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ANNIVERSARY SERMON.*

THE FATHERS AND THE PROPHETS.

Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?—

ZECARIAH I. V.

THAT is a most solemn and responsible charge, under which, the ministry of reconciliation exercise their important office: "Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O, wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way, to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul." The business with which we are entrusted involves the destinies of eternity. Our function is to be exercised in such a manner that we may both save ourselves and them that hear us. Our message is not our own. We may not address to men anything as from ourselves; neither may we invent the themes and words to be proclaimed, nor may we keep back any part of that word which is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness,—“the whole counsel of God”—the message which *He* has commissioned us to bear to men, with all the force and authority of a commandment from Heaven, saying, “Thus saith the Lord of Hosts.”

In the exercise of our ministry, it is often our happy province to speak words of comfort and consolation: and the whole burden of our preaching is designed ultimately to publish glad tidings of good things, even the tidings of great joy. In the

* We intend *occasionally* to furnish a sermon of this character; such reminiscences and appeals are replete with interest and instruction, and will waken an echo in a thousand families and churches.—EDITOR.

themes, the tenor and the spirit of this ministry, is included a dealing in patience and gentleness, such as that of a father with his children. And yet, it does not consist in the mere "preaching of smooth things." Its charity is that which "rejoices not in iniquity, but in the truth." It must reprove, rebuke, and exhort,—albeit with all long-suffering and doctrine; it must warn men of their guilt and doom, if they remain impenitent,—yet with compassion and tears. In order to prepare men to appreciate its words of peace, it must show that there is no peace for the wicked, continuing such: and that they may be induced to take hold of eternal life, it must disclose to sinners how their feet already take hold on eternal death, and urge them to escape for their lives, and to flee for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope which is set before them in the gospel.

In this work, then, the servants of God must often utter the most unpleasant truths—press the most alarming considerations—wake up the most affecting reminiscences—and present to the conscience and the heart the most moving, and sometimes the most tender, and even delicate appeals. Such was the position of the prophet Zechariah, in the circumstances under which he uttered the affecting inquiry contained in our text. He was associated with the prophet Haggai in forwarding the enterprize of building the second temple. The people to whom they prophesied had been some years returned from the captivity; and, already, their sluggishness, in regard to the rebuilding of the Lord's house, their selfish worldliness, and manifold provocations, gave melancholy token that they were forgetting their afflictions, and relapsing into the footsteps of their fathers, whose sins the Lord had so disastrously rebuked. Haggai appeared upon the stage, a few months earlier than Zechariah, and seems to have produced a very salutary impression on the people by his preaching. And, in illustration of that word, "he that hath, to him shall be given," so, as they had improved, and were obedient to the word of the Lord in the mouth of Haggai, God blessed them with another prophet, whose labors were longer continued: and, by these conjoint efforts, a very happy reformation was commenced, and the temple of the Lord was rebuilt. Nevertheless, because, during these ministrations, a portion of the people continued unmoved, and all of them were inadequately remiss, and their perverseness demanded the correction and stimulus of a constant faithful reproof and warning,—the best of them needing to be admonished against the error to which they were prone, of returning to the evil ways of their fathers,—the prophet Zechariah addresses himself to "reprove their sins, and to threaten God's judgments against the impenitent, while he encouraged those who feared God with assurances of the divine mercies which were in store for his

Church, and especially of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world." In pressing his exhortations, he strengthens his appeal by a direct and specific reference to a most tender and delicate point,—the controversy which God had had with their ancestry and predecessors. His mind goes back to contemplate the former generations, and he brings them forth from their graves, in order that in the light of their example, their children might see their own sinfulness, danger, and duty:—"The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers." And their history, and their own recent return from captivity, and the continuance, still, of a part of their nation in the land of their dispersion, were the melancholy and unanswerable proofs of the former delinquency, which they are now admonished not to imitate. By repentance they would cut off the entail of the curse, and, instead thereof, receive a blessing:—and this is the true use to be made of the judgments of God upon the guilty generations that went before us. He calls them to turn unto the Lord,—three times introducing, in immediate connexion with the commandment, the authority and obligation which enforced it, as coming from the "Lord of Hosts," whose almighty power and sovereign dominion are thus set before sinners as an argument for their repentance unto new obedience. And the commandment itself now addressed to these backsliding people, is the very same which the prophets of old had often addressed to their progenitors. These all had passed away, but the word of the Lord, in its counsels, menaces, and promises, is the same in all generations and abideth for ever. It was their happiness that the same messages and exhortations still remained to address them, that they might be directed, urged and encouraged to return unto God, be reconciled with Him, and He with them, and that they might possess His favor and friendship. It is the same message unto all men, and it speaks to us, in the same words with which it spoke unto the fathers by the prophets, and in the latter days by the Son of God himself.

This appeal to the conduct and condition of their fathers, was a most delicate and difficult part of the prophet's duty,—because, if there is anything which men feel most tenderly, and which they are most apt to resent, it is such a reference to their parents as involves reproach, and implies that they suffered under the wrath of God, and, after death, endure the vengeance of eternal judgment. But it is most needful, in dealing with men, to warn them of this very fact,—because they are prone to follow the example of their fathers, and to plead their authority for the sentiments they cherish and the conduct they pursue. But the prophet shrunk not from this duty. He knew too well that the authority of parents could not justify their children in wickedness and unbelief, and he felt his obligations to preserve

their posterity from following in the same path to ruin. Therefore, he enjoins them, "Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, * * * * but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord." For, what was the consequence of their rebellion? "But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of Hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us." It is as if the prophet had said, 'While you may object that it does not become you to be wiser and better than your fathers, consider what happened unto them. Although God's messages by his prophets did not take hold of them so as to reform them, yet the judgments of God, which were the threatened sanctions of his words and statutes did take hold of them—(or *overtake* them, as it is in the margin),—and then they found by their own experience, that their unbelief could not make the word of God of no effect. When their calamities came upon them, they returned; some of them, perhaps, repented, and were saved; and others of them were convinced and awakened; and all of them changed their minds as to the truth and import of the teaching of the prophets; and, although it was too late to avert the ruin which came upon the nation, they were fain to confess that it had happened as it had been foretold; the Lord of Hosts dealt with them, as he had forewarned them he would do, according to their ways and doings; and in all that he did unto them, they were compelled to acknowledge both his truth and his justice. *They were punished*, and felt and confessed that it was in righteousness. And now let their children and descendants behold the agreement and correspondence between the sin and the judgments of their fathers, and between the circumstances of their fathers and their own, lest they now, in turn, share a similar fate.'

It is in the midst of this affecting recollection and expostulation that the preacher bursts forth with this impassioned and impressive exclamation—"Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?"

"What has become of your fathers? The whole generation is swept away, and the places that knew them shall know them no more. Let us think:—they are gone through the world, and gone out of it. Here they *were*, in the places we now occupy, passing through the same streets, dwelling in these houses, trading in the same businesses, worshipping in the same churches. *But where are they?* They are not here;—they are gone;—but they are somewhere still. When they died, there was not an *end* of them. They are in eternity, in the world of spirits, the unchangeable world, to which we are hastening apace. *Where*

are they? Those of them who lived and died in Christ are in *Paradise*; and if we live and die in the Lord, as they did, we shall be with them soon, with them for ever. And those of them, who lived and died in sin,—are in *torment*;—and we are warned by Moses and the prophets, by Christ and the Apostles, that we follow them not, so as to come to that place of torment.”

“And the prophets, do they live for ever? Did those who spake the word of the Lord unto the fathers continue? They too have departed from the earth. Their *souls* do live, indeed, with God whom they served, in the faithful ministration of his word;”—and the memory of their ministrations, and of the oppositions of unbelief, and of the fruits of repentance and faith,—this still survives;—and the word which they preached is still here, caught, with their descending mantles, when they ascended on high to their reward, by those their successors whose mouths still utter the words and statutes of the Lord of Hosts;—and all the effects of their ministry survive,—both in them to whom they were the savor of death unto death, and in them to whom they were the savor of life unto life. But the prophets themselves are gone. They served their generation by the will of God, and, with their generation, they have departed to meet again with their hearers at the bar of God, and to give in their account,—of some with joy,—of others with grief,—and all of them, both preachers and hearers, to test the truth of what those prophets believed and preached to those fathers.

Ah! if this truth were felt as its impressiveness and solemnity ought to make it to be felt, what preachers should we not be, and what hearers would you be! What an influence and force would be conveyed by every sermon.” What scenes of spiritual interest would our worshipping assemblies present; what pains of conviction, what solicitude to be saved, what holy travailing of the new birth, what joy and peace in believing; what thronging crowds in the sanctuary, and what hopes of salvation, and what fitness for living, and fitness for dying, too, and what comforts and consolations abounding by Christ, and what looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, and what praises and services of the glory of the Lord of Hosts, even of our God and his Christ. Would to God there were its due weight given to this momentous consideration, that ‘we are dying ministers, dealing with dying men, about the concerns of immortal souls and an awful eternity, on whose very brink we are at this moment standing.’ For let us think, ‘the prophets that are now, do *we* live for ever?’ No: as the fathers and the prophets of old have vanished from the earth, so must it be with us who occupy their places, and enter upon their labors, and inherit their means of grace, and succeed to their eternal responsibilities.*

* For some of the language quoted in several preceding paragraphs, I am indebted Matthew Henry, slightly altered and expanded.

You and I, my hearers, are concerned in this solemn truth. It is our case. The example before us, is, in too many particulars, the mere picture of our own condition. Not only in regard to our common mortality and destination to eternity, but in the relations of many among us to a hitherto abused and misimproved gospel. To you also the word of the Lord hath spoken, saying, "Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts," as it was spoken unto you, and to those who have gone before you, by the former prophets, when they cried, saying: "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, turn ye now from your evil ways and from your evil doings; but they did not hear nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord." "Be ye not as your fathers;" be not as ye have been yourselves. "Your fathers where are they, and the prophets, do they live for ever?" As they have gone, so shall we go, so shall you go, so shall I, and this pulpit, and these pews, will be vacant of us; men may seek us, but they shall not find us here; and other prophets and other worshippers shall be here in our places; and where shall we be, when but a very few years shall have come and gone?

We cannot always preach for your salvation; you cannot always enjoy these means of grace; you cannot always pervert and disobey this gospel with impunity; you cannot always forget, and despise, and misimprove, and turn a deaf ear to the things which you now so listlessly disregard. Oh, shall it be with you, as it was with the Jews before the captivity, that you shall pass away, and as many who once were here have passed away, and leave no other memorial of your existence and of your treatment of the gospel, and no other example and ground of appeal to your children and others that are to come after you, than this, "Be ye not as your fathers were;" and than this passionate, and it may be, hopeless appeal concerning you, by some other preacher than he who now speaks, "Your fathers where are they, and the prophets, do they live for ever?"

The whole subject thus introduced to our consideration, in this passage of the word of God, suggests to us a solemn and an affecting application to ourselves, in the circumstances in which we are now assembled in the house of God. Nor needs there much modification to make it suit as a description of ourselves.

It is now seventeen years since I first appeared, in the dew of my youth, in the character of the ordained pastor of this people, and my first sermon in this responsible relation was from these words: "I determined not to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified." To that determination I have adhered in all good conscience unto this day, when I am now preaching my three thousand and first sermon since my ministry commenced, and, excluding all other service of the gospel elsewhere, my two thousand three hundred and twenty-first sermon to this congregation. In this ministry I have sought to unfold

the glorious gospel of the blessed God. I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. I have set before you life and death. Courting no man's favor, fearing no man's frown, seeking only to please you for your edification, I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you publicly, and from house to house, as I had opportunity, testifying unto you all, without exception, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And I call God to record, and I call you to record, that in this thing I am pure from the blood of your souls and of all men. I have endeavored, alas! how feebly, and with manifold imperfections and sins, to serve the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which befell me. Neither would I count my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And I may appropriately add the words of the apostle, which immediately follow the text of my first sermon as your pastor: "And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." "Nevertheless, having obtained help from God, I continue even until now." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles."

Seventeen years have passed since then! It is half the lifetime of a generation, and this measure of time has been amply illustrated here. Many changes have passed since then. The whole appearance of this part of our city has been greatly altered and beautifully enlarged and improved. The former tabernacle in which you and your fathers worshipped,—in which many of you were baptized, and in which many of you have participated in solemn, and joyful scenes, and services,—has been taken down, and this spacious and beautiful temple has been reared in its stead. But it is not of such changes, I would speak.

There is, too, a vast change in the appearance of this congregation. How many new faces appear which were not here seventeen years ago. And how many who were children then, are now grown up, and become the fathers and mothers of other children. And some who were not then born, have since been born again of water and of the Spirit of God, and have claimed their places, by the side of their parents as heirs together with them of the grace of life.

But there is yet another change. Half a generation of time

is the measure of these years,—and half a generation of human beings has passed away! Half of those who were living seventeen years ago, are dead. Look into the world around us, and see where are the greater half of them' who walked these streets, seventeen years ago? and of the men who were then eminent for rank and wealth, for fame and power, for station and influence, for guiding and governing, both in Church and State? Kings, Presidents, Rulers, Ministers, Elders, Teachers,—and fathers and mothers in Israel, and fathers and mothers of families, and the fathers and mothers of some of you,—these, and uncounted children and youth have passed away!

It is not unusual on such occasions as the present, to enumerate mere statistical matters,—to exhibit a summary of sermons and marriages, baptisms and funerals,—of the increase and decrease of communicants, of colonizations and contributions for the enlargement of Zion;—and perhaps in all this, there may be a little self-glorification on the part of the minister, while he flatters the pride of his congregation. But there is one item of statistics worthy to be noted in our review, and that demands to be pondered. What a contribution, and in what a light does it appear, when we sum up this day the ravages of death among us. Look around you—into the bosom of your own families, and among the circles of your friends and neighbors, and see how, and of whom this sum has been made up. Where are the dear familiar faces, which once greeted you? Ah! my friends, I am answered by the sombre habiliments of woe, by downcast eyes, by flowing tears,—and, when I go into your houses, by fondly cherished mementoes and relics, and affecting reminiscences, and the lingering sighs and words which still preserve the memory of them whose seats are vacant at your board. Yes; what a contribution is this, that we have rendered to eternity, made up of one half of our congregation; what a colony have we sent off,—full one half of ourselves, already become emigrants from earth, to people that solemn world, that unseen country which men enter through the gloomy portals of the grave!

I look around this house. Cast your eyes around it, too. And what a melancholy change is here. Where are those venerable heads, long familiar to our eyes; where are the fathers, the last relics of the former generation,—the men who took the lead in calling, and welcoming me, when I first came among you? I remember well, how I was interested on becoming first acquainted with this congregation, by the sight of so many, old, grey-headed men, who worshipped here seventeen years ago,—men, whom your memory and mine honors, because their hoary hairs were that crown of glory which invests the head of the aged, when they are found in the way of righteousness. And strange though it might seem, that a mere stripling should for that very

reason, undertake to be the religious instructor of a people among whom were so many who were long before me in Christ,—yet those hoary-headed men, who took me by the hand and welcomed me so cordially, were no small inducement to me to undertake the pastoral office here. Among them, I thought to find rich experience, and wise counsel, and genuine Christian sympathies with the toils, and trials, and difficulties, and the conscious inexperience of a ministry begun in so important a charge, in so extensive a parish, and as the successor of such men of God as had hitherto fulfilled the pastoral office here. Nor was I mistaken. I found in these men all that I respected, all I hoped for. And many are the pleasant and affecting reminiscences of their judicious and affectionate advice, assistance, intercourse, and friendship. But let us look around; seek for those familiar faces—your fathers and patriarchs, so vividly present to our memory, and to our mind's eye. Ah! it was but lately, and they sat here, and there, and all around us.* * * The memory of them all is fragrant here. We look around, as if to see them in their accustomed places; but we cannot see them, they are not here, to day; but there are swelling hearts here, to echo, and to answer the inquiry, “Your fathers, where are they; and the prophets do they live for ever?”

Alas! they are gone! And yet, shall we weep and break our hearts in the selfishness of our bereavement, because we shall see their faces no more? Shall we stand stupified and amazed, like the bereaved Elisha for the rapt Elijah, when we can call to mind how we saw many of them ascending to heaven, as it were in chariots of fire, and with horses of fire,—and vent our grief as he did; “My father! my father! the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.” These have gone to their reward. And He, who gave them to his Church, is still its living Head; and He is Head over all things for the Church, to furnish other lively stones, and other workmen, for the upbuilding of His spiritual temple here. But many others are gone; those who, as our seniors in age, or even merely as our predecessors in death, might be included in the inquiry to-day; “The fathers, where are they?” Half a generation here,—half a congregation dead! And where are they? Those of them who died in the Lord, are with God to-day, and with the Lamb, and with the general assembly and Church of the first-born in heaven,—“where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,”—and there they shall be for ever with the Lord, in the kingdom prepared for them from before the foundation of the world.—Those of them who died in their sins,—who refused the gospel, and obeyed not our Lord Jesus Christ,—where are they? They, too, have gone; gone to

* We omit a paragraph containing a touching record of individual histories; of departed wisdom and piety, and worth, once enjoyed, and now lamented by this people. **ERRON.**

judgment and retribution; gone,—we *must* speak the word of the Lord,—to their own place, vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and the dreadful gulf of hell, which separates the wicked from the righteous, is eternally impassable!

Half a generation gone! and then beside, to think that while we are but separated from this one half of our own generation, by the narrow stream of death, over which all of us must pass, the process of transition is still going on, every moment; even now, we, the other half, in one continuous train, are transferring to eternity; while we speak, the passage is uninterrupted:—

“ Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now;—

Ah!

“ How many to their endless home,
This solemn moment fly—
And *we* are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die.”

“ And the *prophets*, do they live for ever?” This inquiry is important, not only as we consider the affecting thought of their mortality, but, as we revert to the ministrations of former pastors here, and ask what has been the influence of this whole catalogue of pastors and teachers sent unto you, until this day? what has been their influence upon *your* character and prospects for eternity, who still survive? Some of you heard the gospel on this spot, from the lips of the venerable and sainted Rodgers and M'Knight, now gone to their rest, but who being dead, yet speak; and from the lips of their venerable colleagues, Miller, who stands upon the verge of four-score, and Milledoler, who has also closed the stated labors of a ministry of more than half a century. Some of you were baptized by their hands. Others of you have heard that gospel from the lips of their successors, now separated from this charge, and not likely often to utter it to you again. And for seventeen years, for more than two thousand times, you have heard it from these lips that speak to you once more this day, besides hundreds of times more, from other ministers, who have occasionally occupied this pulpit, during my connexion with you. And all these men have passed, or are passing away; and the memory of these thousands of sermons, which have contributed to shape your character and destinies for eternity, rises up, and appeals to you. What impression have they left upon your souls, and what record borne to heaven concerning you? To the children of some of you, these hands have administered the seal of the covenant, in the waters of baptism;—on some of you, my beloved youth, I have sprinkled those holy waters which signified your relation to the covenant, and your dedication to the Lord. Many of you have seen in this sanctuary, and in that which formerly stood here, the manifest tokens of the descent of the spirit of God. Some of you have rejoiced in

souls renewed, and sins forgiven. Some of you have felt the agonies of conviction of sin, but in so far as man can judge, you did not enter into terms of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, when His spirit strove with you. Some have been thoughtful,—perhaps are thoughtful now. And some have utterly despised the word and ordinances of the Lord's house; and for some, the table of the Lord has been spread scores of times in vain, for you have turned away from the symbols of the living bread, and refused the memorials of the atoning blood. Some have sinned against light and knowledge. Some have hardened themselves against God, and how have they prospered who are still utterly unmoved, in rebelling, and resisting the Holy Ghost!

And now let me appeal to you personally: Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? How stands it between your soul and God? Ye *Christians*, are you growing in grace, letting your light shine, and ripening for heaven? Ye *tempted and afflicted ones*, are the consolations of God small with you, and what good have you extracted from your sorrows? Ye, who have been *awakened*, are ye still anxious for your salvation, or, do ye now believe? Ye *careless ones* and despisers of the gospel, how long will ye behold, and wonder and perish in your unbelief against the word of God, which we have declared unto you? Ye *parents*, how have you honored and observed the promise which is to you, and your children, by training them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Ye *baptised persons*,—baptised men and women, who have hitherto trifled with your birth-right, and defrauded your children of theirs,—and ye young persons and children, who have been baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, what use have you made, and what use are you making of the privilege, and of the promise of God, and of the covenant of adoption, and of your own solemn obligations therein, and what requital are you making to that blessed Savior, who authorised your introduction to the seal of naturalization in his church, by commanding, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven!" Are ye yet in your sins? And all ye, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, what are ye doing, and what have you done with the providences, and mercies, and trials, and means of grace, which God has employed with you, and in which you have been connected with the ministry of God's servants, the prophets who have passed, and are passing rapidly with you to that judgment-seat, where all of us must soon give account?

Let me appeal: And now, how many scenes rise up, in which you and I have mingled together: I have united some of you in marriage, blessed the nuptial bond, and prayed, when

I exhorted you then, that your houses might be Bethels, that the fire of devotion might be kindled by your hands on the domestic altar and burn in your hearts, and that you, and your partners, and your children, might become heirs together of the grace of life: Have you performed your engagements, and honored your mercies? have you set up the domestic altar, and, as sons and daughters have been born unto you, sought diligently, and prayerfully, to train them up in the way they should go? and have you given yourselves unto the Lord, and dedicated your offspring unto God, before His altars, and in the courts of the Lord's house? Again, I have sat at your bed-side, when you were sick, and afraid to die; and I saw your anguish, and counselled you then, and I prayed for you, and prayed with you, and I heard your vows and hopes; and again, you recovered: But where are your vows to-day, and how have they been kept? Again, I have followed not a few from among you to the grave, and how many affecting scenes in the house of mourning, rise now before my memory, and yours. Sometimes the aged father or mother in Israel, who, like a shock of corn fully ripe, died in peace, and entered upon the joy of the Lord. And sometimes, the youthful Christian, gathered with the early dead, but not too soon for him, nor too soon for the heaven for which grace had made him meet to be a partaker. And these were your dead, and mine, mine also sleep in your burial-places side by side with yours. Have you, their children, their brothers, sisters, or friends, been profited by their death, so that you have become followers of them who, through grace and patience, have inherited the promises? And sometimes, it was the aged sinner, "laden with guilt and heavy woes;" and sometimes, the young sinner, cut off in his guilty career, and from his deceitful hopes and plans: And you have seen it, too; and have you trembled, and turned unto God, when He spared you, while He was striking them down and destroying them at your very side, and, amid this scene which was meant for mercy to you, warned you by the hopeless end of them who "died and made no sign?" And sometimes, it was the father or mother, in the very prime of life, prostrated by insidious disease, and leaving the widowed partner like a lonely partridge, to mourn in solitude, and the hapless babes to bewail their lot of orphanage. And again, the sweet and blooming infant, and the budding youth of girlhood, and the young man in his pride of strength,—just fixed his footsteps on the threshold of manly life,—have offered a shining mark and inviting target for the shaft of the insatiated archer,—and parents have lamented in the bitterness of grief, and, in their anguish, burst forth in passionate exclaiming, "My child, my child! would God I had died for thee, my child!" And yet again, the wedding feast has been spread, and a tender but pleasant luxury of sweet and timid sorrow, has mingled with the joy of

the bridegroom and the bride—but soon, alas! yea, sometimes ere the appointed day came round, another partner claimed the plighted hand, and the bridal couch was exchanged for the winding-sheet, and the cold, dark grave, and the felicitations of kinsmen and friends, for the embrace and brotherhood of corruption and the worm, that feed sweetly in their hideous, loathsome revelry, on the fair, but unresisting and helpless form, alike of delicate beauty and sinewy manhood. Whose house has not death invaded!

My friends, you have shared these scenes, and I have shared them with you. They are of the incidents in your domestic history. In these and like afflictions you have sought the presence and counsels, the consolations and prayers of your minister. And the God of all comfort hath even united us with you in tenderer sympathies, as partakers of like afflictions, that so we might be the better able to instruct and comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God—that our affliction and consolation might be for your consolation and salvation, through the close and enduring bonds of communion in sorrow and communion in joy. And now, I ask you, how you have borne these sorrows, and read these affecting lessons of Providence, and gained, as wisdom and grace can gain,—extracting spiritual life and health, even from the gloom of the house of mourning, and from the fields and ravages of death!

I seek not, in waking up these tender recollections, to wound stricken hearts afresh, nor to provoke a mere momentary sigh, nor barely to unseal as for this little moment, the fountain of your tears. And yet, why should not both you and I weep, unmindful of fastidious propriety, and indulging the luxury of grief and the salutary sorrow sanctioned by our great high priest, whose heart of tenderness overflowed, when standing beside the tomb of his friend Lazarus, and surrounded by the tearful Martha and Mary, and the sympathising friends of that lovely, bereaved family of Bethany, even “Jesus wept.”

But still, we would use these scenes to mark the flight of time, and to suggest inquiries as to what we have laid to heart, and what has been the influence upon our spiritual condition, of all this mingled sorrow and kindness, warning and rebuke, mercies and means of grace, which we review this day? Oh! with what spirit, with what saving impression and sanctified emotion, shall our hearts dwell upon the questions, where are the friends of our youth? Where our loved ones? Where are the dead? Where are *we*, and whither do we tend? and what is our portion in the gospel, and our portion in eternity?

How oft have your ministers toiled in pastoral labors, waking while you slept, now trimming the midnight lamp, and now meditating on their sleepless couch, late in the watches of the

night, and now bending the knee in prayers for you, while they kept these vigils of which your slumbers were unconscious, and of the meaning of which you are too unconscious even while you wake. Why do I speak thus publicly, of these private, personal exercises, and secluded studies in the word of God? It is because you are concerned in them. They are of the cares and labors of the prophets and ministers of God, on your behalf. It is that I may appeal to you, who have the fruits of our labors, and ask you, "What fruits of your salvation shall we have in requital of our ministry among you?"

And let the solemn tones of the question which is uttered from the lips of the Lord of Hosts, ring in your ears, and be repeated in your resounding hearts, until it forces you to repentance and to peace with God; until you comprehend the fulness of that merciful solicitude with which your God is asking you, "Your fathers, where are they, and the prophets, do they live for ever?"

SERMON CCCCLXIX.

BY REV. JAMES M. MACDONALD,

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SYMPATHY WITH CHRIST.

"But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

"And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but, to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."—MATTHEW XX: 22, 23.

THE two disciples of our Lord, who applied to have special posts of honor assigned to them in His kingdom, were ignorant of what was involved in their request. Such honor could be shared, only, by their having, in another respect, been common sharers with their Lord. They must drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism. James and John desired to sit, the one on His right hand, and the other on His left; they are given to understand that in order to be joint heirs with Christ in His glory, they must be ready to suffer with Him; for, if so be that we suffer with Him, we shall be also glorified together.