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~ Sermons ~

THE ROCK-FOUNDATION.

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Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.—ST. MATT. vii., 24, 25.

IF there is one cry which, in these days, is heard oftener than any other when men are talking about religion, it is the cry for definiteness. The pulpit, professing to speak for its Master, Christ, calls men to come and be His disciples and join His fellowship, and believe His truth, and obey His precepts. And men answer, "How can we do as you bid us, until we know who are Christ's disciples, and where is His fellowship and what is His truth and His will? One set of teachers make of religion a ceremony, and another an emotion, and others yet a historic memory. There are the Romanists and the Revivalists and the Liberalists—which shall we follow? Whose creed shall we believe? May not you Christians wisely set about finding some common ground of agreement among yourselves before you urge men to come into a fellowship whose conspicuous characteristics are its differences and alienations?"

It is the chief value of such words as I have just read to you, that they lift all such criticisms as these into the clear light of common sense and practical duty. "You want"—it is as though Christ Himself had said it—"some

3. So far as appears from the history, he was an affectionate husband, indulgent father, a good-natured friend, a peaceable neighbor, a "most respectable citizen," a "model man."

4. As was natural in one who was free from the common vices and errors of mankind, he had a good opinion of himself and his own wisdom.

5. Only one fault is mentioned—a fault common to all idlers—grumbling or fault-finding.

II. Yet this model man is called "wicked and slothful." Why?

1. His course is the most dangerous to others. Positive sinners afford positive warnings to others. The evils and the guilt of their deeds are beacons to warn others from imitating their course; but the unprofitable servant opens a switch leading to destruction without placing any red flag or lamps to warn those following. On the contrary, he unconsciously offers himself as a model for imitation.

2. He is the most guilty. As a servant he has learned his Master's will and has promised obedience. (Luke xii., 47; Matt. xxi., 28-31.) His negligence is a species of treachery. (Prov. x., 26.)

3. There is less hope of his reformation. For (a) there are no positive sins to re-

prove. The surgeon can remove the cancer, but cannot cure a weakness of the vital principle. (b) His well-founded good opinion of himself and evil opinion of others (Luke xviii., 11-12) is a coat of mail against reproof.

4. Sins of omission are the most numerous, as many as the days or the hours. *Objection*—Are little sins. Reply—But are still sins.

5. Sins of omission are hardest to repent of.

6. And hardest to repair. The lost opportunity never returns.

III. His sentence. 1. Not condemned for his grumbling; his hard thoughts of the Master.

2. But for what he had not done.

3. And such the general rule at the judgment. (See Matt. xxv., 41-43.)

IV. Applications. 1. We shall all be judged for the good we failed to do, for unimproved opportunities of doing good.

2. The absolute necessity of pardon in Christ. We might face our positive sins, but not the trusts of our omissions of duty.

3. Our need of God's grace to keep us watchful, etc.

4. The goodness of the Gospel. We can learn God's goodness from man's sin.

INSTALLATION SERVICE—CHARGE TO THE PASTOR.

BY JOHN HALL, D.D., AT CANAL STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, N. Y.

It now becomes my duty by order of the Presbytery to say a few words to you in the nature of a charge. The charge is directly and primarily to yourself; and yet, when one is speaking in the hearing of the people to whom you are to minister, it is impossible that its tone and its language should not be affected in some degree by the recollection of their presence.

You are ordained as a preacher of that Gospel of which you have just now with the rest of us heard. Remember that your great function is to be a preacher—a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Remember that it is in the preaching of that Gospel that you are warranted in looking for and expecting the blessing of

God Almighty. There is no promise that he will make your poetry or your history or your speculation or your philosophy the means of quickening dead souls into spiritual life; but what God promises to bless is the preaching of His Holy Word. You are to look for success with confident hope in the degree in which you are setting forth the truth in the love of it. If you will thus preach the Word, you will be a truly evangelical minister, proclaiming good tidings of great joy unto the people—not magnifying the Church in Christ's place, not magnifying your office in Christ's place, but magnifying Him first of all, the Chief among ten thousand.

If you thus preach His Gospel, you will

be a true Protestant minister, not holding yourself forth as in any sense a priest, saving in the sense in which all God's people are a holy priesthood—holding yourself forth as a witness-bearer, as one who is permitted to set forth in their inherent harmony, the glad tidings of salvation that God has given in His Holy Word.

Let it be your aim first of all—most of all, with the utmost preparation that you can give, with all the attractions with which you can invest the subject, with all the energy of your nature that you can put in it—let it be your aim to be a true, manly, earnest evangelical preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You will not forget at the same time that you stand in other relations. You become, for example, a presbyter, associated with the body of presbyters in the government of this Church. You are an elder; there are ruling elders connected with you, and in the nature of the case they know human life better than you. In the nature of the case they know the conditions and circumstances of this congregation better than you can at first know them. It is not only your privilege, it is your duty to avail yourself of the knowledge that they possess and endeavor to work in concert with them so that this Christian Church may have what the Scriptures offer to all Churches, the true and godly oversight of the body of presbyters who feel themselves responsible to Christ, the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls.

And you will bear in mind the oversight which is in the New Testament connected with the ministry. You are to be brought into the closest personal contact with the people of your charge. That oversight you must make real, and you can only do it by seeking the people in their homes, becoming familiar with them in their avocations, so that you may learn to understand them and have intelligent sympathy with them in their struggles and difficulties. The saying ascribed to Chalmers, whether he used it or not, is true, that the way to reach the hearts of the people is to go to their homes. There you see the difficulties that lie in their way; there you are brought into loving and intelligent sympathy with them; there you will be

helped to bring the message delivered from the pulpit, in a simple, informal style and tender spirit to bear upon them one by one; there you will gain their confidence, there you will establish the link of affection between them and you, and there, let me say to you, you will reap some of the richest rewards of the faithful ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I remember when I was a minister in the city of Dublin, a dear brother, faithful in his place, was removed from the Church on earth to the Church above; he was taken in the midst of his usefulness; he had many people in his charge in comparatively humble positions in life, but no less pure and good and true because God had put them in this subordinate place. I remember how one of these, a domestic in the house of another, speaking to me of the death of her minister, used words that I have never forgotten. "Next to my own father," said she, "I loved him the best in all the world." I tell you to have such attachments as these, founded upon fidelity in the work of the ministry, is a higher reward than the loftiest eulogiums the world can pronounce upon you, and the most splendid popularity that this or any other city can give you.

Try to be a house-going pastor that you may have true and real access to the confidence of the people. You will remember that you are not merely to deal with the individual; you are to try to build up a Christian organization. A real Christian congregation is not simply a number of people that happen to be together; a true Christian congregation upon New Testament principles, has a genuine organic life; its members are bound together by intelligent sympathy. They are fellow citizens, fellow soldiers, fellow sufferers, fellow workers, fellow worshippers, fellow heirs; and it is to be your duty to bring together here a body of people committed to one another and committed to the work of the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

When you find round about you those who are only casual in their attendance upon this Church or any other, do the best that it is competent for you to do to attract them to the Church and to lead them to identification therewith, in all its

duties and responsibilities. Do not hesitate to tell them that it is cheaper, a thousand times, to have a place in the Church of the living God than to be a servant of the world with its pleasures and its fascinations. Do not hesitate to tell them that to have one member of a family go in the way of ruin and destruction costs more—costs more a thousand times—than it can ever cost to be in a true and living connection with the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Try to build up here a body of intelligent, living, believing people, through whose united life and whose common work the Gospel of Jesus Christ may be diffused around about.

And you will not forget in the last place that you are a member of a presbytery, and so a member of a larger Presbytery—The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. The honor of that Church is, in some sense, committed to your hands. You are to be a true brother, upholding the character, and cultivating the fellowship, and trying to promote the usefulness of your brethren in Jesus Christ. To be a minister in this city with its multitudinous temptations, with its many openings for labor, with its many

distractions, is at once a responsible and difficult work. Look upward habitually for grace, that grace that God gives, and which he never withholds from the soul that waits upon Him.

There are some peculiar elements in your relationship to this people which I trust God will give you grace to utilize to the utmost. Many of them are strangers, like yourself, from another land. Not a few of them are yet without homes. They are dwelling among strangers; they have difficulties on that very account. You can understand them; you can sympathize with them; you can draw them away from ways of temptation; you can draw them into ways of happy and useful service; and if they have not all comfortable homes on the week-days, you can at least contribute to giving them a true and real and happy home on the Lord's Day, and so by His grace help them in seeking preparations for the Home that is eternal above.

May God bless you in this work; and may God bless the people who have called you to the ministry and who, I trust, will sustain you with their sympathies, their prayers and their co-operation.

THE BOOK OF ACTS, CHRIST'S MANUAL OF MISSIONS FOR HIS CHURCH.

BY PROF. A. W. PITZER, D.D., HOWARD UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D. C.

No. I.

Luke, a Gentile physician, the author of this work, in his address to Theophilus, alludes to a "former treatise he had made of all that Jesus *began* both to do and to teach until the day in which he was received up."

Dr. M. Baumgarten, in his able and admirable work on Apostolic Church History, calls attention to the peculiar force of this word, "*began*." Luke in his Gospel of Grace for the Gentile world set forth the *beginnings* of the work of Jesus Christ in his fleshly and earthly life. Clothed in glorified flesh, at the Father's right hand and in the Heavenly Realm, he *continues* that same work, by His Word, His Spirit, and His servants; and is the

acting subject of this entire history. Whether on earth or in heaven, He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever; and in every age, and under every dispensation of His grace, His work is the same. From the Eden of Moses to the Paradise of John; from the promised Seed of the Woman to its fulfilment in the slain Lamb of the Apocalypse He is the same Healer and Lord; and to Him all Prophecy is one connected, consistent and completed Testimony. The sphere of His activities may change from Heaven to earth, or from earth back to Heaven, but there is no change in the personality or work of the actor Jesus.

When on earth, in human form and