



THE  
SUBJECT AND SPIRIT  
OF  
THE MINISTRY.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE SYNOD OF NEW-YORK AT THE OPENING  
OF ITS LATE SESSIONS AT NEWBURGH,

Oct. 16th, 1838.

BY ERSKINE MASON,

MODERATOR OF THE SYNOD.

NEW-YORK:

E. FRENCH, 146 NASSAU STREET.

MDCCCXXXVIII.



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*New-York, Oct. 20th, 1838.*

**Rev. ERSKINE MASON, D. D.**

**DEAR BROTHER,**

The undersigned members of the Synod of New-York, believing that the publication of the Sermon delivered by you at the opening of the late sessions of that body, would be seasonable, and productive of much benefit, earnestly request you to furnish a copy of the same for the press.

We are with the highest regard,

Your brethren in Christ,

|                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| THOMAS H. SKINNER, | WILLIAM PATTON,    |
| J. W. McLANE,      | JOHN J. OWEN,      |
| ASA D. SMITH,      | EDWIN F. HATFIELD, |
| WILLIAM BRADLEY,   | CHARLES PORTER,    |
| S. G. SPEES,       | N. E. JOHNSON,     |
| SAMUEL H. COX,     | WILLIAM B. LEWIS,  |
| HENRY A. ROWLAND,  | D. LEAVITT,        |
| JAMES J. OSTROM,   | BENJAMIN LABAREE,  |
| HENRY A. RILEY,    | CHARLES HALL,      |
| W. ADAMS,          | MARCUS WILBUR,     |
| PETER ROE,         | ANSON G. PHELPS,   |
| ABSALOM PETERS.    |                    |

*New-York, Nov. 10th, 1838.*

**REV. THOMAS H. SKINNER, D. D., WM. PATTON, D. D.  
&c. &c.**

**DEAR BRETHREN,**

In compliance with your request, I submit to your disposal the Sermon preached by me at the opening of the late sessions of the Synod of New-York. My own wishes would never have given it to the press, but I do not feel at liberty to decline a request made by so many of my brethren in whom I have confidence. I should prefer also to give it corrections and amendments before submitting it to the public eye ; but circumstances, which I need not mention, have determined me to publish it in the very words in which it was delivered. You have it, therefore, precisely as it was preached.

I am, with the greatest respect,

Your brother in the gospel,

**ERSKINE MASON.**

## A S E R M O N .

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IId. Epistle to the *Corinthians*, chap. IV. v. 5, first part, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord."

I SHALL use my text upon this occasion as presenting the subject matter and spirit of apostolical ministrations, and as disclosing the secret of their success. It is unworthy of the Christian, no less than the philosopher, to contemplate these ideas dissociated from each other. The latter, if he be worthy of the name, and so desirous of tracing effects to their causes, will naturally inquire, what it was that gave to the first heralds of the cross a power over the minds of men which seemed little short of omnipotence itself; and the Christian minister, with any thing of the spirit of his office, will wish to contemplate the results of apostolical labors in their connections, that he may learn what deficiencies there are in his own case, or

what untoward influences, so far as he is concerned, prevent a similar success from attending his own ministrations.

I shall not, upon the present occasion, occupy your time and exhaust your patience by a lengthened examination of the various principles upon which different men have attempted to explain the wonderful success attendant upon the early publication of the gospel. We all admit, that in reference to the efficiency which secured these wonderful results, we dare not stop short of the eternal throne itself in our inquiries after its source—for while “*Paul planted and Apollos watered, God gave the increase.*” Our inquiries, therefore, must relate to the instrumentalities used, and the circumstances in connexion with which those instrumentalities were attended with so much power, and their application was followed by such wonderful effects.

A single glance will discover, that whatever may be said upon this point, the success of which we speak, must ultimately be resolved into the gospel itself, and the manner and spirit which marked its publication. It is true, there may have been circumstances peculiarly favorable to its rapid advancement at the time referred to ; it is true, there was the gift of inspiration ; it is true, there was the power of work-

ing miracles, largely dispensed to the primitive church; but they were called for, not to give success to the gospel, but to prepare the way for it, to achieve its own wonders: and unless it can be shown that circumstances are of such a nature now, as to call for a similar bestowment, they can never with justice be brought forward to explain the difference between the results of present and primitive ministrations; since they all were but adventitious, growing out of the fact that the gospel was then a novelty, and out of the peculiar state of society. If circumstances, connected with the political organizations of society, are no less favorable to the gospel now, than they were in primitive times; if we, "*upon whom the ends of the world have come*," find already done for us what it was the design of miraculous endowments to do for the Apostles, it is unfair, unphilosophical, unchristian, to account for their superior success by their extraordinary qualifications, which served only to place them in circumstances equally favorable with our own, to the effective ministrations of the truth.

No, my Brethren; it was "*the sword of the spirit*," and the manner in which it was wielded under God, that explains the wonderful doings of apostolical days. The first heralds of the cross started out with the world for their field, and its salvation for their prize;

they carried with them the simple message of reconciliation through the cross, their own hearts imbued with its spirit ; and wherever they could gain attention to their message, its triumphs followed ; and the simple tale of the cross accomplished, what the wisdom of the wise and the learning of the learned had failed to do, a moral revolution. The prejudice of the Jew was disarmed ; the superstition of the people gave way, and over all the obstacles which prejudice, and superstition, and interest, and wickedness could throw in its way, the religion of the cross advanced, till we find its power acknowledged, and its altars erected in the very household of the Cæsars. Such was the result of apostolic labors. This, as given by an Apostle himself, explains it, “ *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.*”

I shall ask the attention of my Brethren in the ministry for a few moments, while I endeavor to point out the instrumentality upon which we must depend, and the spirit we must cherish and manifest, in order to success in the work to which our master has called us.

I. When the Son of God sent forth his disciples to their work, this was the language of their commission, “ *Go preach my gospel.*” Under this commis-

sion every ambassador of the cross, from that day to the present, has acted; for we know of no other authority under which any man has rightfully exercised the office of a herald of the cross. The language of the commission seems to be general, and yet it is sufficiently specific. The object to be accomplished, is the conversion of man; the instrument of its accomplishment, the gospel of Christ. They were to carry with them no other weapon, use no other instrumentality, depend upon no other means. Here nothing has been left to human wisdom; and he who, in attempting to accomplish his master's work, puts his own wisdom in the place of the wisdom of him who sent him, and relies upon a different instrumentality from that which has been furnished him, does so upon his own responsibility; and must bear the reproach, not only of his own failure, but of all the injury which results to the cause of Christ through his, however well-meant, yet injudicious endeavors.

By the gospel of Christ, as an instrument of human conversion, I suppose we are to understand all those principles which cluster around the doctrine of vicarious atonement as their common centre; the lost, ruined, helpless condition of man as a sinner, the provision which the grace of God has made for him involving the nature, character, the righteousness even

unto death of Jesus Christ as the ground of pardon ; the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, and the promises of good, as well as threatnings of evil, which have been sealed in atoning blood. These, and their correlative truths, usually comprised under the general term of gospel, constitute the exhibition to us of those great facts, in view of which we are brought into the kingdom of God, and prepared for eternal glory. They all give rise to, spring from, or serve to illustrate the sufferings of the Son of God. You cannot find a single doctrinal statement in the New Testament which does not carry you directly to the cross, or for the explanation of which you must not go to that cross. You cannot find a single motive, nor a single explanation, nor a single offer, nor a single warning, nor a single appeal, to which the cross of Christ does not give meaning and power—*that* is the radiating point of light and heat to the whole system. Blot out from the gospel the doctrine of Christ's vicarious atonement, and you rob it of all its vitality ; and it remains to be seen what you have left, beyond the frigid influence of infidelity, or what effectiveness your teachings carry along with them to correct the evils of the human heart, to give peace to the human conscience, or to make man like his God.

It is evident, if what I have advanced is true, that the power of the gospel lies *in the facts themselves*, which it discloses. It is by bringing *them* into contact with the human mind that you secure the results of the gospel; and whatever you may do, however ingeniously you may argue, however earnestly you may labor, however impassioned may be your appeals; you argue, and labor, and appeal in vain, so long as the great facts of the gospel system are not brought to tell with power upon the conscience and the heart. There is such a thing as speculating *about* the gospel, taking up its principles as mere themes of philosophical investigation; approaching it and handling it as a mere theory, which passes sometimes under the name of preaching the gospel, which is, after all, nothing more than exhibiting one's own philosophy; and which, placing that philosophy in the front ground before the human mind, conceals the great facts of the revelation of God; and is, therefore, not only without beneficial result, but prevents those facts from producing their designed effect, standing, as it does, between the mind and their perception.

I do not mean, by this remark, to cast odium upon what is called the philosophy of Christianity, nor to rebuke as wrong all inquiries into the mode of the truth's operation, and the best methods of presenting

the facts of the gospel. Every minister of Jesus Christ must be a Christian philosopher, if he would be "*a workman, that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*;" he must be one, if he would remove the obstacles which a false philosophy has interposed to the influence of the truth; he must be one if he would work a way for the truth through the varied and almost endlessly diversified windings of the human bosom, and find for it a lodgement in the human mind; and he who cannot be one, is unfit for the office which he exercises.

And this, what I call the philosophy of Christianity, presents a legitimate field for the exercise of the human mind. There may be diversities here in the *results* at which different minds may arrive; but so long as the facts themselves of the gospel are brought out to view in all their distinctness, the power of the gospel remains, since that power is found not in the philosophy of those facts, but in the facts themselves. When I speak of, and condemn, speculations about the gospel, I refer to all attempts to philosophize *away* its facts, or to those laborious arguments which give the mind nothing but philosophy; which make the *rationale*, if I may so speak, the main thing, and truth secondary; which may teach men to reason, but not to believe; which may show them how they ought to

be convinced, but never convict them; how they ought to repent, but present them nothing in view of which to repent : in fine, which makes philosophers, or rather sciolists in philosophy, sometimes ; but Christians, never. Let a man philosophize as much as he pleases ; but against two things let him be on his guard—philosophizing away the facts of the gospel, and bringing his philosophy with him into the pulpit. He may use it to guide him in his exhibition of truth ; he may use it in giving shape to his argument, place to his exhortations, and time to his appeals ; but let him never use it *as itself*, an instrument for the accomplishment of saving results. A minister of Christ may in his study be a philosopher always ; in his pulpit, never.

There may be also oftentimes a dependence upon extraneous means and instrumentalities, which is utterly inconsistent with preaching the gospel. We have heard of those who are very fond of untried methods, and would search for hitherto undiscovered instrumentalities of conversion, seeming to forget that there is but one appointed instrumentality of conversion, as old as the apostles' day, and the only one which they have a right to use. The process of experimenting is as dangerous in the Church as it is in the State, and must always lead to melancholy results ; and it

says but little for any man's wisdom, it says but little for his holiness, that he is not satisfied with an instrumentality which Christ himself appointed, and which apostles wielded with such amazing power and such glorious success. If the gospel is not as successful in my hands as it should be, it is no very striking proof of my humility that I should look for the reason in the gospel itself, rather than in my own heart or my mode of preaching the gospel. I should find enough to occupy my wisdom and strength there, without expending them in efforts to alter and improve the arrangements of Jesus Christ.

Here, however, I would note a distinction by too many, as appears to me, overlooked, between a *dependence* on outward means and the *use* of such means, to give effect to the gospel upon the minds of men. It is against the first I inveigh; the latter, I dare not condemn. Upon this point, however, all the wisdom and discretion we can summon to our aid, is needful to guard us against error. We shall find, in spite of ourselves, that when apparent success in gospel ministrations, is connected with some outward movements, we will be prone to transfer our dependence from the gospel itself to those movements, and so dishonor the appointment of our master in order to honor ourselves. And yet no man can say, that in

some circumstances, peculiar action may not be called for, by that wisdom which every ambassador of the cross should possess; neither can any man rightfully condemn such action, when, instead of being put forward as the main ground of dependence, and so being made to displace the truth of God from its proper position, that truth itself is relied upon; and this action is intended only to give us a vantage ground for using the truth; especially when such action does not contravene the letter or spirit of the New Testament, if it be not in strict accordance with both.

The design of these remarks, as my Brethren will perceive, is to enforce this position,—that the main instrument, in fact the only instrument, upon which an ambassador of Christ may depend, is the truth of God; and that truth, as exhibiting the great facts of the gospel system; and if a man places his dependence, or, if not his entire dependence, his main dependence, elsewhere, whatever may be said of his ingenuity, power, or eloquence, it can never be affirmed with correctness of him that he preaches the gospel of Christ.

All of you, my Brethren, are perfectly familiar with the history of the first preachers of the gospel, as it tends to illustrate and confirm this simple principle. Paul was determined to know nothing among those

to whom he went, but Christ crucified. In looking at the results of his labors and those of his contemporaries, in contrast with all that had been accomplished by human wisdom, he triumphantly asks, "*Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*" and he did so by the foolishness of preaching, the sum and substance of which was "*Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.*" The first ambassadors of Christ acted upon the principle that they had no right to use any other instrument but the cross, and their experience demonstrated that they needed none other. Wherever they went, they carried with them the same message; and whether their hearers were Jews or Gentiles—whether they were the common people or philosophers—whether they were rich or poor, the same message answered for all. If their object was to convince of sin, they pointed to Christ; if to bind up the broken heart, or give peace to the wounded conscience; if to edify the saints or reprove the backslider, they had recourse to the same exhibition of facts for all their arguments, all their exhortations, and all their appeals. Every doctrine they advanced had direct reference to him "*Who put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;*" and

for every duty they inculcated, they found their motives in Jesus Christ. In short, they constantly moved in that circle of which he is the centre ; and all the lines of their ministry found in him their common and ultimate termination. If the Jews on the day of Pentecost were pricked to their hearts, it was as they heard Peter preaching Christ. If the eunuch was brought to the knowledge of the truth, it was as Philip preached unto him Christ. If the jailor believed with all his house, it was as Paul and Silas pointed him to Christ. The Apostles would not preach in the enticing words of man's wisdom, affecting the style of the philosophers of their day, knowing that the truth of God needed not human help to make its way in the world. Yet Paul was a man of learning and philosophy ; and while he used all the advantages with which, in these respects, Providence had favored him—advantages easily perceived in the skill with which he used the sword of the Spirit, and in the arrangement of all his arguments—you can see at a single glance that his whole object is to give prominence to the facts and principles upon which he placed his dependence. He reasoned, and so may we ; but he reasoned to commend truth to the conscience, and so must we.

It is worthy, also, of remark, that the Apostles

looked upon the gospel as the best not merely, but as the *only* source of cure for *all* the evils of sin. They did not deem any preparation necessary for them to work effectually in the prosecution of their design. We find no great array of preparatory means—no machinery set in operation to clear away obstacles. The gospel itself was sufficient to remove every obstacle and prepare its own way. It was not their doctrine, that you must first, independently of the gospel, cure some disorders of the human mind, or rectify some existing errors in human society, which stand in the way of the triumphs of the cross. They expected the gospel itself to cure these disorders and rectify these errors; and the way in which they reached specific sins was, not by a direct attack upon those sins, but by bringing the hearts of men under the influence of the truth. They would cure the prejudice of the Jew by a direct effort to make him a believer in Christ. They would put an end to the idolatry and lasciviousness, and intemperate excesses of a heathen world, by bringing them nigh to God through the blood of his Son; and, instead of stopping to instruct the ignorant as a previous step to their conversion, they would enlighten, and instruct, and sanctify, and save them by one and the same application.

It was thus that they passed through the world, leaving everywhere the proofs of the efficacy of the gospel, erecting in every place the monuments of the power of the cross.

Brethren we have the same great instrument which they had. We have the same Providence to arrange our circumstances which they had. We are dependent upon the same divine influences ; and the promise, "*lo ! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,*" is as good for us as it was for them. In view of the contrast between our limited success and their glorious triumphs, while we preach, and say, "*Lord who hath believed our report,*" and yet read the record of their history as a history of unparalleled success ; is there not occasion for us to pause, and institute an inquiry into our method of using the great instrument of conversion, that we may ascertain whether our comparative want of success may not be attributed to the fact, that while we have the gospel, we do not exhibit the gospel as we should ; or, if we do thus exhibit it, it is not in our minds the only or the main instrument upon which our dependence is placed. For if we have lost sight of this great truth—that it is through the foolishness of preaching Christ and him crucified alone, that God saves men, and are

depending upon other instrumentalities, the cause of failure is at once discovered.

It may, however, be conceded to us, that we have in use the same means which Apostles had ; still the inquiry remains, Do we use them with their spirit ? and a few remarks upon the proper spirit of the ministry shall now occupy your attention.

1. And here I need hardly say to you, my Brethren, that no man can be truly said to *preach* Christ, who is not himself personally interested in his theme. I know that the words of the gospel may be uttered—and the arguments of the gospel may be advanced—and the consciences of men may be plied with the claims and appeals of the gospel. It may all be done with eloquence of diction, and grace of utterance ; it may disclose the workings of a powerful genius, and constrain men to do homage to the might of intellect ; but there is no *preaching of the gospel*. The science of experience, and the language consecrated to it, may be mastered ; but the gospel will not be preached. No man can preach who does not himself perceive the glory of Christ, and know the preciousness of Christ. Spiritual knowledge, spiritual feeling, and the powerful impulse which is derived from principle alone, are essential requisites to a preacher. Without them there may be fire, but it will be false ;

there may be an unction, but it will be spurious. Under ministrations however clear, however powerful, as exhibitions of intellect, yet unbaptized with the spirit of Christ, not a cord will be touched, not a heart will be moved. Give a man what you please, in point of genius, learning, eloquence, he wants more to make him a preacher—he wants that genius enlightened, that learning directed, and those lips of eloquence touched by the spirit of his master. Let him but be gifted with a spiritual discernment, and the change is amazing. New treasures of every kind will be disclosed; floods of sublime emotion, fields of brilliant imagery, and super-human power of persuasiveness. It is not eloquence, in the proper sense of that term, that constitutes the rod of the ministry; it is the tone of their feeling, the holy unction of their utterance; and this is the result of the impressions of the gospel upon their own souls. This is, in fact, the ground-work of all excellence; the first, the chief element of all pastoral competency; and when we read this remarkable resolution of the Apostles, “*We will give ourselves continually to prayer,*” we seem to have reached the secret of their soul prosperity, their preaching eminence, their wonderful success. They preached the gospel, because they felt the gospel. God was with them, as they were with God. I feel

upon this subject that days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom; and upon the present theme, it is more proper that my seniors should speak to me than I to them. And yet I do but give enforcement to their own convictions, when I say, that in this age in which we live, and in the circumstances in which we are placed, the exhortation to each one of us, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence,*" is peculiarly appropriate. The scenes through which we are passing are not the most favorable to spirituality of mind; and it would be strange if none of us were obliged to testify that we needed greatly the reviving influences of the grace of God. I do not touch upon the subjects which agitate us, nor the unhappy conflicts in which our church is engaged, nor the fact of our distraction, for the purpose of determining their character; but merely to inquire if their tendency is not to becloud our own spiritual perceptions, blunt the edge of our spiritual feeling, and so take from us the rod of our ministry. Oh! if I am right in my supposition as to the requisites of a herald of the cross; if a man must possess the spirit of Christ in order to preach Christ; is there not room for the inquiry, whether we do indeed preach Christ? and if the spirit of our office is gone, no wonder that its results are absent also.

2. The spirit of the ministry is a spirit of self-renunciation, *We preach not ourselves.*" In the statement of this general principle, and in its truth, we shall all agree, while it is possible that through the deceitfulness of our hearts we may be blind to our constant contradiction of it. It is not only when our aim in our office is the promotion of private interest, that we do preach ourselves. We may pour our severest censures upon the man who would say, "*Put me into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread,*" or give vent to a burst of holy indignation against him who uses his office for the purposes of earthly emolument, while at the same time we may be involved in the same condemnation with himself.

We may preach ourselves when we are as far removed as possible from the influence of mere pecuniary considerations. There are temptations of an intellectual kind, the dangers of which must be seen to be many and powerful by every man who knows any thing of his own heart. They exist in proportion to the greatness or splendor of endowments which God has bestowed upon him who exercises the ministerial office. "*An eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures,*" may be above the gratification which thousands and tens of thousands of silver and gold would bestow ;

and yet he may preach himself, by aiming at the applause of his listening auditory. It is always so with him who is more concerned about the impression he makes upon the minds of his hearers as to the character of his exhibitions of truth, than about the impression he makes upon their minds respecting Christ. Though a man may understand the gospel, he may conceal its glorious object behind the display of his own powers; and he may use that object, as it may serve to fix the attention of men more firmly and exclusively upon himself. He holds up the pole, but the brazen serpent is invisible; and so charms the ears with the sound of the silver trumpets, as to make the people forget the jubilee they are intended to proclaim. Such a man preaches himself, not Christ Jesus the Lord.

The same thing may be affirmed of all whose object is solely, or chiefly even, to advance a particular system, or further the interests of a particular sect. There is such a thing as being more concerned about our own peculiarities than about Christ, about making proselytes to our cause than about making Christians. And the spirit of which I speak presents itself almost always to the public view, under the guise of a great regard for the cause of religion. The man whom it controls would rather that man not should

receive the gospel, than receive it in any other connexions than those in which he presents it. He would rather men should remain impenitent, than be converted to Christ in a way which should not illustrate the excellencies of his system or his sect. Such a spirit is not the product of any one particular system; it is the natural result of any and every religious system when pressed to extremes, when, of course, it becomes perfectly exclusive. Men, under the influence of this spirit, do not in words, but they do in fact, claim infallibility; "*We are right, and all others are wrong,*" is their motto, not proclaimed perhaps, but nevertheless acted upon; and wherever it may be formed, and by whatever lips put forth, in whatever garb it may be dressed, it is everywhere the same—the offspring of bigotry, the war-whoop of persecution; and you may call a man under the influence of such a spirit a preacher of Christ; God knows him as a preacher of himself. How different, my brethren, how very different, the spirit of the Apostles. The wealth of the world was not the object of their ambition, but its salvation. The opinion of the world was nothing, provided Christ was exalted. They could rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake. Paul could call himself "*the least of all saints,*" and say he was "*not worthy to be called an Apostle.*" Let

his place be any where, he was satisfied so long as Christ was honored and men were saved. He could live for Christ, or he could die for Christ, as Christ could be honored most in his life or in his death ; and so far was he from that spirit, to which we have above adverted, as unwilling to acknowledge any but those who sympathized with him in every thing as preachers of Christ, that even when men preached Christ of envy and strife, and from a desire to inflict upon himself personal injury, he could say, "*Notwithstanding Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, and will rejoice.*" And without this apostolical temper, give a man whatever other qualifications you may, you can never make him a preacher of Christ crucified.

It may well be made a matter of inquiry, how much the success of the gospel is dependent upon the possession of such a temper upon the part of its ministers ; certain it is, that where it obtains, those hindrances to the truth do not exist which often impede its triumphs, and over which we are often called to mourn. Am I wrong in supposing that we are, on the ground of the absence of such a spirit, to account for those collisions and jealousies, those animosities and heart-burnings, which, existing among those whose object is the advancement of the glory of the

same master, mar the beauty of the church of Christ ; and, by distracting her counsels and dividing her energies, diminish her strength ? I cannot be condemned for such a supposition, as inconsistent either with the teachings of philosophy or the laws of Christian charity. I find Apostles in this manner explaining the divisions which rent some of the early churches, and the difficulties among themselves with which they had to contend. The love of personal pre-eminence, the spirit of Diotrophes, has occasioned more heart-burnings and alienations, more strifes and contentions, in the visible Kingdom of Christ, than any other cause ; I had almost said, than all other causes combined.

Upon this point the history of the church is no equivocal teacher. If you look over the page of that history, you will find, if I mistake not, that the lines of separation between different parts of the church of Christ have been drawn, not by the spirit of Christ, nor by a love of the truth, but by a spirit of self. What has been, in the first instance, a defence of the truth, has degenerated into a contest for victory, upon purely personal grounds,—an opinion advanced, a position taken, has enlisted more energy and effort in its defence, than the glory of the master ; and the lines of separation between the follow-

ers of the Redeemer have never been so marked that the world could perceive the distinction, until bitterness, and acrimony, and personal animosity, have demonstrated that the combatants were actuated more by a pride of opinion, love of place, desire of victory, than by that spirit which lays self and all its interests at the foot of the cross ; and perhaps the ecclesiastical historian cannot discover a single breach in Zion, which, at its commencement, might not have been healed, had the spirit of Christ, the spirit of self-renunciation, prevailed at the outset, instead of a spirit of blind and conceited partizanship. If I speak to those who know any thing of themselves, as having been taught by the Holy Ghost, I need not tell them how very deceitful the human heart is ; how easily we may suppose ourselves actuated by a different motive, controlled by a different influence, from that which in reality sways and directs us. What seems to be an angel of light may be the devil in a stolen garb ; what we persuade ourselves is the love of Christ, may be the love of self.

There were differences in the primitive church : Paul and Barnabas contended till they separated, and Paul arrayed himself against Peter ; but there was no such thing as the strife of partizanship between them, no such thing as arraying their influence

against each other, no such thing as an endeavor to thwart each other in their efforts ; and any one can perceive, that had a spirit of self, in either case, prevailed and acted itself out, as it has often done since in similar circumstances, the early church might have been distracted throughout its whole boundaries, and we never should have read the record of its unparalleled success. Let me not be considered as advocating a time-serving or temporizing policy, or as justifying any thing like a compromise between truth and error. I would contend for the honor of my master, but I would do so in the spirit of my master. I would have every Christian disciple to lose sight of himself in the glory of that cross whose triumphs he would advance ; and instead of being actuated by personal considerations, pride of opinion, of character, of party, of sect,—to be governed by that temper which would lead him to lay himself in the dust, and let his opponent ride triumphantly over him ; if by such self-renunciation the glory of the cross would be promoted. Of one thing I am sure, my Brethren ; if we lie low ourselves at the foot of the cross, we do not occupy a position favorable for strife ; if the spirit of Christ animates, pervades, and controls us, we cannot become blind partizans ; if we lose sight of ourselves, we will lose sight of the motives in which

most of the evils which afflict the church of Christ originate.

3. Let me remark, in conclusion, that the spirit with which we must preach the gospel must be one of simple, absolute dependence upon God. If there be one truth, the influence of which we, as ministers of Christ, should feel more than another, it is this, "*neither is he that planteth any thing, neither is he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase.*" The whole arrangement of God in this matter, is such, as that every success in preaching may be traced directly to himself. He hath "*put this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of men.*" A minister of Christ never goes to his work so inadequately furnished as when he feels the strongest confidence in the arguments he is about to use. There is a kind of dependence upon self, of which it is difficult to divest the mind, and yet under the influence of which we always fail. It would be surprising were it otherwise. We dishonor God by clothing ourselves with his own attributes, and then perhaps wonder that he does not honor us. It is hard, I know, after having labored long, and expended our utmost skill in arranging and presenting the truth of God, to feel that our efforts, our skill, our labor, in themselves are nothing

without a higher power to accompany them ; to feel that we, with our mightiest efforts to convince, convert, and save men, are like the prophet, carrying a common threshing-flail to beat the mountains into chaff ; and yet we must feel so, if we would be successful.

So felt the Apostles ; they were nothing in themselves ; they hung their hope upon the influences of the promised spirit ; hence they were men of prayer, of ardent, importunate, persevering prayer ; they labored, if I may speak so, upon their knees, and went forth to their work carrying with them the power of the Holy Ghost, which their prayers had already subsidized. So it has been with every successful ambassador of the cross ; so it has been with the church in the hour of her greatest triumphs ; and we have reason to believe, that in proportion as this spirit of prayer, evincive of a sense of dependence upon God, returns, the obstacles which impede the triumphs of the gospel will be removed ; mountains will be exalted, and vallies will be filled ; and the ministers of Christ, as they go forth to their work with no other instrumentalities than the truths of the gospel, will find continual reason to exclaim,

“ These weapons of our holy war,  
Of what Almighty force they are.”

My Brethren in the ministry, we occupy a position of solemn responsibility. I shall not undertake to unfold its nature or to define its extent ; I may safely say, however, that for every failure of the gospel to accomplish its result, which is traceable distinctly to our failure to use the proper instrumentalities, or to use them with the proper spirit, we are answerable. Did we feel the truth of this principle as we ought, what different men should we be. How should we study, that we might preach the gospel ; how should we watch our own hearts, that we might preach it aright. It seems to me, that a sense of our responsibilities to God and to our fellow men would in many points correct us, and give to our efforts for the glory of God and the salvation of souls an abiding and powerful impulse. How that sense of responsibility would dethrone self ; how it would rob minor things, upon which we lay so much stress, of their importance ; how it would allay all personal feelings and bitter animosities, and lead us to strengthen each other's hands and encourage each other's hearts ; how it would make us feel our dependence upon heaven ; so that, in all our efforts each one of us should say, "*my soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.*" Under the weight of such a responsibility, we should have but little time,

and less desire to expend on many things, which now engross so much of our attention, and occupy so many of our hours; we should feel that we had *this one thing* to do,—to make full proof of our ministry.

Brethren, that responsibility rests upon us, whether we feel it or not; and it is hurrying us forward with amazing rapidity to the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. Soon, very soon, you and I, my Brother, will lay down our ministry, and with it our record, at the bar of the Son of God. Then there will be a solemn disclosure, not of results merely, but of feelings and motives. Every secret thing will be unfolded, whether it be good or bad; and the question which should concern every man, and especially every one who holds the high office of an ambassador of Christ, is not, what shall be the present gain of my course; not, whether I shall attain a particular earthly end; but how will the wishes I cherish, the motives which prompt me, the designs I contemplate, the course I pursue, appear, when they shall be unfolded in the light of the burning throne? The judgment, my Brethren, the judgment is just before us; the day of unerring discovery, of impartial examination, of righteous and irreversible decision is at hand; the voice of God has sounded the warning. Our Brethren who have gone, and are daily dropping

around us, herald its approach. The master says, "*Behold I come quickly.*" Brethren, be it ours to think, to feel, to speak, to pray, to preach, to plan, to labor,—so that we may be enabled to respond, with cheerful and triumphant spirits, "*Amen, even so come Lord Jesus.*" Amen.

23 A168