

Jesus, the Founder and Head of the Church

D. B. Ray
From *Baptist Succession: A Handbook of Baptist History, 1871*

In This Issue:

***Jesus, the Founder and Head of
the Church***

Page 1

The Devoted Pastor

Page 4

The Habit of Thankfulness

Page 12

On Purification

Page 15

***Getting Married from the Wife's
Standpoint***

Page 20

From the shores of America we have followed the footprints of the Baptist denomination back through England, Holland, Germany, the valleys of Piedmont, and Italy, up to the land of Judea, in the apostolic age. We have found our denominational chain of succession unbroken, though the same people were at different times called by different names. We have now reached the fountainhead of that mighty stream of Scriptural churches flowing down from Jerusalem through the desert gloom of more than eighteen centuries, and watering the famishing world with the pure Gospel of the River of Life. Here may be found the establishment of the Church—the light-house of the world—erected upon the Rock of Eternal Ages, and casting its beams of heavenly light far over the stormy seas of moral darkness, while the multitudes of mankind were enveloped in darkness.

Notwithstanding we have traced our denominational line of succession directly up to the apostolic age, yet this would avail us nothing if we are found destitute of those peculiar characteristics which distinguished the early churches. In chapter first, we laid down seven Baptist peculiar characteristics which now distinguish them from all the parties of Christendom. We now proceed to examine these peculiarities, one by one, by the light of Inspiration, to see if they are sustained by the Word of God and examples of the apostolic churches. It was remarked in the outset that no denomination, except the Baptist claims Jesus Christ, in person, as their founder and head. Other denominations

look to uninspired men for their origin. Does the Bible sustain the Baptist doctrine that Jesus Christ himself established his own church? To the law and testimony: The Lord spoke by the mouth of Daniel the prophet, and said: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (Dan. 2:44)

It is generally admitted that this prophecy points to Jesus Christ, who is the God of heaven who was manifested in the flesh. If this be correct, and it cannot be reasonably doubted, then it was declared by the prophet, that Jesus Christ, the God of heaven, should set up the everlasting kingdom. Does this mean that Abraham should set up the kingdom? That Moses should set it up? That John the Baptist should set it up? That Peter or all the apostles

together should set it up? This work was delegated neither to angels nor men. It was peculiarly the work of the God of heaven.

Some assume the position that the God of heaven established his kingdom on earth by proxy—by human agents—as the God of heaven built the temple by Solomon, and wrote the Bible by inspired men.

But it must be remembered, that when God performed these great works through human agents, those agents were especially appointed by God himself to perform their several labors. No one but Solomon was divinely authorized to erect the first temple, which was a type of the Church of Christ. It would have been rebellion for anyone else to have assumed to himself the right to build the temple. Even David, the highly favored king of Israel, dared not enter upon this work without divine permission. He earnestly desired to build the house of the Lord, but he would not lay one stone toward this work without the heavenly commission.

Those who wrote the Scriptures were moved to this work by the Holy Spirit. And in the Gospel dispensation, when John the forerunner baptized the penitent Jews, he could point to his commission from heaven, and say: "He that sent me to baptize with water." (John 1:33) Neither did the apostles assume to themselves the apostleship without the divine appointment; they were chosen and ordained by Jesus Christ. But where is the commission authorizing either angels or men to set up the kingdom of God? It cannot be found. In the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom of God was symbolized by the stone which "was cut out without hands." (Dan. 2:34)

This could not have been the case if God had delegated human agents to set up the kingdom. It is true that men were appointed to perform certain duties in connection with the establishment of the kingdom, but they were not appointed to set it up. John the Baptist was sent "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:17) John did not set up the kingdom. He simply prepared materials from which Jesus gathered the first members of the kingdom.

When was the kingdom set up? We answer, that the setting up of the kingdom, with its laws and ordinances, was not an instantaneous, but a gradual work. John preached the Gospel and prepared materials for the setting up of the kingdom, but Jesus Christ, soon after his own baptism in the river Jordan, chose the twelve apostles who were the first members of the organization known as the church or kingdom of God.

When John beheld the triumphant church as the bride, the Lamb's bride, under the symbol of the great city descending out of heaven from God, he saw "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:14) in the twelve foundation stones. This shows clearly that the twelve apostles were the first or foundation members of the Church of God. A kingdom or church must, of necessity, have a king to rule over it, subjects to be ruled, and laws to

be obeyed. Jesus Christ himself is the king, from everlasting to everlasting.

The absurd idea of the coronation of Jesus on the day of Pentecost is false and ridiculous. He possessed kingly glory with the Father before the world was; he was born King of the Jews; he was the "King of Israel" (John 1:49) when Nathaniel met him; and he declared himself to be a king at the bar of Pilate. (John 18:37) It is a settled point that Jesus Christ was king while on earth, before the day of Pentecost. And the king had subjects to be governed as soon as the apostles left all and followed him. The seventy disciples were soon added to the twelve, and the subjects of the king continued to increase during his ministry.

But when were the laws delivered for the government of the kingdom? As Moses came down and delivered the laws to govern national Israel, after he had fasted forty days on the Mount, so Jesus Christ, after he had fasted forty days during his temptation in the wilderness, began to deliver the laws for the government of his kingdom. The Savior continued to deliver these laws till the night of his betrayal.

After the Lord's Supper was instituted, then Jesus delivered the kingdom, as a complete organization, to the disciples in the following words: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22:29, 30) While Jesus Christ the king was personally present with the church, he transacted the business of the kingdom; but he was now about to depart to the Father, and he delivered to his disciples the kingdom, or the authority to execute the laws of the kingdom in the absence of the King. In the same night, in his dedication prayer, the Savior said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John 17:4)

The setting up of the kingdom was the work assigned by the Father to Jesus Christ; and as he declared that his work was finished, we must conclude that he had completed the setting up of his kingdom. This position is fully illustrated in the building of Solomon's Temple, which was a type of the Church of Christ. Solomon's Temple was built of stones and timbers prepared in the quarry and forests of Lebanon. Solomon did not bring rough materials and place them in the building in order to prepare them, as is done by modern workmen, but each stone and timber was first prepared for its place, and then placed in the temple, and the building progressed to completion without the sound of a hammer.

The temple was complete, in all of its parts, before it was publicly dedicated to the service of God by prayer and the

application of sacrificial blood; likewise the Church of Christ was a complete organization, all of its laws and ordinances had been delivered, before it was publicly dedicated by the prayer of Jesus, recorded in the 17th of John, and the application of his own blood which was shed upon the tree of the Cross.

The injunction requiring the apostles to tarry at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high, had no reference to the setting up of the kingdom, but to the power to speak with tongues and remember all the previous teaching of the Savior. The Baptist position, that Jesus Christ was the founder of his own church, is supported by the language of the Savior himself, as follows: "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18)

Did the Savior mean that Peter would build his church? That Luther would build his church? That Calvin would build his church? That John Wesley would build his church, or that Alexander Campbell would build his church? No. He declared, "I will build my church," and a church or kingdom built by anyone else is not the kingdom of Christ. As already remarked, the establishment of the church as a complete organization, was a gradual work from the calling of the apostles to the establishment of the Lord's Supper. This work had been begun before the Savior said, "upon this rock will I build my church," and he went forward to complete and establish his church upon himself as the only foundation which is able to support his kingdom.

The Baptist position has been fully sustained, that Jesus Christ is the founder of his own church, and that it was set up during his personal ministry on earth. The Savior said: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." (Luke 16: 16) This passage alone ought to silence every objector who denies that the kingdom was set up before Pentecost. The Savior began his work while John was living, and men pressed into the kingdom before the day of Pentecost.

Again, are the Baptists right in claiming Jesus Christ as the only head of the church? In ancient times the Baptists were called, by way of derision, the *Acephali* —the headless— because they acknowledged no human head. That Jesus Christ should be recognized as the head of his disciples, as their great teacher, was established by the voice of the

Father when speaking in the hearing of the affrighted disciples on the mount of transfiguration, he said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matt. 17:5) Any society which appeals to any other authority than that of Jesus Christ, in cases of discipline, does not recognize him as its head and lawgiver.

The same position is affirmed by the apostle Paul, when he declares that God "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness in him which filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:22, 23)

And again, the same apostle says: But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. 4:15, 16) Once more, writing to the Colossians, Paul affirms that "Jesus Christ is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." (Col. 1:18)

The Baptist position has been fully sustained, that Jesus Christ is the founder of his own church, and that it was set up during his personal ministry on earth.

From the foregoing, and many similar passages, it is abundantly proved that Jesus Christ alone is to be regarded as the founder and head of his own kingdom. The idea of the body of Christ, his church, having a human head, is utterly preposterous. In fact, whenever

any one presumes to occupy the place, either as the founder or head of the Church of Christ, he has partaken of the character and prerogative of Antichrist. We now reaffirm that the Baptist denomination is the only one on earth which claims Jesus Christ in person as its founder and head.

It is almost a work of supererogation to collect testimony on this point because, all who have even a slight acquaintance with Baptist doctrine, ought to know that it is a fundamental principle with Baptists to claim Jesus Christ as their only founder and head. But, as some are prone to pervert Baptist views, it may not be amiss to gather a few authorities on this important point.

In the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, it is said: "The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order, or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner." (*Rel. Denom. U. S.G.*)

B., p. 51) This is but the testimony of all the Baptists in the world.

The author of the Religious Encyclopedia, in this point testifies as follows: "They [Baptists] think that the Christian Church, properly so called, was not visibly organized in the family of Abraham, nor in the wilderness of Sinai, but by the ministry of Christ himself, and of his apostles; and that it was then constituted of such, and of such only, as made a

credible profession of repentance from sin and faith in the Savior." (*Religious Encyc.*, p. 188)

And on the same subject the Baptist Manual, published by the American Baptist Publication Society, remarks: "We acknowledge no founder but Christ." (*Bapt. Man.*, p. 82)

Thus we find that the Baptists of the present day possess the Bible characteristic that Jesus Christ in person set up his own kingdom.



The Devoted Pastor

Stephen P. Hill

From *The Baptist Preacher*, 1844

"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants, for Jesus' sake." (2 Cor. 4:5)

The institution of the gospel ministry, although at first sight, it appears a feeble and insignificant instrumentality, is notwithstanding, the means, which God in his infinite wisdom has selected for the salvation of the world. It hath pleased Him by what is deemed the foolishness' and weakness of preaching to save them that believe.' Not that all men who assume the sacred office are called and qualified of God to preach the gospel.

There were many in the time of the Apostles, who professed to be public teachers, and who from various motives of a selfish and unholy character, thrust themselves like fools into the place where angels fear to tread. Some like Simon Magus had no higher view of the awful work than that it was to be purchased with money. Some like Diotrophes, strove for it that they might have the pre-eminence. Some preached Christ from envy and strife and contention, supposing to add affliction to the Apostle's bonds. Such were "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ:—and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." (2 Cor. 11:13-14)

The truth is there was never anything good that was not capable of being counterfeited. There are not only hypocrites in the Church, but hypocrites in the ministry. It was a remark of that venerable man, Abraham Booth that

he feared there would be found a larger proportion of wicked ministers than of any other order of professing Christians. Certainly the Lord Jesus Christ includes this number among the many that will say to him in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:22-23)

Personal piety in the minister of the Gospel is the first qualification to be sought. The questions to be asked are not, Is he talented? Is he eloquent? Is he possessed of rare and remarkable gifts? Is he capable of attracting crowds? But, Is he pious? Has he grace? Does he love God? Are his motives pure? Has he a simple and single desire to honor Christ, and to do good to his fellow men? Nor, should a minister take his own piety for granted. He should examine himself. He should deal very rigidly with his heart. He should weigh well his motives in the balances of the Sanctuary. He should act independently of flesh and blood and try to please only God, who trieth the secrets of the inmost soul, who judgeth not as man judgeth, but who looketh on the heart. (1 Sam. 16:7)

He must take heed to himself. He must be pre-eminently a man of prayer. It has been said that three things make a minister - prayer, meditation and temptation. And it is

related of one early church figure that being asked what was the first thing in religion, he said, "Humility." When asked what the second was, he answered, "Humility." And what was the third, he still returned the same answer, "Humility." Now this is the point on which we would insist, in describing the character of the true minister of Jesus Christ, and the example of the Apostles and primitive ministers is before us, to this end, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

Let us consider:

I. WHAT THE APOSTLES DID NOT PREACH, or what is implied in preaching ourselves;

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN PREACHING CHRIST; and

III. THE FACT THAT MINISTERS SHOULD CONSIDER THEMSELVES as the servants of the people for Jesus' sake.

I. WHAT THE APOSTLES DID NOT PREACH, or what is implied in preaching ourselves.

1. We preach ourselves if we preach to gain a living.

In saying this, I would not be understood to say, that ministers should not have a living as well as others. Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." (1 Cor. 9:14) "For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes?...If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things?" (1 Cor. 9:9, 10, 11)

Indeed no plainer proposition can be made out, either from the Scriptures, or from common experience, not only that the pulpit, is worth more than it costs, but that nothing has such righteous claims to a generous and adequate support. When we look at all that religious institutions have done for us, temporally as well as spiritually, we must feel convinced that the pulpit is not in debt to the people, but the people to the pulpit; and when we carefully read the Word of God, we shall learn that nothing is in stricter accordance with his will, and that no principle is clearer laid down than that "the labourer is worthy of his hire." (Luke 10:7)

But if he be a mere hireling, who has desired to be put into the priest's office that he may get a piece of bread. If he chooses the ministry as he would a profession or a trade because thereby he may have the means of subsistence. If he takes the oversight of the flock for filthy lucre's sake, and makes the work of God a sinecure — then truly he may be ranked first in the description of those who preach themselves, whose aims are selfish, whose motives are mercenary. They prophesy for reward, and divine for money, and under a cloak of sanctity they hide a heart of covetousness. "Woe unto them for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward." (Jude 1:11)

2. They preach themselves, who preach for popular applause.

Alas! How many it is to be feared preach from this miserable motive, and what a lamentable tendency there is in the people to feed this pernicious flame! To have men's persons in admiration, and to waft perfumes to the idol of popular favor! Now if a man preaches for fame, if he preaches to display his talents, his fine voice, or fine person, or his commanding eloquence, he evidently preaches himself.

Now if a man preaches for fame, if he preaches to display his talents, his fine voice, or fine person, or his commanding eloquence, he evidently preaches himself.

It is of course necessary to the successful ministration of the Gospel, that the preacher should be possessed of some gifts; that he should have learning: the more the better. He should be especially mighty in the Scriptures; and he may be an eloquent man. He may even employ in his preaching, the

aids of elocution and the graces of style.

But let him make all his acquirements, subservient to the great end of his ministry, the salvation of souls. Let him use the ornaments of literature and learning as the surgeon does the polish of his instruments. Let him beware lest he pervert the use of these things by making them minister to his own vain glory. It is a great matter to be able to say with the Apostle: "For neither at any time used we flattering words as ye know... nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others." (1 Thess. 2:5, 6)

3. Preaching ourselves implies again, that we preach to build up ourselves, or our sect or party.

This is a motive which cannot be right in the sight of God. We see much of this species of zeal in our times. "Men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after

them." (Acts. 20:30) The Apostle saw it in his time and rebuked it. The spirit of sectarianism, the spirit of party zeal, the spirit of supposed superiority, the spirit of selfseeking on the part of the minister, and the spirit of favoritism on the part of the people: "Now this I say, that every one of you saith I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:12, 13) "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?...Who then is Paul? and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" (1 Cor. 3:3, 5)

How preposterous, in this view, do those arrogant claims appear, which are set up exclusively for our particular Church as though no moral excellence or salvation could exist out of it: and how vain to suppose that certain forms and ceremonies are essential to the true office of a Christian minister. The pastors of primitive times, were only the brethren of other Christians, and though they were to be esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake, yet they possessed, they assumed no power over the consciences, or the liberties of the people. Their influence arose from their character, and from the pious and humble manner with which they performed the functions of their sacred office.

In the New Testament the pastor is a plain man surrounded by a number of individuals who form themselves into a voluntary society, that they may mutually enjoy the ordinances of Christ, and who have appointed him to be their officiating minister. In this view of the subject, Christianity fully manifests its character as a religion of the heart, as distinguished by its simplicity and spirituality, and as being the choice of those who really love its name. The moment the idea of secular greatness and magnificence was suffered to possess the mind of Christians, the gold changed, and the most fine gold became dim. Then the ministerial office ceased to require personal qualifications, and assumed powers, which the Apostles neither exercised nor professed. Personal piety, and holy zeal for the salvation of men, ceased to be regarded as necessary for the sacred office, and successive corruptions, subverted its spirituality and its sacred design.

II. But let us pass to notice what is implied in preaching Christ Jesus the Lord.

It is, in other words, to preach the truth of the Gospel. In this the Lord Jesus has a prominent part. The Gospel concerns him from first to last. He is the author and he is the finisher of our whole faith. (Heb. 12:2) He is the sun of the whole system, and is emphatically the truth. So that in

preaching the truth, we must preach him; and he who does not preach him, does not preach the Gospel. This is the grand theme of the Christian ministry.

The topics on which we are to dwell, the subjects which are to employ our meditations, are his person, his character, his work, and his laws. In view of these, the Apostle with all his pre-eminent abilities and gifts declared that he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. (Phil. 3:8) And so rapt was he in the sublime discoveries of the Gospel; so completely superior was he raised by them above all selfish considerations and personal aims that he determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Cor. 2:2) This was the subject matter of the Apostle's preaching. Not that he undervalued the moral precepts of Christianity, or that they did not find a place in his ministrations, for these were important parts of the Gospel, but still subordinate and not the essential parts of it. They revolved around it like planets and satellites, but He was the central luminary that gave them all their beauty, and light and life.

To preach then Christ Jesus the Lord, is to preach the whole truth, in distinction from a part, or a single part, on all occasions. A person for instance may preach the morality of the Gospel, and if he preach nothing else he cannot be said to preach the Gospel any more than the physician can be said to be master of the healing art, who would recommend one, and the same prescription to every patient, no matter what the nature of his disease. It is also to preach the whole truth on proper occasions in distinction from the whole on every occasion. Christ himself never unfolded all his truth, nor what he did unfold, at one time. "I have many things," said he to his Disciples, "to say to you but ye cannot bear them now." (John 16:12) What should we think of a physician, who being called to visit the sick, should administer the whole quantity of his medicines at one time? But the truth at proper times, and under proper circumstances, is to be unfolded, as it may be adapted to the case of the people.

I need not say that this includes the being and perfections of God; the character and condition of man; the atonement and divinity of Jesus Christ; His glorious character, and perfect righteousness, and availing blood, as the only ground of a sinner's hope; the blessings of the salvation he has procured; its comforts, its privileges, its duties, its requirements, its prospects and rewards, with the awful guilt of rejecting it, and the fearful punishment of the impenitent. Nor should we omit to teach very clearly and strenuously the nature and necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit as the glorious and efficient agent of the regeneration, and of the progressive sanctification of the

soul. We must distinguish between his operations on the heart, and the mere movements of animal passion; between true and false, or spurious religion; warn against the ever varying dangers that are around the flock; lead them into the pastures of safety and feed them with knowledge and understanding. The whole truth, must also in order to be preached faithfully, be applied to the conscience and to the heart.

It is not enough that it be preached merely; it should be fastened and clenched to the heart. Its adaptedness to the wants and condition of men must be shewn; the lights and shades of different characters must be drawn; and the nature and peril of particular sins be exposed. The truth must be separated from error; a discriminating line must be drawn between them at the place where their varying colors mingle. The beauty of holiness, so apt to become dim in the heart of even the best, must be brought out till it is seen and felt, in contrast with the hatefulness of vice. The corruptions that gather around the truth must be removed, like the earth that conceals and buries the gold in its mountain bed, and the precious ore be refined of its dross and alloy, and applied to a valuable purpose.

All this, and much more than this, is implied in preaching Christ faithfully, and all this is to be done in every possible way. The duties of the pastoral office are so diversified that an enumeration of them would be impossible. They lie in every department of labor, and are often of the most arduous and depressing kind. If an inspired Apostle, in view of the important trust committed to him, exclaimed, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:16) with what a crushing weight must it fall upon the shoulders and heart of those not similarly privileged.

Besides preaching the Gospel, the truth of God, faithfully, impartially, entirely; besides illustrating, enforcing and applying the Word of life in the pulpit, he must follow it up with anxious and prayerful, and exemplary piety, at all other times. Not only in public, must he declare the whole counsel of God, but in private, he must study the peculiar circumstances, the individual wants of his flock, adapting himself with heavenly skill, to each particular case. There are the self-righteous, the indolent, the careless, the self-sufficient, the spiritually proud, the formal, the worldly, the backslider, the inquirer, the tempted, the afflicted, that require instruction, reproof; and advice, adapted to the minute and diversified forms which their several cases may assume. There is the conference room, the Bible class, the Sunday school, over which he must cast the light of an affectionate superintendence. There are duties all along the retired walks of domestic life.

The Pastor is a sympathizing friend. He rejoices in your prosperity, and he weeps in your adversity. In the hour of bereavement, and sickness, and death, he is near with the balm, the only adequate one, of consolation. He seeks to guide, and that in every way, your feet, and the feet of your children, in the way of peace, and in paths of everlasting life. What an aggregate of labor! Who can rightly estimate it? "He watches for your souls as one that must give account." (Heb. 13:17) Chrysostom says he never read these words without being shaken as with an earthquake; and Quesnel remarks, that the pastor who trembles not at these words, should tremble at his own blindness and insensibility.

Now when you take in connection with this amount of duty, the time the Pastor must find for the professional and for the devotional reading of the Scriptures; the attention that must be given to the interests of religion beyond the field of his own immediate labors; the time that must be given to the physical and moral wants of his own family; the allowance that must be made for his health and the care that he must take of his own heart and the labor he must use over his own soul; you will feel that his is indeed a work under which he would certainly sink, were not the arms of Omnipotence pledged to uphold him.

III. But we notice lastly the view in which ministers should regard themselves: "ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

Ministers are not the servants of the people in such a sense as implies inferiority, or their having authority over him. On the contrary, what authority there is, is on the other side: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." (Heb. 13:17)

But they are the servants of the people, inasmuch as their whole time and powers are required to be devoted to the spiritual good of their flock. Is the minister a watchman? He is required to hear the word from Jehovah's mouth and warn the people from Him. He watches for souls as one that must give account. Is he a shepherd? He is sent to seek the lost, to restore the wandering, to feed the flock of God, the sheep and the lambs of Christ. Is he a steward? It is required in him that he should be found faithful. Is he a ruler, a guide, an overseer? He is bound to train, to regulate, and direct the Church of God.

It is his duty to preside in the Church. And this requires the utmost prudence and wisdom. Amidst a variety of different spirits and tempers, how arduous the labor of keeping

things in proper order! How much righteousness, and godliness, and faith, and firmness, and meekness, and patience, and forbearance, and love, need we here! The less of self-importance and tenaciousness in carrying a point we manifest, and the more of respect and disinterested regard for our brethren, the better we shall succeed. Is he a laborer? He must work with all diligence in his Master's vineyard, until the night of death shall bring his reward. Is he a builder? He must be very careful of what materials he builds the spiritual temple, since every man's work must be tried of what sort it is. Is he a pilot? How well acquainted should he be with his chart, and how vigilant in his trust!

Now it is necessary that the people should feel that their pastor is in all various ways laboring for their good. They must if possible be constrained to feel a conviction, that in all that he does, he is actuated by no mercenary views, or selfish purposes; laud money, or fame, or the gratification of his personal pride, is no part of his object; that he habitually and sincerely seeks not their wealth, or their applause, but their salvation. Our rejoicing should be this, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." (2 Cor. 1:12)

We should be able to say boldly and without fear of contradiction we seek not yours but you, and "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." (2 Cor. 12:15) "But we are made manifest unto God and we trust also are manifest in your consciences" (2 Cor. 5:11) Let us then in this connection, consider the mutual ties subsisting between a pastor and his flock. These are expressed throughout the Epistles in many terms of endearment, remarkable for their tenderness and force. It is obvious from these passages:

First. That they are created by the love of Christ. We cannot love him that begat, without loving those that are begotten. We cannot love the original which we have not seen, without loving the image which we have seen. We cannot love Christ without loving his people. They were objects of infinite love by Him, long before a single principle of attachment towards them was implanted in the hearts of others. He loved them with an everlasting love. (Jer. 31:3) He loved them to the death. "I am the good Shepherd," he says, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (John 10:11) Like him it will be our anxious endeavour "to seek and save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10)

The love of Christ constraineth us to lay down our lives for the brethren. The soul is an object of inestimable value. The sufferings and death, of "the Lamb of God," have endeared it to the affections of all his true servants, and stamped on it an importance which transcends every other. Those whom he has redeemed by his blood, are so dear to him, that he has identified their interests with his own; and his ministers will also feel that they are identified with theirs.

How beautiful was this affection exemplified in the case of the great Apostle, who had once breathed out "threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." (Acts 9:1)

What does he say to the Corinthians? "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you." (2 Cor. 2:4) "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." (2 Cor. 12:15)

In what terms does he write to the Galatians? "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." (Gal. 4:19)

And what to the Ephesians? "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—that ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." (Eph. 3:14, 17, 18, 19)

How does he address the Philippians? "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:8)

And what was his language to the Thessalonians? "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children, so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you not, the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. And ye know, how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God who bath called you unto his kingdom and glory." (1 Thess. 2:7, 8, 11, 12)

Thus the tenderness of a father, of a nurse, is made to represent the affectionate solicitude which a pastor feels for his people.

Secondly. The ties of such a relationship are strengthened by exercise. This is a natural result. The minister who has been long accustomed to labor for a people's good — to watch and weep and pray for them, under all the changing occurrences of life, becomes more and more attached to the objects of his love, in consequence of their continual action on his heart. The mother finds her affections insensibly fastening themselves stronger and closer around a beloved child, in consequence of her frequent anxieties and watching and efforts for its welfare. Just so, the pastor, that has the best interests of his people at heart, will acquire a sensibility for them, more intense than any with which he feels for himself.

In the different scenes which he is called to witness and to soften, whether it be in domestic prosperity or affliction, his heart is open to sympathy. It is his privilege to impart relief. His very character, as a messenger of divine mercy, makes it his duty to minister in spiritual things. He is to operate on the affections. His office implies everything tender, attractive, and endearing; and he will be successful in his ministry of benevolence, in proportion to his lively sense of the differing circumstances of his flock. He is supposed to be acquainted deeply with the experience of the heart. He studies and feels its wants—kindles with its hopes—struggles with its fears—endeavors to understand and to explain the causes of its disquietude—to know and to tell where it may find repose.

Hence, the endearment of his relation and the strength which it continually acquires. An affecting illustration of this tenderness is exhibited in the parting interview of Paul with the Church at Ephesus. His appeal to them on that occasion cannot be too often considered. "Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." (Acts 20: 18-20, 31) Such was the Apostle Paul, the living example of ministerial tenderness and fidelity. Such were the grounds on which he appealed to the sympathies of his ministerial charge.

The minister is the servant of the people in view of the benefit and consolation derived from God's providential dealings with him which they derive from his very afflictions. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," says the Apostle Paul, "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our

tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings...or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." (2 Cor. 1:3-6)

Such was the spirit of faith with which the Apostle regarded even the most painful tribulations of his life; such was his confidence in their author, and such his satisfaction with their end, that he bursts out in praise while reviewing, nay even in the midst of those very tribulations. Nor for himself alone is he grateful, but for those to whom he ministers, as having mutual participation with him in the consolations as well as sufferings which he is called to experience. And he intimates that one great design of his own afflictions, is, that he may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith he himself is comforted of God.

That is to say, the benefit of his personal experience in suffering is reflected upon others who are called to suffer, in that he is made more capable of sympathizing with their trials, and of communicating to them the consolation which aboundeth to himself by Christ. Thus whether he was afflicted, it was for their present and ultimate good, not only for the former reason, but because the patient endurance of the same sufferings which he also suffered, had the same happy and saving tendency in them; or whether he was comforted, it was, for similar reasons, for their consolation and salvation.

On these reasons we need not now enlarge. Everyone who perceives the operation of moral causes can readily understand why these afflictions of the ministry were calculated to work such beneficial effects in the body of Christ.' If sanctified by the Spirit of God to minister and people, the blessed influence of these dispensations will be manifest to all. Their mutual prayers will evince their mutual interests, and common sufferings will create common sympathies and ties. And let it be observed, that these ties extend beyond this life, to eternity.

Not only is it, writes the Apostle, for your present consolation, but for your future salvation, that we thus suffer. Sent by the same Author, designed for the same end, borne with the same patience, sanctified by the same Spirit, endeared by the same Redeemer's blood, and sweetened by the joys of a mutual faith, "our afflictions, though not for the present joyous, but grievous, (Heb. 12:11)—are yet but for the moment, and work out for us a

far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (2 Cor. 4:17)

In this heavenly discipline, selfishness has no place. The anxiety of a faithful minister for himself is swallowed up in his anxiety for the eternal happiness of his people. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." (1 Thess. 2:19-20) And thus, to use the words of Rutherford to his flock, my witness is above, that your heaven would be two heavens to me, and the salvation of you all, as two salvations to me.

These views of the Gospel ministry will sufficiently account for the extreme anxiety and tenderness of those whose honor and privilege it is to share it; and of the deeply affectionate regard towards such of those who are the subjects of its ministrations. In former times, nothing could be stronger, than the endearing bond of attachment, which united a faithful shepherd to his charge. Read the Epistles of the great Apostle—we would say again to all—if you would behold an exhibition of ministerial endearment.

Consider what praises, what prayers, he offers on behalf of the saints, for their mercies and for their tribulations. See how ready he is at all times "to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." (Rom. 12:15) Reflect on his longings after "you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:8) Think of the anxiety of his sleepless nights, implied in Heb. 13:17; his "watching often," his "labors even to weariness," his "striving as in a conflict," that they may be comforted and enlarged.

Taken from them "sometimes in presence, but never in heart," he longs to see them that he may impart to them some spiritual gift; (Rom. 1:11) and whether seeing them, or hearing of their affairs, he can at no time be satisfied unless assured that they "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Phil. 1:27) And to such an extent did he carry his sympathies toward them that he declares, if he was offered up, if his life was made a sacrifice upon the service of their faith, he should joy and rejoice with them all.'

"How beautiful and holy," then, in the language of Bloomfield,

"in all its perfection of obligation, is the spiritual connection which subsists between a faithful minister of Christ and the flock which he is appointed to feed. How many are the methods by which that bond of affection may be more closely drawn! Many an anxious care does the faithful and vigilant Pastor experience for

the welfare of those who are endeared to him by the sacred sympathy of spiritual affinity; many a sorrow for failures in which the world thinks he has no interest; and many a joy for blessings which he alone perceives descending upon the heads of those whom he loves in the Lord."

Finally, I come to ask you to turn with me aside a moment, to witness a scene of more than ordinary solemnity. It is the deathbed of a Christian Pastor. He desires, before his voice is forever silenced, to address to you one word more of affectionate exhortation. His heart, before it is forever still, would throw before you, once more, its tenderest sympathies.

He who thus seeks you, sincerely loves you, and has your truest interests at heart. He watches for your soul, as one that must give an account, and he trembles under the dreadful responsibility of his charge. The subjects, on which he is anxious, in the simplicity and godly sincerity of the truth, to speak, are eternal realities. They deeply concern your happiness, for the present and for all future periods. He is commissioned from God, with a message to you, and as God's faithful ambassador he would deliver it, as the last he will ever have to communicate, in the conviction of its immeasurable importance. And oh! If it be true, that "a deathbed is the detector of the heart," you may be sure, that the words which he will speak are the words of honesty and soberness. Let us approach the spot. It has nothing repulsive.

God smiles on him, and he smiles on death. He is in near prospect of perfect purity, everlasting freedom, full and uninterrupted joy. The doctrine of the resurrection, and faith in his happy interest in that doctrine, sustain him in his final hour, and make him rejoice in the sacrifices which he made to attain to this triumphant consummation. Reclining on his last pillow, his heart is possessed with "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." (Phil. 4:7)

The termination of his earthly toils and conflicts hastens on, and like the weary laborer, at the close of day, he waits to quit the field and go to "be ever with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:17) Hear his language—"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day." (2 Tim. 4:4-8)

But to you, over whose spiritual interests I have watched, I am anxious to address a final appeal. My motives for assuming the responsibilities of the sacred office, as far as

with the closest self-examination, I have been able to know them, were love to Christ, and an ardent regard for your eternal welfare; it was indeed "In weakness and in fear, and much trembling," (1 Cor. 2:3) that I ventured on such holy ground. Yet made willing by divine grace to forego the gratifications of a world that perisheth; I spurned the allurements of ambition, and the pursuit of pleasure, and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy them, for a season. (Heb. 11:25)

What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. And as worldly inducements had not influenced me in my choice, so neither could worldly discouragements, afterward, lead me to swerve from it. The scoffs of the wicked, the unkindness of false brethren, depressed spirits, a broken constitution and a premature grave— none of these things moved me. I panted for usefulness, and under a weight of conviction which I could not shake off, I felt that necessity was laid upon me, yea "woe was me if I preached not the gospel." (1 Cor. 9:16)

Trusting in him who had called me by his grace, I went forth, and ye yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that our exhortation was not of deceit nor of uncleanness, nor in guile. But as we were allowed of God, to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we spake not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth the heart...But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children, so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but our own souls also, because ye were dear unto us." (1 Thess. 2:3-8)

Now therefore, once more suffer the word of exhortation. The welfare of your soul, as it has been the object of anxious solicitude in life, so is it the absorbing desire in death. Believing in its immeasurable worth, and its alarming exposure to perdition, how can it be otherwise, than that the tongue should employ its latest power of utterance, in warning you to "flee from the wrath to come." (Matt. 3:7) If the value of a thing is to be estimated, by its susceptibility of pleasure or of pain, and by the length of its duration, then the soul must be of all things most valuable. This is the seat of life and of feeling, and it can never die.

The body is but a perishable tenement erected for its temporary abode. Its best and brightest properties are fading and corruptible. If then you look upon this, to admire its strength or beauty, which at the best, are but

the advantages of an hour, how much more, should you prize the nobler, the imperishable attributes of the soul! It is the inhabitant, and not the habitation that matters - the essential being, and not the mere outward veil that covers it.

When you remember too, how soon and how suddenly sickness may wither all your earthly comforts and hopes, how can you build with confidence upon them? When you see the emptiness and delusion of the world, how can you pursue, with so much ardor, its miserable pleasures? Why give your affections to objects so uncertain of attainment, so unsatisfying even if gained?—To riches, when they take to themselves wings, and flee away; to fame, when it vanishes like a shadow from the grasp; pleasure, when its gayest scenes, only load the hours of reflection, with self-reproach and agonizing shame? Alas! The fashion of this world passeth away, and he alone is wise, who seeks an inheritance in the world that is to come.

I see you pursuing phantoms, blinded and led captive by the father of lies, at his will. I warn you of your infatuation and danger. I address your season and your conscience. I place before you the counsels of heavenly truth, unfolding the sad, but true description of your character, pointing you to pardoning blood, and a reconciled God, —bringing "life and immortality to light" (2 Tim. 1:10) and setting before you alike the promises and threatenings of Him who is almighty, in the one life, and in the other death. And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. "Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:26-27)

Such, however imperfect, may be supposed to be the dying appeal of a faithful Pastor. How tremendous is that account, which he will have at least to give of himself, and of those over whom he has labored in the Lord He is "a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish, To the one, he is the savor of life unto life; and to the other of death unto death. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:15-16)

Happy will he be, if when the chief Shepherd shall appear, he may behold the countenances of his flock beaming in glory, and hear their voices raised in the praises of God and the Lamb; and bowing with them before the everlasting throne, he "may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." (Col. 1:28)



The Habit of Thankfulness

John A. Broadus
From *Sermons and Addresses*, 1887

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 Thess. 5:18)

We hear a great deal said about habits. But it nearly always means bad habits. Why should we not think and speak much about good habits? They are as real, and almost as great, a power for good as bad habits are for evil. We do our work largely by the aid of habit. How much this helps one in playing on an instrument, or writing on a type-writer. Through many a familiar conjunction of notes or of letters the fingers fly with the very smallest amount of attention and exertion.

Many a man who is growing old will every day get through an amount of work that surprises his friends, and it is possible because he works in the lines of lifelong habit. Besides, the only possible way to keep out bad habits is to form good habits. By a necessity of our nature, whatever is frequently and at all regularly done becomes habitual. If a man has been the slave of evil habits, and wishes to be permanently free, he must proceed by systematic and persevering effort to establish corresponding good habits. The education of our children, the self-education of our own early life, consists mainly in the formation of intellectual and moral habits. I think we ought to talk more upon this subject, in public and in private—upon the power and blessing of good habits. And the theme of this discourse will be the habit of thankfulness to God.

I. Consider the value of the habit of thankfulness.

It tends to quell repining. We are all prone, especially in certain moods, to complain of our lot. Every one of us has at some time or other imagined, and perhaps declared, that he has a particularly hard time in this world. It is to be hoped that in other moods we are heartily ashamed of ourselves for such repining. But how prevent its recurrence? A most valuable help will be the habit of thankfulness to God. Then if a fretful, repining spirit begins to arise, just in the middle, perhaps, of some complaining sentence, we shall suddenly change to an expression of thankfulness—and perhaps end with laughing at ourselves for the folly of such repining.

It tends to enhance enjoyment. We all know that when we

receive a gift, with any true sentiment and any suitable expression of thankfulness, the reaction of gratitude augments our gratification.

It serves to soothe distress. Persons who are greatly afflicted, and not wont to be thankful, sometimes find the memory of past joys only an aggravation of present sorrow. Far otherwise with one who has learned to be habitually thankful. For him the recollection of happier hours is still a comfort.

It helps to allay anxiety. Did you ever notice what the apostle says to the Philippians? "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:6-7) Notice carefully that we are to prevent anxiety by prayer as to the future with thanksgiving for the past.

It cannot fail to deepen repentance. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." (Rom. 2:4) When we are fully in the habit of thankfully observing and recalling the loving kindnesses and tender mercies of our heavenly Father, this will make us perceive more clearly, and lament more earnestly, the evil of sin against him; and what is more, this will strengthen us to turn from our sins to his blessed service.

It has as one necessary effect to brighten hope. "I love to think on mercies past, And future good implore," is a very natural conjunction of ideas. If we have been wont to set up Ebenezers upon our path of life, then every glance backward along these mile-stones of God's mercy will help us to look forward with more of humble hope.

It serves to strengthen for endurance and exertion. We all know how much more easily and effectively they work who work cheerfully; and the very nutriment of cheerfulness is found in thankfulness as to the past and hope as to the future.

If this habit of thankfulness to God is so valuable, it is certainly worth our while to consider:

II. Occasions of habitual thankfulness.

It is obvious that these are numerous and various beyond description. But we may find profit in summing them all up under two heads:

1. We should be thankful to God for everything that is pleasant. No one will dispute that proposition in theory, whatever may be our practice. The apostle James tells us that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17) We have so much occasion to speak about the religious benefits of affliction, to dwell on the blessed consolations of Christian piety amid the sorrows of life, that we are in danger of overlooking the other side.

It is a religious duty to enjoy to the utmost every rightful pleasure of earthly existence. He who gave us these bodies, so "fearfully and wonderfully made," (Ps. 139:14) who created us in his own image, with spirits of such keen appetency and longing aspiration, desires that we should find life a pleasure. As already intimated, we work best at what we enjoy. It is highly important that the young should enjoy what they are studying; and while this may, to some extent, be accomplished by giving them studies they fancy, it is also possible that by well guided efforts they should learn to relish studies to which they were at first disinclined. I sometimes hear young married people say, "We are going to housekeeping, and then we can have what we like." I sometimes feel at liberty to reply, "Yes, to a certain extent you may, but what is far more important and interesting, you will be apt to like what you have." To have what we like is for the most part an impossible dream of human life; to like what we have is a possibility, and not only a duty, but a high privilege.

2. We should be thankful to God for everything that is painful. Well, that may seem to be stating the matter too strongly. We can help ourselves by noticing that whatever may be possible in that direction, the apostle has not in the text enjoined quite so much as the phrase just used would propose. He does not say, "for everything give thanks," though that might be enjoined; he says, "in everything give thanks." Now that, surely, need not seem impossible.

We may always be thankful that the situation is no worse. The old philosophy was wise and good: "Bless the Lord, 'taint no worse." We always deserve that it should be worse, no matter how sorrowful may be the actual

situation. We can never allow ourselves to question that with some persons it has been worse. Let us always bless the Lord, that but for his special mercies it would be worse with us today. I recall an unpublished anecdote of President Madison, told to me in the region where he lived and died. It may be mentioned, by the way, that Mr. Madison was a rarely excellent and blameless man. His biographer told me that, notwithstanding all the political conflicts of a life so long and so distinguished, he found no indication that Mr. Madison's private character had ever been in the slightest degree assailed—an example which it would perhaps be difficult to parallel.

In his old age the venerable ex-President suffered from many diseases, took a variety of medicines and contrived to live notwithstanding. An old friend from the adjoining county of Albemarle sent him a box of vegetable pills of his own production, and begged to be informed whether they did not help him. In due time came back one of those carefully-written and often felicitous notes for which Mr. Madison and Mr. Jefferson were both famous, to somewhat the following effect: "My dear friend. I thank you very much for the box of pills. I have taken them all; and while I cannot say that I am better since taking them, it is quite possible that I might have been worse if I had not taken them, and so I beg you to accept my sincere acknowledgments." Really, my friends, this is not a mere pleasantry. There is always something, known or unknown, but for which our condition might have been worse, and at the very least, that something constitutes an occasion for gratitude. Whatever we may have lost, there is always something left.

As already observed, our present sufferings may well set in brighter relief the remembered happiness of other days. And though men are prone to make this an occasion of repining, yet it ought to be an occasion of thankfulness. Not long ago a young husband spoke to me, with bitter sorrow, about the death of his wife. I suggested that he might well be thankful for having lived several happy years in the most intimate companionship with one so lovely; and that in coming years, when the blessed alchemy of memory should make her character seem all-perfect in his eyes, he might well find pathetic and ineffable pleasure in the memory of that early time. We all know how to repeat, amid sorrowful recollections, those words of Tennyson, "O, death in life, the days that are no more." But it is surely possible so to cherish blessed and inspiring memories as to invert the line, and say, "O, life in death, the days that are no more!"

There is a still more important view of this matter.

It has become a blessed commonplace of Christian philosophy that our sufferings may, through the grace of God, be the means of improving our character. Such a result is by no means a matter of course. Sufferings may be so borne, with such bitter repining and selfish brooding, as greatly to damage character. But the Scriptures assure us that devout souls may regard affliction as but a loving Father's chastisement, meant for their highest good. In all the ages there has never been a pious life that did not share this experience. To be exempt from it would, as the Bible expressly declares, give clear proof that we are not children of God at all.

Many of us could testify today, if it were appropriate, that the sorrows of life have by God's blessing done us good. All of us have occasion to lay more thoroughly to heart the lessons of affliction. And oh! If we do ever climb the shining hills of glory, and look back with clearer vision upon the strangely mingled joys and sorrows of this earthly life, then how deeply grateful we shall be for those very afflictions, which at the time we find it so hard to endure. If we believe this to be true, and it is a belief clearly founded on Scripture, then can we not contrive, even amid the severest sufferings, to be thankful for the lessons of sorrow, for the benefits of affliction?

Remember, too, how our seasons of affliction make real to us the blessed thought of Divine compassion and sympathy. When you look with parental anguish upon your own suffering child, then you know, as never before, the meaning of those words, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." (Ps. 103:13) When you find the trials of life hard to bear, then it becomes unspeakably sweet to remember that our high priest can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having been "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15) Thus affliction brings to the devout mind blessed views of the Divine character, which otherwise we should never fully gain.

Besides all this, remember that the sufferings of this present life will but enhance, by their contrast, the blessed exemptions of the life to come. A thousand times have I remembered the text of my first funeral sermon, "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:4) These are the present things now—all around us and within us, but the time is coming when they will be the former things, quite passed away. You know the use which skilful composers make of discords in music. The free use of them is among the characteristics of Wagner, but they are often found in our simplest tunes for public worship. The jarring discord is solved, and makes

more sweet the harmony into which it passes. And oh! The time is coming when all the pains and pangs of this present life will seem to have been only "a brief discordant prelude to an everlasting harmony."

My friends, are you optimists or pessimists? Let me explain to the children what those words mean. The Latin word *optimus* means best, and *pessimus* means worst. So an Optimist is one who maintains that this is the best possible world; and a Pessimist, that it is the worst possible world. Now which are you, an optimist or a pessimist? For my part, I am neither. Surely no man can really imagine that this is the best possible world, save in some brief moment of dreamy forgetfulness. And as to thinking it the worst possible world—well, a person would have to be uncommonly well off who could afford to think that.

I read, some time ago, a biography of Arthur Schopenhauer, the celebrated German pessimist. I was not surprised to find that his father left him an independent fortune, and he had no painful bodily diseases. He could afford to spend his time in trying to persuade everybody to be miserable, in building pessimistic theories. But most of us have so many real toils and troubles that we are instinctively driven to search for the bright side of life, to seek all possible consolation and cheer. Agassiz had "no time to make money;" and few of us will ever have time to be pessimists. No, we cannot begin to say with Pope, "Whatever is, is right;" nor yet to reverse it, "Whatever is, is wrong." But whether poetical or not, it will be a very true and valuable saying if we read, "Whatever is, you must make the best of it." And just in proportion as we strive to make the best of everything, we shall find it practicable to carry out the apostle's injunction, "In every thing give thanks."

One of the great early Christian preachers was Chrysostom. His motto was, "Glory to God for all things." He probably derived it from the story of Job, which was his favorite subject of devout meditation, and is mentioned in a large proportion of his eloquent sermons. You might fancy that it was easy for the young man to say, "Glory to God for all things," when he was growing up in Antioch, the idol of his widowed mother, with ample means, and the finest instructors of the age. You might think it easy to say this when he was a famous preacher, in Antioch, and afterwards in Constantinople, when ten thousand people crowded the great churches to hear him; though such a preacher could not fail to suffer profoundly through compassion for the perishing, and anxious effort to reclaim the wandering, and sympathy for all the distressed, as well as with many a pang of grief and shame that he did not preach better.

But Chrysostom continued to say this, when the Court at Constantinople turned against him, when the wicked Empress became his enemy, and compassed his banishment again and again. When his friends would go to far Armenia and visit him in exile, he would say to them, "Glory to God for all things." When he was sent to more distant and inhospitable regions, so as to be out of reach of such pious visiting, his letters were apt to end, "Glory to God for all things." And when the soldiers were dragging him through winter snows, utterly worn out, he begged to be taken into a little wayside church that he might die. His last words, as he lay on the cold stone floor, were, "Glory to God for all things."

III. How may the habit of thankfulness be formed and maintained? Well, how do we form other habits?

If you wish to establish the habit of doing a certain thing, you take pains to do that thing, upon every possible occasion, and to avoid everything inconsistent therewith. Now, then, if you wish to form the habit of thankfulness, just begin by being thankful—not next year, but to-night; not for some great event or experience, but for whatever has just occurred, whatever has been pleasant, yes, and we did say, for whatever has been painful. You certainly can find some special occasion for thanksgiving this very night. And then go on searching for matter of gratitude, and just continuing to be thankful, hour by hour, day by day. Thus the habit will be formed, by a very law of our nature.

But remember that good habits cannot be maintained without attention. They require a certain self-control, a

studious self-constraint. Is not the habit of thankfulness worth taking pains to maintain? The older persons present remember Ole Bornemann Bull, the celebrated violinist. I once dined in company with him, and in an hour's conversation across the table found him a man of generous soul, full of noble impulses and beautiful enthusiasms, and rich with the experience of wide travel.

And when the soldiers were dragging him through winter snows, utterly worn out, he begged to be taken into a little wayside church that he might die. His last words, as he lay on the cold stone floor, were, "Glory to God for all things."

And I was greatly interested in a remark of Bull's which is recorded in the recent biography: "When I stop practicing one day, I see the difference; when I stop two days, my friends see the difference; when I stop a week, everybody sees the difference." Here was a man who had cultivated a wonderful natural gift, by lifelong labor, until, as a performer upon the finest of instruments, he was

probably the foremost man of his time; and yet he could not afford to stop practicing for a single week, or even for a single day. "Now they do it for a corruptible crown; but we for an incorruptible." (1 Cor. 9:25) Christian brethren, shall we shrink from incessant vigilance and perpetual effort to keep up the habit of thankfulness to God?

I see many young persons present this evening. Will not some of you at once begin the thoughtful exercise of continual thankfulness? Will you not think over it, pray over it, labor to establish and maintain so beautiful and blessed a habit? Ah, what a help it will be to you amid all the struggles of youth and all the sorrows of age! And in far-coming years, when you are gray, when the preacher of this hour has long been forgotten, let us hope that you will still be gladly recommending to the young around you the Habit of Thankfulness.



On Purification

J. Davis
From *Sermons on Various Subjects*, 1837

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9:14)

The Hebrews were well acquainted with purifications by the blood of calves, lambs and goats, and the ashes of red heifers; for by blood, almost everything was purified, in the service of the temple. But it is only the blood of Christ that

is efficacious to purge the conscience from dead works.

From the passage before us let us observe:

- I. The object of purification;
- II. The materials with which it is purified; and
- III. The design of this purification.

1. The object of purification: The conscience from dead works.

All the blood of beasts that was ever spilt from Abel, to the period when the fire was extinguished on the Jewish altars, was not sufficient to purify the conscience.

Conscience is the inferior judge, whose residence is in the palace of man's soul: according to whose declaration the man feels, either confidence in God, and rejoices in his favor; or that condemnation, which fills him with that fear that hath torment. Knowledge of-the will, and character of God, is the law by which this judge justifies, or condemns. Conscience is our judge in this world, but Christ will be our judge in the world to come. According to the degree of light, of moral and evangelical truth shining upon the conscience, is the degree of its judicial power.

With the increase of the knowledge of the truth, it raises to perfection, or grows to maturity. It abides with the soul in old age; and as a faithful recorder, it will take the register book over Jordan, wherever my soul shall go, whether to Abraham's bosom, or to the rich man in hell. This deputy judge, and the most exact of all recorders, will bring the book to judgment. God keeps a register book above and conscience keeps a register book below. When both books shalt be opened in the Day of Judgment, they will correspond precisely.

When temptations are presented before the mind, the understanding opposes them, but the carnal mindedness invites them; but the bell of the conscience, like the tolling of a funeral knell, the wire being agitated by the band of the supreme judge, rings through the whole house, and seems like the bell of St. Paul in London, articulating sounds in the ears of Whittington, I SEE THEE:—sinner, I see thee—sounding so loud terrific, and distinct, till all the citizens of man-soul imagine they hear the slow moving sound of writing pens in the recorder's office, and in the book of God.—When sin had conceived, it brought forth death and darkness, and the mist of guilt, fear, and terror. Felix trembled.

We read of good and bad consciences; the work of each of these is, to keep a true, account, and judge accordingly.

Black bills and the judgment of death are registered against thousands in the office of conscience. Such characters are invited to come and apply to the office of the gospel, where Jesus is blotting out the hand writing that is against them, with his own blood! That they might enjoy peace of mind, peace with God, and escape the wrath to come. The consciences of some are so bad, that they will even murder the people of God, and think that in so doing, they serve him. The consciences of others are so fast asleep, that they join with the other faculties of the soul, in crying peace and safety, when destruction is at the door. Other's consciences are seared as it were with a hot iron; so that they are sold to work iniquity, to eat sin like bread, and drink iniquity like water.

And the consciences of others; like some judges in a court of judicature, are bribed; so that they will betray the just cause of the righteous. John the Baptist is unjustly beheaded that Herod might keep his oath of honor. Because of the oath, and the noblemen that were there, the proud fool granted the girl the head of John the Baptist.

A dead fish cannot swim against the stream. A man destitute of good principle cannot break the snares of sin. If Herod had a single spark of good principle, he might have said, "Girl, I have promised thee anything that thou wouldest ask, even to the half of my kingdom; but thou art asking too much, for the head of John the Baptist, the forerunner of our adorable Saviour, is of more value, not only, than all my kingdom, but than all the kingdoms of the world." But he had not the fear of God in his heart, nor before his eyes; therefore, he was swept away in the destructive deluge to the Dead Sea.

A despairing conscience is as bad, and as destructive to its owner, as any of the above mentioned. If our sins are ten thousand times heavier than our tears, repentance and reformation, our profession, our faith, and our love; the blood of Christ is ten thousand times heavier than our sins; and the mercy and grace of God, can forgive sins and transgressions of all those who believe in Christ, agreeable to the demands of justice.

A good conscience is an unspeakable privilege. If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. (1 John 3:21) To answer a good conscience towards God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is the complete victory of that faith unfeigned, that worketh by love. Good conscience is always found in the region of its brothers and sisters, in the country of convictions of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come; it dwells wherever you find illuminated understanding to see the glory of God; faith in Jesus Christ, as the Mediator between God and man; repentance towards God as the Lawgiver in

Zion; flaming, and superlative love to God, good hope through grace; a public profession of the gospel of Christ; the spirit of prayer and supplication: and diligent perseverance to the end. Wherever these things are, there is good conscience; for they always dwell together. Conscience was a faithful recorder under the law; and notwithstanding the revolution that has taken place under the new covenant, conscience is still in office; and being purged by the blood of Christ from dead works to serve the living God, it may be called a good conscience.

II. We would notice the materials with which conscience is purged from dead works. The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God.

If we could take a single view of all the bearings of the blood of Christ, as exhibited in the gospel, what astonishing and brilliant light would shine upon the world — upon the glory of God — the nature and requirements of his law — the dreadful consequences of sin — the infinite atonement of Christ — free, sovereign, and reconciling grace — and our union to him by faith in Christ, as the just God, and Saviour!

All the light that the wise philosophers of the world have gathered, even from the excellent treatises of creation and providence, is like the light of the *ignus fatuus* [will-o'-the-wisp], compared with the light of the sun. It is in the light of the sun we can see the tops of the mountains of immortality, through the dense darkness of sin and guilt, which shaded the valley of the shadow of death. The knowledge of Socrates and Plato, was nothing in comparison with the knowledge of the weakest believer in the blood of Christ.

The natural brood of Christ entirely excels human blood. It was not the blood of one of the posterity of Adam; notwithstanding that he assumed human nature; but he was a new root. The second head—yes, the second man, the Lord from heaven. The second Adam, a spirit quickening the whole body. The blood of Christ was the blood of a sinless and holy person, who knew no sin, neither was iniquity found in him.

Also it was the blood of the man in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. (Col. 2:9) His blood mixed with water, flowed most freely from his head, his hands, his feet, and his side; and in the garden of Gethsemane, gushed forth from all the pores of his body. I approach this blood, not only with fear and trembling, but also with joy and humility; taking off my shoes like Moses approaching the burning bush; for I hear a voice from within the veil

saying, this is the blood of him who thought it no robbery to be equal with God (Phil. 2:6)—yes, it is the blood of him who is the same with the Father; in nature and essence. The true God and life eternal.

The blood of Christ in the gospel implies his whole obedience to the demands of the law, by which we are justified; and the whole sufferings of his soul and body, as the Mediator, by which an atonement was made for the sins of men; and a fountain opened to cleanse them from every sin. The forgiveness of our sins, and the whole of our sanctification, is flowing from this remarkable and efficacious fountain, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, by the washing of water through the Word.

There are five things worthy of our consideration in the representation given of the blood of Christ in the text:

- It is the blood which he offered on the altar.
- It is the blood that he offered to God — the true and living God, the fountain and the author of life.
- It is the blood that he offered without spot, to the living God; there was no deficiency in his sacrifice; it fully and perfectly answered the demands of the law; he being perfect himself; he perfected forever all that believe in him.
- It is the blood that he offered to God, through the eternal Spirit. It was by the operation of the Holy Spirit of God, that his body was formed in the womb. The angel Gabriel said to Mary: the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35) It was by the power of the eternal Spirit that he rose from the grave. He was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. By the operation of the same spirit, Christ is made known to sinners. But by the eternal spirit in the text, we are to understand his divine nature. To offer himself to make an atonement for sin, is ascribed to himself everywhere in the Bible. It was himself that poured out his soul unto death, a sacrifice of sweet smelling savor to God; from the golden bowl of his holy body; which was acceptable in the court of heaven. To pour out the blood of atonement on the altar, was the work of Christ as the High Priest over the house of God, to apply it to the hearts and consciences of sinners, is the work of the Holy Spirit.

- Lastly, we notice that it was the blood that he offered with the gracious and noble design of purging our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. As the Jewish sacrifices were purging or purifying men from ceremonial defilements, so the precious blood of the true sacrifice purifies from sin, from the power, the guilt, and the punishment of sin, and from the very being of sin, by taking it away. Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) Blood was the life of all the services of the tabernacle made with hands. The covenants between God and his people were sealed by blood. By blood the officers of the sanctuary were consecrated. By blood the Israelites were preserved in Egypt from the destroying angel. Blood, fire, and water, were the life and strength of all the typical services of the ceremonial law. Under the New Testament, blood to reconcile, the spirit to sanctify, and the Word to cleanse and direct, are the strength and life in all the services of the gospel church.

Eternal love, precious blood, and efficacious grace, are the materials with which our consciences are purged from dead works. We behold the river of sovereign love running as a living stream through the bloody heart of Emmanuel, sweeping all before it, opening the doors that were locked and hatred in Eden, by the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and lifting up the everlasting gates that the King of glory might come in, as the representative of all those that believe in him, and that the Holy Spirit might come down from heaven to reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. (John 16:8)

The Israelites were delivered from Egypt the very night the Lamb was taken, killed, and his blood sprinkled on the doorposts, as if their deliverance was effected by his hands, and life and safety from his death. In Egypt there was a lamb slain for every family, under the new covenant God has but one large family and one Lamb taken, and slain to save their lives. It is a Lamb of God's appointment; the sum and substance of the shadows, and an object of the adoration of men and angels, to whom are blessings, honor, praise and glory due forever and ever.

All the blessings of the gospel are flowing freely to poor sinners through the blood of the Lamb; as if love and mercy could not write deliverance without dipping their pens in the blood of the Lamb's heart — without the shedding of blood there is no remission (Heb. 9:22), is the language of justice,—mercy replies on the behalf of sinners.

We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Being justified

freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. How much more shall the blood of Christ purge our consciences for the new service of Mount Zion? It is in the blood of the Lamb the spirits of just men made perfect have washed their robes and made them white.

In the cleansing of the leper, several things were necessary, as running water, cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop, and the finger of the high priest, but it was the-blood that gave life and efficacy to the whole. Without shedding of blood, the leper could not be cleansed; so it is now, it is the blood of Christ, the doctrine of infinite atonement, Christ and him crucified, is the life and vigor of all the exhortations, promises, threatenings, invitations, and commandments of the gospel. It is by virtue of the blood of Christ that the Scriptures are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. (2 Tim. 3:16)

From every pulpit where the doctrine of atonement is shut out, that virtue which healeth sin sick souls is also shut out. Believers can crucify the old man only by virtue of the crucifixion of Christ. The value of his blood is the life of the Christian faith. It is the foundation of our hope; take away the foundation and the whole superstructure will unavoidably fall, but this cannot be done—glory to God. The bill of deliverance being presented to the house, was read by the prophets, and passed through the two houses of parliament, that is to say, heaven and earth.

It passed the lower house unanimously on the morning of the resurrection, and it passed the upper house without a dissenting voice, when the Son of God appeared With the bill in his hand, as the Lamb that was slain for us and yet alive. When it became a law of the kingdom of heaven, the Holy Spirit was sent with it into the world, to establish it in the hearts of men as a law of the spirit of life. This law is known by the name of eternal redemption. According to the law of this gospel, God is reconciling the world to himself without imputing their trespasses unto them.

III. We would notice the design of this purification. To purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God.

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your Fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot. (1 Pet. 1:18-19)

It is by the blood of Christ that we are redeemed from vain conversation, and purged from dead works. While in a

state of nature, we are in bondage and captivity, arrested by the hand of vindictive justice, and sold away captives by the enemy of our souls, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. (Eph. 2:2)

Man is not only arrested by divine justice but he is a slave to the strong man armed, and a prisoner of death; by the blood of Christ as a ransom price, we are redeemed from the curse of the law, and the threatenings of vindictive justice; but through might and power we are delivered from the hands of the mighty usurper. the mighty power that was manifested in raising up Christ from the dead, is exerted in the conversion of sinners so that they are delivered from the power of sin and Satan. By satisfying divine justice, the way was opened for the mighty power of grace to attack the castles of Beelzebub, sin and death.

But in the text it is said that by the blood of Christ we are purged from dead works. The works of sinners, who are dead in trespasses and sins; proceeding from carnal mindedness, which is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. 8:7), can be no other than dead works. This is the true representation of the state and condition of every individual while in a state of nature. It is that vain conversation from which we must be delivered by the efficacy of the blood of Christ. This springs from the corruption of our nature, which is vain in all its active operations in seeking after pleasures that vanish away like the crackling of thorns under a pot.

If our consciences are not purged, we cannot serve the living God acceptably. If the love of sin is not dethroned in the heart, our lip, and knee service is nothing but hypocrisy. We can no more draw near to a holy God than a dry stubble can stand before the flaming fire; for we nourish in our bosoms that which God perfectly hates. A sense of guilt, fear and torment in the conscience, drives everyone from the presence of the Lord, like Adam in the garden.

It is only the efficacy of the blood of Christ, as an atonement for sin, applied by the Holy Spirit of God, that can remove this fear of condemnation, and turn the sinner from that unmeasurable distance from God to serve him in truth and sincerity. It is in this way alone that you are constrained to draw near to God, by that faith which

worketh by love. This will make the love of sin to yield and give up the throne to the love of God.

The acceptable service of the living God must originate in a principle of life in the heart. The Word of God must be the rule of operation, the will of God, and not the will of man, must be consulted and obeyed. The consideration that God is holy, that he is everywhere, and that he seeth everything, and that he is jealous of his glory, and that we are accountable to him for our actions, fills the soul with reverence and godly fear—while engaged in the service of the living God. The most high God is worthy to be loved, feared, and adored by all intelligent creatures. His commandments are worthy of our most sincere obedience. To serve God should be our chief delight.

All that we do should be done with a view to his glory. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. 10:31) Pharaoh, king of Egypt is dead. Herod is dead. Nero is dead, but if God is your enemy, recollect, he is the living God. Time and death, and even eternity cannot deliver us from his hands. He has manifested his wrath and displeasure, and his hatred to sin in more than ten thousand instances — such as the drowning of the old world, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the drowning of Pharaoh and his hosts.

And permit me to tell you, fellow sinners, that except you repent of your sins, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, deny yourselves, take up the cross, and follow Christ through good and evil report, you shall all likewise perish.

And permit me to tell you, fellow sinners, that except you repent of your sins, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, deny yourselves, take up the cross, and follow Christ through good and evil report, you shall all likewise perish. Yes, you must unavoidably feel the loss of everything that is good, and feel the sense of everything that is bad, that is under the wrath and displeasure of God forever, in that miserable place where the worm dieth not and where the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:44, 46, 48) — continually crying, “The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and our souls are not saved!”

Sinners, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:2) Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation; (Heb. 3:15) for the period is not far distant; when every one of you shall evidently see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth himself. Therefore agree with thine adversary

quickly—while thou art in the way with him. (Matt. 5:25)
All the dumb Idols the false gods of the heathens are dead.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the only living God, and he is the God not of the dead, but the God of the living. (Mark 12:27) If you are united to the living God by faith in Christ, by virtue of that union your bodies shall raise from the grave and when united to your souls appear like the glorious body of our blessed Redeemer, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; shining brighter in glory than the sun in his full meridian.

May the living God quicken those that are dead in trespasses and sins, and revive his work in the midst of the years, strengthen the weak graces of his people, and bless the labors of his servants, so that many might be purged from dead works to serve the living God. Amen.

There is a fountain fill'd with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plung'd beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains



Getting Married from the Wife's Standpoint

T. T. Eaton
From *Talks on Getting Married*, 1891

"Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go." (Gen. 24:58)

It is not my purpose to dwell on the idyllic beauty of this whole chapter, giving, as it does, such a tender and beautiful insight into the home life of those olden times. It is of marriage, viewed from the standpoint of the wife and of her parents that I wish to speak. It is Abraham's and Bethuel's part in this old wedding, on the one hand, and of Rebecca's part on the other, upon which I would dwell.

Isaac had arrived at manhood and it was time that he should be married and see the sons of the promised line growing up around him. His father would see him married ere his own death, and while his gentle son is yet sunk in melancholy, mourning for his mother, Abraham bestirs himself, for according to the custom of the country, he must take the first step. Whom shall he choose? What shall be the chief points he shall consider in reaching a decision? For nearly half a century he has lived here among this people.

Many and fair are the daughters of the land who have grown up around him. There are daughters of kings, whose alliance would be of the greatest advantage — as men see advantage — to Abraham himself and particularly to Isaac, who is not the equal of his great father, and who therefore

shall have more need of help and friendship from these kings, among whom he lives.

There was a powerful temptation to Abraham to strengthen his position in the land by some such alliance. But he knew the one all-important alliance for his son was alliance with God. He knew the influence wives exert over their husbands, especially when they have the gentle and dreamy disposition of Isaac.

What requisites did this wise old patriarch regard in the choice of a daughter-in-law? Not wealth, nor beauty, nor family influence in the land, but, as Lange well says, "spiritual kindred and equality of birth." These Canaanites are all idolaters, but though in the years since Terah died in Haran, his descendants may not have preserved an entirely pure worship, yet they are worshippers of Jehovah still. Her religious faith and the purity of her blood are the two points which Abraham considers essential in a wife for his son. He has no thought for the size of her dowry or for any worldly advantage whatever.

I would that the parents before me would heed the example of Abraham in this thing. The influence you exert over your children, and more especially over your

daughters, in the matter of a choice of their life companion, is rightly very great. But you should use this influence with an eye single to the highest good of your child, here and hereafter. Train her to consider these points for herself, that they may determine her choice as well as your own. Impress her with the great fact that marriage is the most important step, humanly speaking, she can take in life, and that a mistake here is sure to bring disastrous consequences. There are many things that affect our lives over which we have no control, but our marriage is a matter of free choice, and it calls for our highest wisdom.

Now, when a suitor asks for your daughter's hand, what are the chief points you consider? That he is a true worshipper of God, as Abraham considered in regard to his son's wife? Do you care more for character than for wealth or position? Do you care for purity of blood? So far from sneering at "good blood" in men, we should remember that it is of even more importance than training. It ranks next to piety.

Bad training is more easily overcome than bad blood. It is far more important that people should be thoroughbred than horses should be so. The laws of heredity are no mere theories, they are laws of nature, inexorable as death and sternly enforced to the third and fourth generations. Ignoring them does not rob them of their awful power.

But please observe what "good blood" is. I do not consider him of the best blood who can trace the longest line of wealthy and distinguished ancestors. Oh, no. His is the best blood who has the longest line of pure and upright forefathers. Whether your grandfather was an emperor or whether he was a brick carrier, makes little difference — but whether he was a pure and devout man.

In thinking of good blood pay little heed to high position or great family names. That man has the best blood in his veins who comes of a race of men and women who have been alike stainless in purity and inflexible in truth and honesty. And that man has the vilest blood whose ancestors have been impure and dishonest, though he be descended from kings or is related to every great man in the Nation.

Abraham knew the purity of the blood of Terah's family; knew there were no vices to carry their curse down the line of his descendants; therefore he made no inquiry as to the worldly prosperity of the family or the standing they had acquired. It was unnecessary for Abraham to charge Eleazer in reference to the character and disposition of the wife to be chosen for Isaac. Eleazer's own shrewdness would discover means of testing these. It was needful to

give direction only as regards true worship and purity of race; the other things, with Eleazer's wisdom, could be taken for granted.

But, alas! The character of young men is not something which Christian parents can take for granted, as Abraham could do in the case of Rebecca; therefore they must inquire into this as of vital importance ere they give their daughters in marriage. That is a requisite which nothing can compensate for. There may come times when, if a young man be upright and honorable, it may be excusable to overlook a lack of piety, or when his piety may be such as to overcome the bad blood in his veins, but there is nothing which can compensate for vices in his own character.

All the wealth of Croesus, the purest blood, the highest position and the greatest genius should weigh nothing with the father if the man who would wed his daughter is of bad habits and depraved character. In the marriage of your children, as in everything else, the words of Christ must be obeyed: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." (Matt. 6:33)

And that your daughters may consider moral worth and character, it is needful that they shall see from their earliest childhood that these are the things you esteem most. If they hear you praising mere worldly success, hear you telling with evident approval of "smartness," hear you talk apologetically of "sowing wild oats," as if you believed God could be mocked, and a man fail to reap just what he has sown, then you cannot hope your girls will regard integrity and purity as essential in the men they will marry. And you may rue with bitter tears your failure in teaching them from their infancy to put a right estimate on the worth of noble character.

When Eleazer has told his business, and Bethuel and Laban have decided that Isaac is a worthy suitor, then is Rebecca called upon for the final decision. It is she who will leave home and kindred to sojourn in Canaan — it may be never again to look upon the faces of these loved ones. It was right for her parents to consider the offer for Rebecca, and that their decision, had they found him unworthy, should be final.

Fathers have opportunities to learn the true character of young men which maidens, shut in from knowledge of evil, cannot have. Fathers may sometimes wish their daughters to marry evil men from selfish motives, but they rarely oppose on the ground of character without good reason for such opposition.

But while it is well for the veto power for unworthy suitors to rest with the parents, yet their consent should always be conditional on that of their daughters. No parent has any right to insist on a daughter's marrying a man against her wishes, though he may rightly forbid her marrying a man who is unworthy. Marriage is too solemn a thing, till death do them part — and the life of a woman depends too much on the choice she will make for any other person to assume the responsibility of deciding for her. Should the marriage prove an unhappy one, while there is life-long grief for the wife, there is life-long remorse for the parents who took the decision out of her hands.

"Wilt thou go with this man?" is the question asked of the young Rebecca as she stood before her relatives. "Wilt thou go with this man?" is the question asked of every young maiden as she stands looking out upon life. And I wish to speak some words of truth and soberness which may influence those who hear me to choose rightly.

First of all, you must remember that marriage is an institution which God has established for his own wise purposes, and, therefore, the chief thing for you to consider is the laws he has established for its government. In this, as in all things else, my young friends, you must think of God first, not of your own pleasure or of the happiness of others, but first of God and afterward of these other rightful things. He has given commandments concerning marriage, and you can as easily disobey Him about getting married as about being baptized or anything else.

God loves you and takes a loving Father's interest in you. He will be pleased to see you well married. He made you to be a help meet for man, and you may be sure you are glorifying Him if, in entering the estate of matrimony, you heed the commandments He has laid upon you; commandments given in infinite wisdom and infinite love. If you are a Christian, you will be anxious to please God and you will know that all his laws work together for your good. But whether you are a Christian, or not, these laws are unchanging. Woe to you if you disregard them.

As you face the question, "Wilt thou go with this man?" the duties and obligations you will take upon yourself are clearly set before you in the Bible:

- "And the wife see that she reverence her husband." (Eph. 5:33)
- "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Gen. 3:16)

- "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." (Col. 3:18)

Reverence first, a fear of offense and of alienation, the wife must see that she reverence the husband. You are to marry no man to whom you cannot look up with conjugal fear. The second point is submission; not absolute and complete, as a servant to his master, but, "as it is fit in the Lord." Whatever other things you may consider, and rightly consider, it is your solemn duty to God to marry no man whom you cannot reverence and whom you are not willing to obey in the Lord.

I know these are old-fashioned doctrines and old-fashioned virtues. I know that much of the teaching of this age is to reverence nothing and obey nobody, and this is called "freedom and progress." But God does not advance thus with any century, nor do His laws make such progress. His wisdom is still infinitely greater than that of the Nineteenth Century, and the penalty for violation of His laws is not relaxed by any dissolving of human government.

Whenever men attempt to alter God's regulations, or to substitute others for them, they invariably do harm. Because a wife is not happy unless she loves her husband is reason enough why the apostle should charge the older women to teach the younger ones to love their husbands, and it is good reason for advising every girl to be very careful about marrying a man she does not truly love. But men have gone farther than that, and, like good-natured Uzzahs, have put out their hands to steady the ark of family life. They have substituted love for that reverence and willingness to submit, which God has required, and talk as if the Bible said simply, "Wives, love your husbands."

Why, the great burden of the thousands of novels which are put into the hands of our girls is that a woman should marry the man she loves, without any reference to reverence or obedience. In common conversation, how often it is said, "You should not marry a man you do not love," and how seldom we hear, "You should not marry a man you do not reverence." To be "true to the man she loves," is considered a noble thing in a woman — it is nobler to be true to the man she reverences.

Suppose the Christians of our land had been true to their daughters and their God in this thing. Suppose that our girls had had it impressed upon them, in conversation, in books, and in all the ways in which marriage is made a subject of thought, that they must marry no man whom they did not reverence. Can you estimate the good that obedience to that one requirement of God would have done in this world? But, instead of that, our girls are taught that they

must marry the man they love, without any thought of reverence at all.

The consequence is, they persist in marrying unsuitable men, and often dissipated men, vicious men, worthless men, merely because they love them. And the terrible results which follow, in unhappiness, separations, wretchedness, and even want, they bring on themselves, and the grief which weighs upon the parents' hearts as they stand helpless in their loving pity, are known to all men.

This must all be changed, and that speedily, if our society is not to crumble from the ruin of that foundation of all earthly good—the family. The great number of divorces is not due to marrying originally without love, but to marrying without reverence. Girls must be taught not to think for a moment of marrying a man whose character they cannot revere, and boys must be taught that they cannot hope for noble wives unless they grow up with characters worthy of reverence. Both girls and boys must be taught that their responsibility in marrying is first to God.

It will not do for a girl to say, "I will be happier married to this drunken, vicious man whom I love than I would be married to any man I reverence, or in remaining unmarried." Her own pleasure is no excuse for disobeying God, and besides, she is sadly mistaken in thinking that a marriage solely for love will bring happiness. She must either obey God in her marriage or refuse to marry at all. She is not required to marry a man whom she does not love; she is simply forbidden to marry a man she does not reverence and is not willing to obey in the Lord. With that one restriction she can consult her own wishes.

The ideal marriage is when the wife reveres, loves, and will cheerfully obey in the Lord her husband. That is the lot I hope God will grant to every maiden among us.

To every woman is left these three choices: She may marry a man whom she reverences, she may remain unmarried, or she may marry a man whom she both reverences and loves, and this is the ideal marriage. But to marry without reverence is forbidden to woman, no matter what her motive is, whether for money, or position, or home, or occupation, or from a foolish dread of remaining single, or from the most absorbing love.

"But," one may say, "a woman may be mistaken in a man's character. She may think he is pure, true, brave and God-

fearing, and find out after marriage that she was mistaken in her estimate." That is true, but it is only the greater reason for care. A maiden who regards a man's character as the important thing rather than the number and fervor of his protestations of love, and who gives heed to the opinion of her parents, and prays to God for guidance, is by no means likely to be deceived. The danger is, obviously, far less than if she turn her back on God's law and "follow the dictates of her own heart."

The ideal marriage is when the wife reveres, loves, and will cheerfully obey in the Lord her husband.

One may love very passionately for a while a bad character, whether the badness consists in vice or petty meanness, but when the, "passion shall have spent its wayward force" all the best of the race shall learn to their bitter sorrow that only love which is rooted in reverence is abiding.

The bitter consequences of a disregard of this law are not confined to the poor girl, who, in the thoughtlessness of her youth, and under the teachings of what she has read and heard, marries a man because she loves him, with little thought of his character.

Alas! The sins against this law are also visited upon the third and fourth generations. How many a mother in this city alone is suffering for her sin in marrying a vicious man by seeing her sons go astray from the evil tendencies inherited from their father, and gathered from the example of that father and the associates he has brought around them. I beg you, my friends, be not deceived. God is not mocked; whatsoever a woman sowed; that shall she also reap.

I hope no one will misunderstand me, and think I have argued that women must marry men whom they do not love. Oliver Wendell Holmes has well said that love is only one reason for marrying, while there may be a hundred reasons against it.

I leave the whole question of love just where the Bible leaves it, and I insist that women must not marry men whom they do not reverence, and whom they are not willing to obey in the Lord. The wife is the helpmeet for her husband. She is to submit to him in all things save in matters of conscience. There she is responsible first to God.

If a man should demand of his wife what is contrary to her conscience, it is her duty to refuse, but outside this higher realm she is to submit to him and recognize him as the head of the family, "even as Christ is the head of the

church." (Eph. 5:23) If our girls were only taught the obligations assumed in marriage, I am sure there would be less running away with worthless, dissipated men.

A gentleman from the interior of the State recently courted a young lady in this city. He is a man of fine appearance, of agreeable manners, of education, of decided talent, and is successful in business. She knew all this, but ere she would entertain his suit she got her father and brothers to get reliable information as to his personal character. And not till she was thoroughly satisfied that he was a man that she could reverence did she consent to become his wife. Here is a noble example, worthy of the imitation of every maiden in the land.

A character worthy of reverence. What are the qualities which true women honor in men? Truth, bravery, purity and strength — these four — with all they involve. That firm strength of character which is the foundation of all integrity and steadfastness. Who honors a weak-minded, weak-souled man? Truth to God, to his fellow-men and to her is the foundation on which her faith in him can rest.

That purity, which she has a right to demand, shall be as stainless in him as he demands in her, and that bravery which quails not before danger, and heeds neither men's sneers nor their threats. These are what women reverence in men, and these our youths must strive to possess ere they are worthy to ask noble women to become their wives.

There are other things in marriage our Rebeccas should consider thoughtfully. The disposition, aside from the character, has much to do with the peace and happiness of home life. Men of goodness, truth, and courage may vary in disposition. One may be easily annoyed and another moody. One is reticent, and another voluble and diffusive. One is cheerful, another despondent. One is demonstrative to a degree unpleasant to a wife of the opposite temperament; another is reserved, so that a woman who desires voluble affection would suffer greatly from doubts of his love.

Similarity of taste also sweetens life. Congeniality between the loved ones of husband and wife is very desirable. It is of great importance for a maiden to consider whether the circumstances around her after marriage will be such as will promoted - growth in grace and her usefulness in God's service. The great law of the Christian life must ever be the controlling principle: Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

I shall have accomplished my purpose if I impress upon your hearts that in marriage the first obligation is to God, and that all disregard of His law will be sternly punished on you and your children. Men are not commanded to reverence their wives, and yet no man who respects himself will marry a woman he does not honor. If only our women were as careful, what a powerful incentive it would be to urge men to honorable and upright lives; if only every woman would refuse to marry a man whose goodness is not as stainless as he requires hers to be! God forbid that men should ever think less of the character of the wives they choose, and may He hasten the day when husbands must have the same irreproachable characters.

You should no more think of marrying a drunken man than your brother would think of marrying a drunken woman. And you should no more think of receiving attentions from a drunken man than your brother would think of paying attentions to a drunken woman. And do not marry a man in order to reform him, no matter how many promises he may make.

Not one in a hundred of such experiments are successful, and do not be foolish enough to think your case will be the fortunate exception. You can do much, and you ought to do much to reform the vicious and protect the innocent. But this is to be done, not by marrying dissipated men, but by using your great influence against the things that make men dissipated — the drinking customs of society, the saloons and gambling dens among us. I beg that you make most of the opportunity given you.

"Whatsoever ye do, do all for the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10:31) Loving husbands, reverencing wives, and obedient children make homes which are for God's glory when piety is there also. Our hearts go with Rebecca in her journey to her new home, and we are gladdened across the centuries as we read in conclusion of the beautiful story: "And Isaac loved her, and he was comforted after his mother's death." (Gen. 24:67)

As one whom his mother comforteth, we read, and when that comfort was taken away, only his wife, whom he loved, could make good the loss in the loving heart of Isaac. All that is tender and cheerful in this life of trial and sorrow clusters around the word "comfort" and links the mother and wife, in their loving ministrations, with the Great Comforter, for the sake of whose coming it was expedient for His disciples that Jesus Himself should go away.

