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SERMONIC.

WILL GOD DWELL WITH MEN?

BY BISHOP MATTHEW SIMPSON, IN MADISON AVENUE M. E. CHURCH, NEW YORK.

But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?—2 Chron. vi: 18.

THE human soul in its better moments longs for the knowledge and friendship of God; and to many a heart the question comes as it did to Solomon: "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" Will He come to *my* heart; shall I know Him in His presence and in the fullness of His power? There are times of prosperity, of health, with friends around us, with our usual wants supplied, when we think little of God, and the soul does not feel so much that there is need of Him. But to every one of us there has come, or will come, moments of anxiety, moments of sorrow, moments when we shall feel that there is no human friend that can supply for us that which we need. There will come a time when the soul is about to quit its abode in this earthly tabernacle and to go out alone into eternity; and then, when all human help is felt to fail, the soul cries out for God. Will He come near; will He befriend and be with us in those moments? The Psalmist de-

scribes this longing for God, as like the thirst experienced in a dry land, where no water is, the unsatisfied, the constant, parching feeling of thirst; so the soul cries out for God, even for the living God.

I do not suppose that, in this question asked by Solomon, he had any doubt. It is put in a form to impress itself: "Will God in very deed" dwell with men on the earth; will He so dwell that we shall know of His presence? The question appears to have been answered by his own soul, for immediately he asks that God will look with favor on the enterprise of opening that temple, and be with the people, and with confidence he asks for the abiding presence of God with them. So that I understand the question to have its own answer, and that answer to be: "God will indeed, most assuredly, dwell with men on the earth."

The circumstances under which the words were spoken are full of interest. The temple had been built—a temple which had occupied more than seven years in building, on which had been expended millions of money, which was one of the finest edifices ever reared on earth. In the quaint language of the

[The first several sermons are reported in full; the remainder are given in condensed form. Every care is taken to make these reports correct; yet our readers must not forget that it would be unfair to hold a speaker responsible for what may appear in a condensation, made by another, of his discourse.]

on, and the introduction of his household into the church of Christ.

The Conversion of the Jailer.

(Lesson February 17, 1884.)

By B. M. PALMER, D. D., FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW ORLEANS.

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.—Acts xvi: 31.

AMONG the passages of Scripture which explicitly declare the necessity of faith in the sinner's salvation, the text has the advantage of being a direct application of the principle in a concrete case. Christianity then, both in doctrine and practice, has but one answer to those who ask the jailer's question. Yet this is not the answer which human philosophy would have returned. It would never have dreamed of proposing to redeem a soul from guilt through the obedience of another.

I. *Why then in a scheme of grace is faith announced as the sole term of salvation?* The reply is that salvation includes deliverance from the punishment of sin, from its dominion, from its defilement, and finally from its being.

1. The first step therefore is pardon. But law can make no provision for this, without annulling its own authority. Even grace can only offer pardon to the sinner upon the full reparation to infinite justice through the expiatory sufferings and death of Christ, as his substitute under the law. Thus, pardon has been already procured, and needs only to be accepted. Hence the necessity of faith, or trust, in Him who has lifted the sentence under which we were condemned.

But a criminal may be exempted from punishment, who is not restored to favor; and the sinner cannot be accepted before God, unless invested with a righteousness that shall entitle him to this privilege. This too has been procured through the obedience of our Head. Nothing remains but to appropriate and make it our own, through the faith which becomes thus the sole and necessary term of salvation.

2. So far, the legal relations of the sinner only are changed: the next step is the renovation of his nature. The principle of sin must be broken within him, so that he may be delivered from the dominion of sin no less than from its guilt. This is accomplished in the New Birth, imparting spiritual life, and implanting the principle of holiness whereby the sinner becomes "a new creature" in Christ Jesus. From this flows our progressive sanctification, just as the line is generated from a moving point, in which the power of sin is daily weakened in the soul. In all this however Christ only fulfils the office of a king, "subduing us to himself" by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. Hence again the necessity of faith in Him by whom the salvation, within as well as without us, has been wrought.

3. The salvation is not complete whilst a trace of sin remains. Its last stain must be removed, and its very being must be destroyed. This occurs at death, when we are perfectly transformed into the image of our Lord and are translated into the presence of His glory forever. But only those share in this blessedness of the Redeemer who are united to Him by a faith which "receives and rests upon him alone for salvation as he is offered in the gospel."

Faith, and faith alone, is thus the indispensable condition of salvation from sin; whether this be viewed with reference to guilt, or its dominion, or its defilement, or its presence and being.

II. *What now is this faith, which is the instrument of our salvation?*

1. It is a grace wrought within us by the Holy Ghost, a divine principle implanted in the new birth, the first sign of the spiritual life which has been infused. The sinner's constant mistake consists in spinning this faith out of his own reason, instead of receiving it as a gift from God.

2. The exercise of this faith is our own act; and it draws upon the whole contents of our being, bringing every faculty of the soul into play—and is the precise point at which the entire agency and responsibility of the creature are

recognized in the matter of salvation.

3. Faith always includes repentance. They are the two poles of the same truth. Motion to a place always necessitates motion from a place. Faith is the movement of the soul to Christ, under the drawing of the Spirit; repentance is the co-ordinate movement of the soul away from its own sins. The measure of the one is the measure of the other.

4. Faith is the conveyance of the soul to Jesus Christ, and is the human measure of His atonement. The divine measure is the law which it has "magnified;" but the human measure is the faith which embraces it.

5. Faith is the bond, on the part of the creature, by which he is united with Christ, and made "partaker of the divine nature." It is therefore the root of all true obedience and comfort in God's service. It can never lead to the "filthy antinomianism," which says, "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound."

Conclusion.—The goodness of God in reducing the sinner's salvation to a single issue. It has always been His way. Under the first covenant, whilst the law covered man's entire nature, the temptation was restricted to one form, and Adam's obedience was subjected to a single test. So the sinner is shut up to a single issue. He has only to accept the salvation freely offered in the Gospel. Is it possible to conceive any offer more moderate, more simple, more reasonable, more easy than this? How much is the sin of rejecting this salvation aggravated by this fact?

The Thessalonians and Bereans.

(Lesson February 24.)

BY "CLERICUS" [PRESBYTERIAN], BROOKLYN.*

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched

*Dr. J. H. Vincent, who engaged to furnish the sermon on this lesson, found it impossible to do so and a clergyman who prefers to be known as "Clericus," has consented to take his place.—Ed.

the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.—Acts xvii: 11.

THESSALONICA was a maritime city of Macedonia, situated on the Thernaic Gulf (now the Gulf of Salonica), and rose into importance with the decay of Greek nationality. It shared with Corinth and Ephesus the commerce of the Levant. It was therefore an invaluable centre for the spread of Christianity; and the apostle to the Gentiles evinced great sagacity in seizing upon such strong and influential centres of trade and commerce to plant the Cross and infuse the leaven of the New Faith. Paul, in company with Silas and Timothy, visited the city during his second missionary tour. He found here many Jews—for, the world over and in all ages, they have been a trading race—and a synagogue, which was the first scene of his labors. He spent considerable time in this place making two, if not three visits, and gathering a large and flourishing Christian church, to which two of his epistles were addressed. It is still a city of commercial importance, with a population of 80,000 souls. Its numerous existing mosques, some of them very celebrated, were once Christian churches.

BEREA was also a large city in Macedonia, thirty-five miles west of Thessalonica, on the slope of the Olympian mountain range, "beautiful for situation"—commanding a fine view of the plain of the Axios and Haliacmon.* It was a fitting temporary retreat for Paul and his companions, after their narrow escape from the rage of the Jews of Thessalonica. But instead of rest and quiet, they went straightway into the synagogue of the Jews and boldly proclaimed the Word of God, and with marked success. "But when the Jews of Thessalonica" heard of it, "they came thither likewise, stirring up and troubling the multitude." It was deemed prudent that Paul should re-

*The site of this ancient city is occupied by the modern town of *Heria*, with a population of 10,000 souls. An American missionary, Rev. F. M. Dood, of Bloomfield, N. J., has spent a long life here in the service of the A. B. C. F. M.