by him, and as being under his absolute control, to "yield ourselves unto God"—that is, to give ourselves up to his service and control. "And yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God;" that is, yield yourselves in all your powers and faculties, whether of mind or of body, that they may be employed in God's service, and to his honour and glory. Now it is here evidently implied, as it is throughout the whole Word of God, that men are at present in such a lapsed and ruined condition as to be alienated from the service and love of God, and enthralled by the love and dominion of sin. Such is the disposition of mankind universally, that they listen with a ready ear to the voice of the tempter, and are incredulous to the forewarning of Jehovah. They bow willingly to the yoke of sin and Satan, hard and ignominious though it be, and they openly and blasphemously declare by their *practical* enunciations, which speak louder than any words, "As for God we will not have him to reign over us. We love the wages of unrighteousness, and after sin we will go."

It is also here as plainly taught us, that however this may be the determination of mankind, and however unanimous they may be in thus casting off the yoke and authority of God—that, nevertheless, they are still under his government, under untransferrable obligation to obey him, and amenable to that law whose wrath is revealed from heaven, not only

against all *unrighteousness*, of whatever character and degree, but also against the *ungodliness* of all men, of whatever name, rank or station.

It is further and very clearly taught that, however men may be now guilty, and held justly accountable for the endurance of that penalty in which, by one man's disobedience, we are all involved; however they may have ratified that sin by their own voluntary choice of a course of like disobedience; and however habituated they may have become to the service of iniquity, they are not one whit the less under obligation, or less bound to render unto God a full and perfect obedience. By the very fact that God has permitted them to live, given to them the exercise of a free agency, and presented to them motives for such obedience, they are imperatively required, by every consideration of justice, to render unto God, and to his service, those powers and faculties with which he has endowed them. These powers are in no sense theirs, and cannot, therefore, without robbery, be withdrawn from the superintending care and claims of him by whom they were originally given, and by whom they are constantly sustained.

God has placed in the breast of every man a will, to which is given authority and power to govern and direct the movements of the inner man. By this the passions, affections, and desires move and exercise their being, and without its consenting fiat no rational act can be performed. Now, in the present corrupt state of human nature, this will has been seduced into the service of sin, and withdrawn from all natural allegiance to the dominion of heaven.

God, however, does not release from subjection this will, which he alone could either give or maintain. He, therefore, enters his demand in the conscience of every human being; and, calling heaven and earth to witness, he solemnly forbids that homage which the sinful heart of man renders to the god of this world, on the peril of everlasting death; while he encourages its devotion to himself and his service by the promise of everlasting life. And it is of God's infinite mercy that any such demand is made to that which is in itself of no account to him, and of which he has been so unworthily despoiled. It is because of God's unspeakable mercy we are spared at all, borne with in any patience, or permitted the opportunity of returning to our allegiance to him. And that we should be invited thus to submit our wills to him, and to devote ourselves to his glorious service, by those motives which are presented in the gospel of his Son, this truly is a mystery of love, whose height, and depth, whose length and breadth, is beyond our comprehension.

You will observe, too, how the exhortation requires not that we should, in this life, be absolutely free from sin as a law or principle within us, which would be impossible. The evil tendency, or law of our members, remains even in regenerated men, and is still ready to war against their renewed nature. This *tendency* we are not required, therefore, utterly to destroy, which it were impossible, while in this body of sin and death, that we should; but *voluntarily* to submit to this inward propensity, or to yield ourselves to its suggestions, so as to do its will, this is forbidden, and this we may not do. On the

contrary, to be resolutely determined not to submit to this law of concupiscence or sin, but, contrariwise, to follow out, at every cost, the dictates of the law of holiness; this is what we are under obligation to perform at once and without delay, with full knowledge of what is required of us; with serious consideration; with a determinate judgment; with liberty of spirit, having disengaged ourselves from all other masters; with a belief in and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of God in him as our only Lord, Sovereign, and Master; with all humility, joy, and gladness; and with the entire surrender of all that we are and have to his guidance and direction. This is that duty to which we are each called by all that is winning in mercy, and by all that is fearful in that wrath which burneth even to the lowest hell.

This duty is ours as fully as if we retained all man's original power and inclination to discharge it. It is plainly and absolutely commanded. And it is by simply believing that in doing what God has thus warranted and required, God will as certainly "work in us both to will and to do;" it is by thus casting ourselves before his footstool, in the entire surrender of ourselves to him in Christ Jesus, and trusting to Christ's righteousness and meritorious intercession, that every sinner has been, or ever will be, made able and willing to "yield himself unto God, and his members as instruments of righteousness unto him."

But this brings us, in the second place, to the consideration of the *principle* upon which this *duty* is here made to rest. This, also, is expressed both

negatively and affirmatively. We are exhorted and required to devote ourselves to God, and to withdraw all allegiance from the service of the world, by the assurance that we are "alive from the dead." Herein is contained the principle upon which, as the only true and living root, the apostle would graft the duty of obedience. We are called upon to make this self-dedication unto God, not that we may thereby *obtain* life, but as those for whom that life has already been obtained; not that we may *merit* life, but as those upon whom it has already been most graciously conferred; not that, by any sacrifice on our part, it may be wrought out, but as those for whom it has been already purchased by the precious blood of Christ. The principle of the apostle is, therefore, diametrically opposite to the principle of legalism in all its forms. It is at direct variance with all the prescriptions by which men, in their arrogant pretensions to wisdom, would secure this heavenly blessing. "Yield yourselves unto God," *they* would tell us "that, by such a holy devotedness, ye may commend yourselves to God, and thus secure the blessings of life and salvation at his hands. Enter, therefore, upon this way of formal and ceremonial purification, since, without holiness, it is impossible that you can ever see God." Such would be the exhortation of those who build their hopes upon a righteousness within them, and not upon a righteousness without and beyond them, and who thus seek to be justified for their own doings, and not for the work and merit of "the Lord our righteousness."

But how widely different is the prescription of this

divine apostle. He inspirits us to this act of a self-devoting sacrifice, not so much by the prospect of what may in future be gained by it, as by the thought of what has been already achieved on our behalf; not so much by the hope of conciliating the divine clemency, as by the glorious assurance that God has been already reconciled. "As those who are" already "alive from the dead," and to whom there is held forth the promise of an ascension to glory, even to that glory with which Christ has been glorified, are we here urged to "yield ourselves to God."

There is a peculiar force and expressiveness in this declaration, which plucks up by the very roots all dependence, for the production of holiness, upon the ability or self-righteousness of the creature. "As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all" the redeemed "be made alive;" "for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." By sinning in the first Adam, as our public head and representative, we were all constituted sinners, and are treated by the divine Lawgiver as guilty in his sight, "and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Thus were we, and our entire race, under sentence of death, and bound over to the endurance of this dread penalty. And the righteousness of such a sentence we have all attested by the fact, that out of the universal race of man, there has not yet been found "one righteous, no, not one; all having gone out of the way, each in his own way" of sin and folly. But by becoming united to the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, the head and representative of the whole family of the redeemed, we are constituted righteous through

the merit of his righteousness, which is imputed to us, and are treated by God accordingly. "There is, therefore," we are assured, "now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Death hath no dominion over them. The law has no demands against them. For since death has been endured by their Surety on their behalf, and since the law has been magnified and satisfied for them, they can walk forth in all the freedom of deliverance, and rejoice in "the glorious liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free."

This, then, is one view of this all powerful motive, by which the apostle urges us to an entire devotion to God. Inasmuch as all the claims of that law, which you had broken, have been fully met, and the uttermost of its denounced penalty has been borne; since He who thus suffered for you still lives to intercede on your behalf; and since this whole plan of salvation was of God's devising, and has been completed unto God's well pleasing; as those, who are thus redeemed from the threatened penalty of death, and who are thus made legally entitled to the sentence of divine approval, "yield yourselves unto God," "who is now in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself." Instead, therefore, of urging us to holiness, by the motive of thereby meriting the Divine favour, we are urged to it by the very fact, that thereby we can merit no favour, that propitiation having been already secured by the mediation of the Son of God; and instead of inviting to the pursuit of holiness, that we may thus open up a way of access unto God, it is by the very plea that such a way has been already made plain and

obvious, that we are encouraged to approach. It is no longer, therefore, argues the apostle, impossible for you thus to yield yourselves as sinners unto God, seeing that every let and hindrance has been removed; that an "ATONEMENT" has been made, and that God is now "just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly." The doctrine of salvation is thus adapted by the God of nature to the mightiest principle of nature—"for we are saved by hope." We are begotten by the Gospel to the blessed hope of an immortal life. We are certified that the battle has been fought and the victory won, and that now there is announced to us, through Him who was mighty to save, that Gospel which bringeth good tidings of great joy, even "peace on earth, and good will to men."

But, while in this argument of the apostle, there is an appeal made to the principle of hope, the most potent affection of our nature, this argument is also addressed to the principle of gratitude, which is perhaps one of the most pure, pleasant, and disinterested of those affections by which the heart of man is actuated. "Yield yourselves unto God as those that are dead." By the very fact, that you who *were* dead; dead in law, dead by the utterance against you of heaven's righteous sentence of everlasting death; dead to all hope of any possible deliverance; by the thought that you "*are now* alive;" and by the infinite mercy of God in Christ delivered from that condition of despairing wretchedness—"yield yourselves unto God." Withhold not that soul from God, which had been brought under the sentence of eternal death by its apostacy from him, and which has now been re-purchased from the hands

of eternal justice; "not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold," but by the endurance, in our stead, by God's only begotten Son, of all this deserved misery.

Sin is here, as I said, likened to some cruel and despotic monarch, who, after he has seduced poor and deluded souls into his service, by the pleasures which he affords them for a season, then gluts his bloody and ferocious spirit, by putting them to fierce and endless torments. "The wages of sin is death." We are now in the position of those who, by the interposition of another, have been rescued from the grasp of this destroyer; and we are, therefore, called upon to yield ourselves henceforth unto His service, by whom we have been redeemed, and by whom alone we can be preserved, and not again to yield ourselves to one from whose determined vengeance we were so mercifully and so wonderfully preserved. Let us take the recorded instance of that princely father, whose own son was found to be the first violator of a law, the penalty of whose infraction was the loss of both eyes. In the yearnings of paternal love, and yet as governed by the mastering principle of sovereign equity, he desires to maintain justice, and yet exercise compassion. The prince, therefore, humbles himself, though innocent of the crime, to a substituted endurance of one half of the denounced penalty, and was deprived, on behalf of his guilty son, of one of his own eyes. Now, were that son again actuated with a desire, whose indulgence would incur the vengeance of the law, how ought he to be dissuaded from such a suicidal act, by the affecting remembrance, that he was now freed from the full

endurance of that penalty, which he had in part suffered, through the satisfaction rendered to the law by the suffering and loss of another? And how would his heart be made to relent, by the recollection that he who did so interpose on his behalf, was no other than his own offended father?

Now just such, though immeasurably stronger, is the appeal here made to us. We were condemned, not to the loss of our eyes merely, but to the loss of life itself; not to the loss of our bodily life merely, but to the loss of our spiritual and eternal life also, involving, as this necessarily does, the misery of eternal death. We "were dead in trespasses and sins," and "already condemned." And we may imagine, that having actually endured the bitter curse of death, we are again alive, through the miraculous and all merciful agency of the divine Redeemer. As those, therefore, who have been thus restored to life; as those whose death is not again required to meet the claims of a violated law; as those for whose deliverance salvation has been wrought out by none other than the very power against which we had so grievously offended; we are persuaded not again to bring ourselves into bondage to sin and Satan, but to throw ourselves upon the mercy of Him "who hath loved us, and given himself for us," and who was made a curse for us, being put to death in the flesh, that we, through his death, might have everlasting life.

Nor is this all that is contained within the compass of this heavenly principle. It makes its appeal not only to *hope*, which is the strongest, and to *gratitude*, which is the loveliest principle of our

nature, but also to *the assured certainty of success*, which must leave us inexcusable for our disobedience. "As those who are alive from the dead." Not merely does this teach us, that by the meritorious sacrifice and atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ are we alive *legally*, the sentence of the law having been endured by another. Not merely does it teach us that, being thus alive, we are bound gratefully to live unto Him who thus died for us, and by whom, also, we may be completely redeemed; but it teaches us, also, that if we will only believe on this Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as thus able, and willing, and mighty to save us, yea, "even to the uttermost," and though we be the "very chief of sinners," there is in him an omnific virtue by which we shall as certainly be made alive *spiritually*. We shall be made "alive unto God" as we have hitherto been alive only to sin. We shall be so wrought upon by the power of that Spirit, whose divine agency Christ has secured for us, by virtue of the everlasting covenant, that we shall become, as it were, "new creatures in Christ Jesus," "being born again" by a new and celestial birth. If any man will thus cast himself, in a believing acceptance of him, upon Christ Jesus, "he is a new creature," for "though he were dead he shall be made alive," even for evermore. Christ Jesus is thus our head, not only *legally*, but also *vitally*. He is the source, not only of justification from the guilt of sin, but of sanctification also from the power of sin. He has not only wrought out a work of grace *for* us, he also accomplishes a work of grace *within* us. He opens the heart. He sends into it his quickening

spirit. He imparts to the soul spiritual energy and life.

He, therefore, in whom we are to believe, has power also to enable and dispose our hearts to believe upon him. He, to whom we are to yield ourselves, is able also to make us willing for such a consecration; and he, to whose service we are to be given, is also ready to fit and prepare us for all its requisitions, and to "give us power to become the sons of God."

Are you, then, now disabled by sin, and far gone from original righteousness? Christ, who raised up the dead by his mighty power, is also able to quicken your souls, and to make them alive unto God. Are you under the dominion of sin, and bound down hand and foot by its iron fetters? Only yield yourselves to Christ, and those chains shall burst asunder, and fall from around you as did the cerements of the grave from around the renovated Lazarus, or as did the fetters from the freed limbs of the imprisoned apostles. He who speaks the word gives the power. He who commands also inspires. He who bids the dead come forth, breathes into him the breath of life, and empowers him to walk forth in newness of life. He who requires you to yield yourselves unto him, is able also to assure you of your success, for "sin shall not have dominion over us."

And are you under a debt of obligation to God's holy and righteous law, which you are incompetent to satisfy, and exposed to its vengeance, which you dare not confront? Nay, but my fellow-sinner, "you are not under the law, but under grace."

Yours is a dispensation of mercy, and not of justice. Yours is the offer of a free purchase and gratuitous pardon; and the law itself rejoices, since "mercy and truth have in Christ Jesus met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other."

Neither is yours "the spirit of bondage, that you should again fear," but the spirit of freedom and of love, that you should draw near in confidence, and even boldness. The law, as your creditor, has no demand; for, in the obedience of Christ, the debt has been more than liquidated.

If, then, there is any power in *hope* to inspire and animate the human breast; if there is any thing in *gratitude* to call forth its tenderest sensibilities; if there is aught in *the assurance of success* to inspire to noble daring; if these motives are powerful, and the objects to which they lead invaluable, then surely there is in this argument of the apostle the law of evangelical holiness, and all the strength of divine principle. And hence may you perceive the ignorance and fatuity of vain and conceited men, who charge the doctrine of a free, unlimited, and gratuitous mercy, with the consequences of licentiousness in practice, and weakness in motive, or who fear to proclaim to men, in all its fullness, "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." The spirit of the Christian is free and not constrained. It is spontaneous, and not forced. It is filial, and not slavish. It is cordial, and not formal. It is liberty, and not law. It is love, and not fear.

The condemnation wherewith the finally impenitent sinner shall be everlastingly condemned will be, not that he could not discover the knowledge of the

Most High, but that he would not come to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd ; not that he would not come unto God by his own power, which he could not do, but that he would not come unto God by Christ, who is "the way, the truth, and the life ;" not that he did not make himself whole when he was diseased, or alive when he was dead, or righteous when he was sinful, or holy when he was polluted, but that he would not come unto that blessed Saviour, who, as a physician, is able to restore him ; who, as almighty to save, can even quicken souls which are spiritually dead, and who of God is made unto every one that believeth wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and complete redemption.

Just, then, as inexcusable is the obstinate and self-destroyed sinner, as is the man who, when sick, refuses to send for a physician, or to receive his medicine when offered. Yes, just as everlastingly self-condemned will you be, my impenitent reader, who now in this, the day of thy merciful visitation, putteth away from thee the things that belong to thy peace. Only continue in thy present course, and soon it will be said of thee, "but now they are for ever hidden from thine eyes, for thou hast destroyed thyself." "Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked : I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou

mayest see." "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."