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A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT

THE FUNERAL

OF

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BY

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A DISCOURSE.

"For before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."—Heb. 11, 5.

Surely, no passage of Holy Writ invites a more appropriate train of reflections for this occasion, than the one we have just quoted. Indeed, it seems as if it had been penned for this very hour; or rather as if he, whom we now mourn as dead, had lived with his eye upon it in holy emulation of faithful Enoch.

With what wonderful munificence and simple accuracy hath the Holy Spirit scattered through the sacred book the various delineations of virtuous character! Not a good man dies but we are able to read his prominent traits, imaged in some verse or line—sometimes in many.—And what a consolation this, to read what God has said of his faithful servants long ago, and then find its exact counterpart in the lives of our dear departed!

Under such circumstances, we cannot "sorrow as others which have no hope." We must look up and trust a faithful God, and feel that what he does is right. We must grasp, with new energy and interest, the lessons of instruction which the book of Wisdom contains; and we must appreciate more keenly and sweetly the consolations derived from the wholesome doctrines of the gospel. Now to set these doctrines clearly before us—to impress them indelibly upon our minds, and to lead us to the rich and full enjoyment of their comfort, God often bids us look upon their exemplification in his servants. One stands before us in the page of sacred history, while the other, with whom perhaps we have been intimately associated, lies at our feet in the embrace of death, yet speaking still, in words that must be heard and heeded.—Surely God thus deals with us to-day.

Let us therefore turn our minds upon what he tells us of his servant Enoch. "Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." "*Before* his translation"—not at that time, not afterward, but *before* it.

It is possible then to please God, even in life—while man dwells in the flesh.

But let us remember on this as well as all other occasions when we read God's word, that it is God who speaks to us—not in the dialect of heaven, but in the imperfect language of fallen mortals. We could comprehend, even partially, no other. The words in which we are addressed, and the imagery on which we look must be, not such as angels are accustomed to hear and behold, but such as will not dazzle or bewilder the weakest mortals. Heavenly things must be compared to earthly. The mean and the weak must represent to our senses the

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glorious and the mighty. Even the polluted must often figure to us the pure. When we read therefore of God's pleasure, or displeasure; his anger, or approval; his hatred, or love; we must not imagine that he is "altogether such a one as ourselves"—a being of caprice, passion, or impulse. These terms are only used to indicate to our weak understanding the relations we sustain to God; or rather the consequences involved in our obedience or disobedience to his law. God has given us a law as a rule of life, and "in the keeping of his commandments there is great reward." When we read therefore that Enoch "pleased God," we are simply to understand that he kept the law given him, and thereby secured the "great reward."

It is possible then, we say, to please God—to keep his law—to meet the demands which he makes of us even in life. Enoch did it, and his example is a demonstration which bears down all argument to the contrary. Enoch did it, and he was but a man—a poor, weak, fallen man. None will contend that he was more. Enoch did it, and that too under a dispensation less propitious than that under which we live—in that blank age ere God had written word—in that dim age ere the Gospel had brought "life and immortality to light"—in that profane age when "the wickedness of man was great in the earth," and when all the world but a faithful few had bowed the knee to Baal. Will it be said that there was less required or more bestowed in proportion to circumstances then than now? Let those who assert it prove it. Against the one stands the inflexible Justice of God, who is no respecter of persons—who requires neither more nor less of one than another,—whose ways are equal in all ages and nations. Against the other stands the Gospel—a dispensation of grace, wherein, not an angel speaks, but Christ the Lord, the Son of God, who himself declares the least saint to be greater than the greatest of former prophets.

We therefore assume without further proof that, in as much as Enoch pleased God, it is possible for men now, even for us, in the use of the means appointed, to please him also.

God has done all things well. He has therefore revealed to man the precise *manner in which the divine approval may be secured.* He has appointed the means on which the possibility of pleasing him depends—the condition with which he promises to enable every man to comply, that will. We are told that "Enoch walked with God." God was his guide, his leader, his friend, his comforter, his daily companion. As a father God took him by the hand, and lead him wherever he went, guiding his unwary feet into smooth and safe paths. Alone as a stranger and pilgrim in the earth, God was his companion and friend. A journeyer through a wilderness, beset with dangers and often bewildered, God was his guide and defense. And when burdened with a load of grief he mourned and wept, he would fly to God for comfort.

Thus he "walked with God." He was dedicated to God. He made no other calculations but to serve him while he lived on the earth, and then to go to him. It is easy to perceive that all this grew out of one temper (if we may call it so) of the mind, namely: *faith in God.* Without faith there could have been no such dedication to God. Why did he walk with God? Because he believed in him. He believed there was a God and he trusted in him. Had he said in his heart "There is no God." it could never have been recorded that "Enoch walked with God." Had he believed in other gods, he never could have been the servant of the true one. Had he not leaned upon and trusted in God, it could never have been said that he pleased God.—One of the grandest sentences that Paul ever wrote, must have remained forever blank. Hence it is easy to see what the Apostle means when he says "without faith it is impossible to please God." How natural! For "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

It is not a dead inactive faith. It is one that expects reward, and consequently inculcates labor—obedience. It is a faith like Enoch's, which produces good works; for "faith without works is dead,"—useless, vain. It does not please God. For obedience is the soul, the spirit, the life of faith.

It is not because men say "Lord! Lord!" that they enter into the kingdom of heaven. This is not what pleases God. This may all be empty profession—the sound of brass—the tinkling of a cymbal—flattery, deceit. It is because for the Lord's sake they do the will of their Father in heaven. God is pleased with them, not because they say to the beggar, "Be thou clothed, and be thou warmed and fed," and give him nothing, but because for the Lord's sake they feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and do good to all men, even their enemies.

It is not because men call themselves Christians that they enjoy the divine favor; but because the Father beholds in them the Spirit that was in his Son —"Christ the hope of glory formed within them." But the spirit that was in Jesus was a spirit of beneficence. "He went about doing good." In no other way can such a spirit be manifested. The tree can be known only by its fruits. The character of the luminous body can be determined only by the light it dispenses.

Again. God is pleased only with those instruments which answer the end for which they were made. For this reason in the beginning he pronounced the work of his hands "good." He saw that all things answered the end designed in their creation. Man was created and redeemed for His glory. But "herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit,"—not that ye simply say ye believe, or cry "Lord! Lord!" but that ye show that ye love me by keeping my commandments.

Faith is therefore the great condition on which it is possible for us to "please God." Vain is every effort to this end without it: and that an active, energetic faith, producing all the fruits of holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord."

The possibility of pleasing God is a doctrine *full of comfort and encouragement* to every Christian. To know that the God whom we serve, and with

whom we have to do, though "high and lifted up," is not implacable—that he regards us in such mercy and love, as to watch our ways, and approve our works—that he bends from his throne to smile upon mortals, is a cheering thought. Much of human happiness and christian hope depends upon this.—Were there no divine approval of any thing that we can do, how sad and cheerless the toil of life! Who then could hope for heaven? Who then would long for the appearing of such a God? Ask that child flying homeward with such delight the occasion of its joy. It is the joy of anticipation. A day has been faithfully spent. It hastens to render its little account to an attentive mother, who will smile and say, "well done." That smile, that word is worth a world. The thought of it opens a fountain of gushing happiness in its little heart, and nerves its limbs with unwonted energy. How it strives to do its part to accomplish well its task! How it sings amid its toil in view of the kind words and looks to be bestowed, when all is done!

Ask that other child the cause of its grief. It has a father who never approves—who never smiles. For such things it has never learned to hope.—Sternness, severity, and cold indifference have chilled its heart. It never sings—it always sighs. Sadly and slowly it wends its way to the presence of one it cannot love, because he is never pleased. It speaks not, with a bounding heart, of a task performed. It waits not for the word, "well done," for it never heard that word. O wretched child! but not more wretched than every christian did he not know that his is an approving God. What a motive to action this, and how full of comfort! We are children hastening home to our Father in heaven: not a stern indifferent father; but one that loves, approves, and smiles. Our toil is often hard and difficult, but he sees us and is pleased. It is enough. We will toil on. We are stronger when we remember that God is pleased. The world may chide, complain, and frown. But all is well. Still we will go on, and still we'll sing: for God is pleased. Ere long we shall hear the Father's "well done," and behold a smile that shall drive all darkness from the universe, and cause new rapture even among the angels.

This divine approval according to the text is a *matter of testimony even in this life*. It was so in the case of Enoch. It is so in the case of every true servant of God. It is not only possible to please God, but to know that he is pleased. It is not only possible to "keep the commandments," but to know that we do keep them. Whoever does right, has the testimony in himself.—And right is but the sum total of what God requires.

Our God is not an isolated selfish being, dwelling far off in the distance from his creatures, whose presence is unapproachable by mortal man. "His tabernacle is with men." He is about us, and in us. We may commune with him upon our beds in the quiet of midnight, and hear his voice in the midst of daily tumult. "His Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." That Spirit is our comforter assuring us of divine favor—teaching us that God "first loved us," and thus leading us to love him. That Spirit is "sent forth into our hearts crying Abba, Father;" and producing within us "love, peace, and joy." Where these are found there is overpowering testimony of divine favor.

But this testimony is of such a character as to satisfy, not only ourselves, but others also. God writes it by his spirit in our hearts, in bright, living characters—in holy tempers, which shine through all our actions, and the

world beholds the light. Enoch knew himself that he pleased God, and the world around him knew it. They read it in his life—in all his words and acts. Wherever he went the Spirit of the Lord in him, as a burning lamp, shone through the crystal medium of pure words and deeds, and revealed to all observers that he pleased God. "How did he die?" asked one of a departed friend. "How did he live?" was the reply of an eminent divine. This is the test that the world applies. They appeal to the life to judge of the death.—They watch for the *testimony* of divine approval. They have learned to regard it as infallible, and they are seldom mistaken in their decision.

In conclusion, the life of brother Gunn was a demonstration of all that we have said. *He* "had this testimony that he pleased God." No man ever appreciated this blessing more deeply than he: and no man ever showed it more clearly to the world. We knew him well, and when with him we never forgot that we were in the presence of a holy man. On his placid brow seemed written in bold relief "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." The spirit of christian meekness beamed softly in the light of an eye, that ever sparkled with the fire of love. In every act and word was an air of humility which seemed continually to say "Thou GOD seest me." Yet it was not that humility that folds its hands and says "I can do nothing." He was a man of zeal and energy. He wrought in the vineyard of the Lord as a servant that entered at the eleventh hour, and would fain redeem the time of his life, which he considered wasted in sin. He felt that he owed himself to God, and was fully imbued with the spirit of the divine maxim: "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." He repeated this passage not as a compliment to God, nor in the way of affected humility, but because he really felt its truth.

His soul was ardent, passionate, impulsive; but sanctified and subdued.—When a sinner, he sinned with all his might. When the stroke of conviction came, like Saul of Tarsus, he fell conquered. When the voice of pardon stole upon his ear, he leaped to life, beheld the cross with rapture, and never ceased to gaze upon, and appreciate its glory till he reached the crown. Conversion with him was a perfect change—a thorough and entire revolution—a breaking of the soul into a new state—the entering upon a career from which there was no retireing.

He was not a sad, sighing, drooping christian. He was always cheerful, even under trials and afflictions that would have crushed other men. His manner was a beautiful illustration of the poet's sentiment:

> "Religion never was designed
> To make our pleasures less."

But while he was cheerful, he was never light or trifling. He always remembered that his mission clothed him with a dignity above the follies of the world. He guarded well his words and acts lest he should offend his God or damage his cause. He served God not through servile fear—for his was not a mean, cowardly, skulking heart—but because he loved him. He lived in constant and happy communion with Him. Like Enoch, he "walked with God." Like him, he had this testimony, that he pleased God; and like him "he was not, for God took him," almost in perfect health. He scarcely seemed to die, but simply ceased to live.

Thus passed away one whom we knew, with whose weakness and follies, as

well as virtues we were familiar, but one who, through grace, was mighty in Israel, and one who leaves behind for our encouragement the testimony that he—weak and feeble as we—yea, one of us—"pleased God." And now as we fold his body softly to rest, and feel that we have lost a friend and a guide, that shall never be replaced in this world, let us remember, our Lord has said "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you"; and let our hearts respond, "Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus."

"Servant of God, well done!
Rest from thy loved employ.
The battle fought, the vict'ry won,
Enter thy Master's joy."
The voice at midnight came;
He started up to hear:
A mortal arrow pierced his frame:
He fell—but felt no fear.

Tranquil amid alarms,
It found him on the field,
A vet'ran slumbe'ring on his arms
Beneath his red-cross shield.
His sword was in his hand,
Still warm with recent fight,
Ready that moment at command
Through rock and steel to smite.

The pains of death are past,
Labor and sorrow cease;
And, life's long warfare closed at last,
His soul is found in peace.
Soldier of Christ, well done!
Praise be thy new employ;
And while eternal ages run,
Rest in thy Savior's joy.

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