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## → SERMONS ←

THE SUBJECT AND SPIRIT OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

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*Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.—EPH. iii., 8.*

THIS epistle is generally and justly considered as the loftiest production of its inspired and gifted author. Opulent in thought and elevated in sentiment, it is throughout the fervid expression of a great loving heart and of a vigorous illumined intellect. Written under the joyous excitement of the grateful tidings of the firm faith and fearless fortitude of the Ephesian brethren, to whom he had long sustained such intimate and endearing relations, its obvious design is not so much to defend as to display "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." Hence the warm affections of the Apostle's brave and generous heart flow forth with unwonted spontaneity and fulness, and his active and enlarged mind expatiates exultingly in an element delightfully congenial with its spirituality and amplitude. His sentences glow with thought and thrill with emotion. And the frank revelation of his own inner life and personal experience draws us irresistibly into fellowship with his humble, earnest and hopeful spirit, and enkindles in us a desire for the attainment of like sublime faith, and the achievement of similar glorious triumphs.

The passage from which we have selected the text is an humble, grateful and exulting recognition of the sovereign, distinguishing grace of God, which

## ⚡ HELPS IN PASTORAL WORK ⚡

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### A Popular Ministry.

BY JOHN HALL, D.D. (PRESB'N), N. Y.

A ministry that pleases everybody may well suspect itself. Look at the doctrines we preach—human depravity, our Lord's true Deity, the atonement on the cross, the personality and work of the Holy Ghost; the need of every man, the most amiable and cultivated, of being regenerated, the Bible the sole rule of faith, self-denial a part of true Christian living, retribution on the impenitent, the obligation of the Sabbath, and all this with a worship conspicuously plain and free from showy and meretricious decoration. Make all this palatable to "society," the "world," everybody! No, this whole message tramples on the pride of human intellect; it belittles the boasted culture of the time, and it is, if understood, in direct opposition to the "life" which we are being persuaded to import and servilely copy from Paris.

"Then what am I to do?" one may say. Go on and preach these truths, only more clearly, firmly, tenderly. "But what if people leave me?" Yes, some will leave you and go to churches they like better, assigning various reasons for the same. That is their matter. Yours is to preach for the saving of men, not for the keeping of them in pews. "But cultivated and well-to-do people will quit the church." Let them. It is so much the worse for them. Remember Paul's words, "Not many wise, mighty, noble are called." "But it is a pity they should not be saved." Certainly, but it is by the truth they are to be saved, and you are the teacher of the truth. "But I may set them against it." Yes, and if your spirit is bad you will be very guilty in so doing. But if yours is a right spirit then your ministry will be like

Christ's, which irritated and drove off not a few, especially the ritualists and the intellectual kind. "For judgment I am come into this world that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind."

### Pastoral Visiting.

BY REV. SAMUEL PANCOAST.

One of the most difficult problems the minister is called upon to solve is, how he can most successfully perform the duties of his office. His pulpit efforts require a thorough knowledge of theology, as well as a comprehensive acquaintance with the moral condition of man and of his necessities, and particularly of those to whom he is called to minister. To gain this latter knowledge, he must become familiar with their habits of life, their modes of thought, and their attainments in spiritual life. And this he can only secure by actual contact with them in their own homes through pastoral visitation. Hence pastoral work becomes a necessity to successful pulpit work. Just how much of this should be done, and in what manner it can best be done, must be left largely to the pastor himself to determine, in view of his own and his people's wants.

But aside from the aid which the pastor receives in his pulpit work, and the benefit received through this channel by the people, there are two or three particulars in which the work of the pastor outside the pulpit may be specially beneficial to the church.

Pastoral visitation is a medium through which *sympathy* is secured in time of trouble. Every one finds periods in his life clouded with adversity, and overshadowed with sorrow and death—periods in which his soul sighs for sym-

pathy, and is rendered doubly wretched by its absence. In such an hour, how comforting are the presence and words of a faithful pastor!

Pastoral visitation is important also for *counsel*. And this is needed sometimes in temporal as well as in spiritual

matters. Mere routine visiting, without any special object in view, I regard as of no consequence; but pastoral visitation, carrying comfort to the bereaved, sympathy to the distressed, and counsel to the ignorant or perplexed, is invaluable.

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## PRAYER MEETING SERVICE

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### A False View Corrected.

BY EDW'D J. HAMILTON, D. D. (PRESB'N),  
PROFESSOR, PRINCETON COLLEGE.

What obscurity—not to say darkness—of unbelief exists in the world, and even among true believers, as to the real nature and excellence of the Christian life! To most men it is devoid of any deep interest and attraction—a course in which all of happiness must be left and in which nothing save privation and suffering, conflict and labor, await the pilgrim; very many, too, who accept the teaching of the Gospel do not know what satisfaction can be realized by thoroughly reducing them to practice. The highest idea which many form of the earnest life of faith is that embodied in the description by a modern poet, of a youth toiling alone up a steep Alpine pass. Onward he went, leaving the sunny valleys, on past the last human habitation, on over heathery upland pastures, on where the stunted pine-tree grows, on where the chamois springs from crag to crag, on amid the snows and ices of centuries, still bearing aloft his banner, and thinking only of ascending higher and yet higher. At length, benumbed and exhausted, he perished, a victim to his own heavenward ambition. On a subsequent day other travellers found him there, wrapt in a winding-sheet of snow. But, while they were gazing on his pale and saint-like face, a voice fell from Heaven like a falling star, repeating that word with which during his ascent he had made the rocks re-echo, *Excelsior!* The spirit of the youth had attained its home, and he called to those beneath him

to follow his example, to seek a dwelling-place on high.

Such is the world's view—its highest view—of the Christian life: *not such* the view given by the Word of God. The path to Heaven is, indeed, a straight and narrow and upward way. It requires strict conformity to the Divine commands and constant aspiration and effort after the heavenly things. In such a course there is of necessity much of trial, self-sacrifice, and exertion. Yet this course is far from being one devoid of joys and comforts.

They who are accustomed to travel will tell you that there are no countries where their progress is so pleasurable as in those in which they pass over grand and lofty mountains. In such regions they enjoy purer air, more exhilarating spirits, more bodily vigor, more enchanting and widespread prospects than can be obtained in lower places; and so the earnest Christian will tell you from his own experience that the labors and difficulties of his lofty journey are far more than compensated by its delightful privileges. Not to speak of fellowship with God and with the saints of God, he would not exchange that exaltation of soul in contemplation of things temporal and of things eternal, which religion confers, and those heavenly pleasures which flow from the exercise of Christian graces, for all the lower gratifications of the world. And he is encouraged to go on, because, as he looks forward, along the road, he sees, by the light of the promises and blessings of God's word, that his path will grow easier and pleasanter every day. In the dis-