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# A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

*On the 21st of May, A. D. 1829.*

**BY EZRA STILES ELY, D. D.**

MODERATOR OF THE LAST ASSEMBLY.

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ROM. XV. 19. "I HAVE FULLY PREACHED THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST."

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*MY fathers and brethren in the Christian Ministry,*

WE believe ourselves to have been called by the providence, word, and Spirit of our God, to undertake the duties of the sacred office. Of these duties, that of preaching the word undoubtedly holds the first place. We are assured also, that, in a little time, we shall appear before the Judge of the whole earth, to give an account of the manner in which we have executed our stewardship. Must we not then habitually aim to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so far as we know it to be revealed in the sacred Scriptures, and so to speak that a great multitude may believe? Should we not copy the example of Paul; that in the last day we may affirm concerning the places in which we have ministered the word, as he did of the region from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, *that we have fully preached the Gospel of Christ?*

Permit me, as one who would strive together with you for the furtherance of the Gospel, and be a helper of your faith and joy, to show what I conceive to be necessary for us, as ministers of Christ, if we would adopt the language of the text on our death-bed, and at the bar of judgment. We must preach the same good news of salvation by Jesus, which Paul preached; and we must imitate him in the manner of his preaching.

The SUBJECT of our preaching must be the Gospel of Christ. Because gospel signifies *good news*, some have confined the preaching of it to the exhibition of those great and precious promises, whereby we are made partakers of the divine moral nature; but Christ "came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Hence we may conclude, that every thing revealed concerning God and his kingdom, and the duty of sinners to repent, and believe the truth concerning the way of salvation, must be considered as appertaining to that Gospel which its Divine Author taught. If the Gospel relates to Christ, we must show who Christ is, and what he has performed. This cannot be done without teaching that God is, and is a rewarder of all who diligently seek him; nor can we preach Jesus as the Sa-

viour of his people from their sins, without portraying the character of sinners, and the manner in which they become interested in that redemption which has been effected by the Son of God, agreeably to the counsels of the Eternal Father.

We are not to suppose that men without the Gospel will become acquainted with the fundamental truths of Christianity; but, in thought, accompanying Paul into the presence of learned Greeks and Romans, of illiterate pagans, of scoffing Jews, and of little children, we must consider how he taught every man; and, in like manner, must instruct children, philosophers, and such persons as the Bible denominates *fools*. True it is, that in a Christian country, parents, and other teachers who do not sustain the ministerial office, inculcate usually the first lessons concerning God, who made the world; and so far as they teach the fundamental principles of religion, may be accounted labourers together with us; but we are not to presume that our hearers have learned any thing aright, and therefore neglect the simplest doctrines of the oracles of God. Should we require them to *believe*, without first teaching them what they are to believe; or to *repent*, without explaining the nature of evangelical repentance; or to *submit*, without unfolding the moral character and government of the Supreme Being, to whose revealed will submission is due, we should be justly charged with tantalizing miserable men.

The following is a summary of the truths which must be asserted, illustrated, and applied by every one who would fully preach the Gospel of Christ.

There is one only, self-existent, increated, eternal, perfect, holy, just, good, wise, merciful, omniscient, and almighty God; of one, indivisible, pure, spiritual essence; who subsists, acts, and is revealed to us, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This Supreme Being once existed alone in infinite space, and, in his own time, according to his own unchanging purposes concerning all his own actions, produced whatever substance besides himself has being. This Creator of all material and spiritual beings which have begun to exist, exercises a providential government over all the works of his hands, in a way exactly suited to the different natures which he has given to different substances. Material substances are regulated according to established laws of matter; and intelligent, sensitive, voluntary, efficient minds, are the subjects of a mental government, by which the counsels of God are accomplished, without imposing any physical necessity to secure the certainly foreknown instances of their free agency. In the administration of his providential government, free agents of angelic and human orders have been put on trial, under moral laws revealed to them, by some one or more of God's various methods of communicating the knowledge of truth and duty. Any law given to an intelligent, free, voluntary agent, for the regulation of his mental activity, is a moral law. Any mental operation, forbidden by the moral law of God, is *a sin*; and all transgressions of the law, are comprehended under this generic term. Every instance of activity which is required by the moral law, is a duty, because it is conduct due to God; and every act of

duty is called *righteousness*, from its conformity to the rule prescribed. A state, habit, disposition, or moral nature, resulting from, and inducing to, sin, is sinful, and may be termed depravity, or moral evil.

Some of the angelic creatures of God have not kept their first estate; but, before the rebellion of man, sinned against their Maker, and are reserved in chains, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day. Other angels have continued to discharge their duty, and are the servants of Christ in his mediatorial government, being sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

When the Almighty had made the first human pair, a male and a female, each consisting of a material body, and of an immaterial soul, he revealed to them, by personal discourse, through the instrumentality of an assumed bodily form, after the image of which Adam had been made, so much of the moral law as he deemed suitable for their probation; and the duty required of them, corresponded with the extent of the revelation afforded.

Endowed with all the requisite *faculties* and the *liberty* of a moral agent, and possessing in his original estate the godlike attributes of knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, Adam abode not in honour and felicity; but, through the temptation of an evil angel, called the Devil, Satan, and from the use which he made, in his work of seduction, of one of the serpentine race, the Old Serpent, he transgressed the moral law under which he was placed. His *guilt*, that is, liability to punishment, now corresponded exactly with the measure of his *criminality*; and his criminality, fully to be comprehended only by the Supreme Lawgiver, was measured by that portion of the holy, just, and good moral law, which was made known to him, and against which he had wilfully rebelled. The first sin of the first man, Adam, immediately produced a change in his moral character and condition. No longer righteous and entitled to life by obedience, he had become unrighteous and condemned. His kind Heavenly Father had now become his condemning Judge; and his moral nature being changed by his first sin, he hated and dreaded the very Being whom he had before loved. His estate of primeval blessedness was instantly exchanged for one of predisposition to sin, of guilt, and misery. His natural desire for happiness, made him view his Maker with disaffection, when he regarded him as angry with the wicked every day; and had no subsequent revelation been made to him, man's heart would have remained at enmity against the Holy One, like the heart of a devil forever. Subsequent disclosures, however, of divine truth and human duty, were made to our first parents, and frequently to some of their posterity; until in the time of Moses, a record was made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, of the most important events which had transpired, and of the chief revelations which had been made from Heaven during the twenty-five preceding centuries. In the time of that leader of Israel, men began to possess, for the first time, a written revelation; having been in all previous ages dependent on their own reason, some personal communications from Jehovah, and the oral tradition of his instructions to the patriarchs. From the time of Moses until the last days of John the Divine, God,

at sundry times, and in diverse manners, spake to men by his prophets, apostles, and Son, and caused the pages of inspired truth to be gradually produced by holy men, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, until the whole volume became complete. These Scriptures contain the revealed will of God, for the regulation of human conduct, and the exhibition of the only way of salvation for sinners which has been provided. Every particular disclosure of human duty made in the Holy Bible, may be considered as a development in part of the moral law of God, and the whole volume of inspiration teaches us all which we ought to believe and practice, to secure perfect, everlasting bliss:

The volume of inspired truth teaches us, that the Lord God regarded Adam as the head and representative of his race, in the probation to which he was subjected, in such a manner, that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men. for that all have sinned;" not *personally*, "after the similitude of Adam's transgression," but *seminally*, and *representatively*, through their fœderal head. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake," said the Lord to Adam, after he sinned; and subsequently he has taught us, that every instance of suffering and death which occurs, should be considered as a penal evil inflicted on the same account. Obnoxiousness to evil for Adam's sake, is properly termed *the guilt of Adam's first sin*; and our first father may be considered as suffering for his transgression, not only through all of his posterity, but through the brutes which were made for his use, and have been cursed no less than the ground on his account. This connexion between the first sin of Adam, and all the woes of our fallen world, will not render, however, the personal sufferings of his sinning children less the correction of their own actual sins. The same evil may be the punishment of the sin of a father, and of his child; just as the peculiar curse devolved upon Eve and her daughters may be regarded as the special penalty of Eve's transgression, and at the same time as a part of the comprehensive penalty denounced against Adam and his whole family. The execution of the divine threatening to Adam, corresponds exactly with God's understanding and intention in relation to it. His providence and word also show what connexion subsists between the erring first man and his posterity; for all men begin life without any original righteousness, in just such a sinful, guilty, and miserable estate, as that into which Adam fell; with all the requisite faculties of moral agents in a deteriorated condition, and with such a depraved moral nature and mental disposition, as renders it *certain*, though not a matter of physical *necessity*, that they will do nothing spiritually good of themselves, and that their moral conduct will be evil, and only evil, continually, until they are renewed by divine grace.

The whole history of redemption, beginning with the first promise of a seed which should bruise the serpent's head, reflects light upon the moral law, and teaches us, that before the foundation of the world, a vicarious obedience was contemplated, and that the denunciation of death had respect both to the death which Jesus should die for his people, and to the death which all the finally impenitent and unbelieving shall experience as the due re-



ward of their crimes. Every transgression of the law, was to be punished either in the criminal, or in his substitute; and all righteousness rendered by one for himself, or by the Lord, his righteousness in his stead, was to meet with its suitable reward in the person for whom the righteousness was wrought and accepted. Had not a substitution in obedience and punishment been originally contemplated by the Supreme Lawgiver and Judge, the salvation of a sinner would have been incompatible with the essential justice and moral government of the Deity; and the relinquishment of the penalty of the law, in relation to any sinner, would have been a departure from truth and equity.

The centre and soul of all the revelations from God to man, concerning the salvation of sinners, may be discovered in such as the following divine and cheering assurances—“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else. Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. This is the name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. By the obedience of **ONE**, shall many be made righteous. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all; that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead be ye reconciled to God; for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts. God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you. God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us

together with Christ; (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

From these and similar passages of the Bible, we are authorized to teach, that God, as the Father, in which character he is greater than the Son, ordained him to be the Saviour of sinners; and God as the Son, in which character he is inferior to the Father, was *sent* into the world to die, the just for the unjust, that through his death they for whom he died, might become dead to the law as a covenant of works, and alive unto God through his covenant of grace. Jesus Christ was the true God, by possession of the increated, unproceeding, indivisible, independent divine essence, which was so united to the human soul and body of the man Christ Jesus, that both natures constituted but one person. In that one person was vested the office, and by him was performed the whole work, of the only Mediator between God and man. The design of the whole work of the Mediator was to glorify God by the salvation of men. That Christ might accomplish the end designed, he undertook to become obedient to the preceptive and penal demands of the moral law, in behalf of all who shall be saved; and for them he was obedient even unto the death of the cross, the endurance of the wrath and curse of God due to the sins which he bore, and the humiliation of the grave. In virtue of this covenanted obedience, performed in the time appointed, Christ Jesus in his mediatorial office was made Lord and Judge of all; so that God, as the Father, neither rules nor judges any intelligent being, whether in heaven, earth, or hell. Christ Jesus "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." By his mediatorial obedience, Christ has *merited* all the distinction and honour to be enjoyed by him, as head over all things for his church for ever; and whatever he has *merited* will be rendered to him by the Father, who has divided him a portion with the great and the spoil of the strong. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, and as King of kings he "shall be satisfied."

To limit the *merit* and the *results* of his mediatorial obedience to the salvation of his people, would exclude Christ as Redeemer from

the government of the universe; yet it was by his obedience to the preceptive and penal demands of the law, as a shepherd for his sheep, as the head for the members of his body, as a surety for those whom he represented in his humiliation, that he became the author of everlasting salvation to all who obey him, and at the same time universal governor and judge. His meritorious and strictly legal redemption of his people, entitled him to the crown which adorns his head, and the sword which the Almighty has girded to his thigh, no less than to the sceptre which he extends in mercy to all penitents. In the exercise of the power of Supreme Potentate, vested in him as a reward of his toils, and as the means of effecting the subjugation of his purchased possession, the Redeemer grants a temporary REPRIEVE to every sinner of mankind; which affords space for repentance; and in this day of salvation, he enlightens, more or less, every one coming into the world; either through natural conscience, the dispensations of his providence, oral traditions of revelation, or by the written word, and the more direct influences of the Holy Spirit.

In his government of sinners the Son glorifies the Father, not merely by securing the salvation of those who believe; but by his wisdom, patience, and forbearance in relation to those who destroy themselves. He proposes to them truths which are worthy of universal reception and approbation; concerning the salvation of believers, and the damnation of all who die in the final neglect of the great salvation. Every part of his testimony is worthy of credit; and he who rejects it is chargeable with the affront of making God a liar, whereby he aggravates his crimes, and the amount of his everlasting punishment; whether the truth rejected be a denunciation of wrath, or the promise of endless felicity. As a King, Christ commands universal obedience to the moral law so far as it is revealed; and the first of the ten commandments makes faith, Godly sorrow, hope, love, and cordial and practical conformity to the Gospel, of every one, whether renewed in the temper of his mind or not, provided the glad tidings of great joy have ever saluted his ears.

Having obtained a right by his mediatorial obedience to reign as Lord of all, Jesus Christ exercises a gracious, and yet strictly just moral government over all the sinners of our race; and will ultimately render to every one according to his deeds. He is good to all, and showers down his mercies even on the evil and unthankful. He exercises all with judgment, and tries man under this process of heavenly discipline, every moment. The natural tendency of the means of grace which the Saviour God employs with sinners is to convert and sanctify them; and did they not *resist*, *quench*, and *grieve* the Holy Spirit, which being sent by him, is the spirit of Christ, they would all become new creatures, and be happy. To those who believe the Gospel, repent of sin, and by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, he renders eternal life, as a matter of grace to them, but of justice to himself; that his obedience may be rewarded in their salvation. All who thus believe, repent, and work that which is good, are perfectly free and voluntary in their own proper efforts; so that their reformation and new

obedience consist wholly in mental actions, of which they are the efficient: and yet, by his divine moral suasion, not by any creative, physical energy, God their Saviour worketh in them both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure. Unto them *it is given to believe*: and their faith resulting from a gracious rational influence in bringing them to the exercise of it, is *the gift of God*, a *grace* of the Spirit, and, at the same time, their own mental act.

The testimony of God concerning the salvation of sinners, is the *object* believed; and when any one so believes the Gospel as to realize its all-important truths, and to feel and act agreeably to them, we pronounce that he has saving faith; a faith, which is, in the sense described, of the operation of the Holy Ghost; which is influential in the production of holy love; and which becomes the instrumental cause of the progressive purification of the human heart. In the first moment in which a sinner thus believes the Gospel, so as to experience its cordial and practical excitements, the Saviour, in all his redeeming power and love is *given* to him, in solemn covenant, as the *unspeakable gift* of the Father; and thenceforth he is legally identified with the Holy One, who has espoused him. The righteousness of Christ becomes his in this moment, by the covenanted gratuity of the Eternal Deity; and Christ becomes actually responsible to the justice of God, for all the sins of the person for whom he now pledges as a surety his mediatorial character and work. This righteousness of Christ was originally wrought with the design of its being thus actually appropriated in due time to every one who shall be born of the Spirit; and ever after it has become the property of the believer, but not before, it will be *imputed*; that is, legally *reckoned* and *accounted* to him, as his in the judgment of heaven's high court. Hence, he who once had no justifying righteousness, may say, "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Because God has by covenant inseparably connected the bestowment of his unspeakable gift with the exercise of a practical faith, it is said, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." Now the righteousness of God, without the perfect obedience of sinners themselves to the law, is manifested; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe. To every one who believes, his faith shall be imputed, for the very purpose of securing to him the righteousness of Christ; for faith is reckoned in order to righteousness; that being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the righteousness of God may be declared, and he may be just even while he is the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Every sinner who is made acquainted with any portion of the testimony of his Maker, is in duty bound immediately to believe it, because it is true, and is uttered by one who cannot lie; and because he possesses all the requisite faculties and facilities for the exercise of a holy, saving faith. It is this faith which is required in the commands, "seek the Lord," "ask," "knock," "look unto me," "come unto me," and "lay hold on eternal life." In preaching the Gospel fully, this duty of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ with-

out delay, and consequently of repenting and turning unto the Lord, must be repeatedly and solemnly urged; by the reasonableness and importance of the duty; by the certainty that all who believe shall be saved; by the goodness of God in granting us this acceptable time, this only day of salvation; by the love of Christ in dying for sinners; by the condescension of the Holy Spirit in striving with us; by the danger of hardening our hearts until they shall become the subjects of a judicial dereliction and blindness; and by all the dreadful denunciations of eternal death to them who neglect the great salvation, and die in unbelief.

Christ as moral governor of the world and final judge, places none of our race under any necessity of doing evil, and of continuing impenitent in their sins. They who will be lost, *might* believe, and repent, and be saved, if they would; but Omniscience foresees that they will not; and infinite wisdom and goodness, have not determined to overcome the opposition of all men to the truth. For holy and wise reasons, some will be permitted always to resist the Holy Ghost, to continue despisers of the grace of God, and to die in their iniquities. The purposes of God, concerning the everlasting death of those who will experience it, not being known to these individuals, cannot influence their moral conduct; and in the conclusion of all earthly scenes, it will appear to the assembled universe of intelligent beings, that God has rejected none but for their rejection of him, and that he damns none but those who first damn themselves.

In the judgment of the great day, the moral law will be the measure of obedience and of criminality, and of the reward or punishment, which shall be apportioned to each individual. All renewed persons having been pardoned, in the moment of believing, in consideration of Christ's having borne the punishment of their sins, and being accepted with God through the vicarious righteousness of Christ, which fulfilled the law as a covenant of works for them, shall be made honourable and happy, in relative states prepared for them, which shall differ as one star differeth from another in glory; or as the ruler over one city differs from the ruler over five or ten cities. The happiness of heaven shall be equally durable to all, and all shall be perfectly free from evil; but still the positive felicity of each saint in glory, shall be as his works of new obedience performed after he became a child of God, and began to lay up treasures in heaven.

The souls of men, so soon as separated from their bodies by that dissolution which is denominated natural death, enter into paradise, or into the prison of despair; and there await, in the certainty of perpetual bliss or misery, the resurrection of their bodies, which is immediately to precede the general judgment. From the presence of Jesus Christ, the final judge of men and angels, the wicked will depart into a state and place of everlasting punishment, in which the sufferings of each will be regulated in degree by the divine admeasurement of his individual wickedness. All his privileges, knowledge, measure of divine revelation, and other talents, will be brought into a strict and impartial account, and will all have their due influence in fixing the proportion of endless punishment which

is to be awarded to each. Every criminal moral action which any one performs, if he shall die impenitent, will add something to the degree of his endless misery; and every holy moral action, performed by any man after his adoption into God's family, at the time of his regeneration, will be the occasion of an addition to the measure of his endless glory and happiness; so that ours must learn to maintain good works for necessary uses. A wicked deed performed by a pious man, and every instance of unfaithfulness in a truly Gospel minister, will be the occasion of some diminution from that degree of felicity which would otherwise have been enjoyed. The hay, wood, and stubble, built upon the foundation itself, shall be burned, and the foolish builder shall suffer loss; while he himself is saved, yet so as by running through a fire.

That men may be warned, and flee from the wrath which is to come upon the finally impenitent, the doctrine of the new spiritual birth must be frequently inculcated in such a manner as to make sinners realize that it is wholly imputable to themselves as a crime, which they cannot palliate, that they do not *seek the Lord, turn unto him, and call upon him*, out of a contrite heart, so soon as they have the opportunity and means of knowing God and Jesus Christ; while at the same time the Holy Spirit exerts an indispensable saving, governmental influence over the mind in every instance of conversion; without which divine mental suasion, no sinner would ever repent; and which the Holy Spirit is daily tempted, by thoughtless, prayerless mortals, to withdraw. The presumption of sinners, that at some future moment they can, without any aids from the Holy Spirit, without any drawing of the Father, by some inherent natural ability turn to God and be saved, is equally destructive to souls, with that apology for indifference, that awful fatalism in theology, which asserts "that in the day of grace we can do nothing; are wholly passive in the concern of salvation; and cannot repent." Truth equally abhors the sentiment that fallen man possesses in himself, independently of the Holy Spirit's regenerating influence, all the requisite power for making in himself a new heart; for becoming a new and holy moral agent in spiritual things; and the false theory, that in being born of the Spirit, man is inactive, and merely acted upon by a physical energy upon his will. When God worketh in sinful man as an intelligent being, both to will and to do them, and only them, has he *the requisite power* to work out his own salvation. In quickening one, figuratively said to be *asleep*, and even *dead* in trespasses and sins, the Holy Spirit operates upon a moral, sensitive, efficient, free agent, who possesses all the necessary *faculties* and *liberty* of an accountable being; and he brings those faculties into a right disposition for holy activity, without contravening his own established laws of mental empire. In this way the understanding is, first, in the order of nature, rectified in its spiritual conceptions and judgments; then the conscience is purified and enlivened; and then the moral feelings of the soul are changed by the new views of the savingly illuminated mind; so that the sinner loves what he formerly hated, and hates what he formerly loved. The thoughts and feelings of the man being thus rectified by the Holy Ghost, the volitions of his soul, dependent on these anterior thoughts and feelings

which are the motives to his volitions, are changed also. His voluntary conduct becomes holy, just so far as his motives are holy; and henceforth he is habitually a spiritual man, in all the energies of his soul. In effecting this saving revolution in the spiritual state and deportment of depraved man, the Spirit commonly employs the instrumental agency of revealed truth, and applies the same, under the guidance of his gracious providence, by private religious instruction and reading; by the public ministry of the word; by the sacraments of the New Testament; by the discipline of the Church; and by the natural and rational operations of the human mind, under all the varied means of grace. Means in themselves are inefficient, but in the hands of the Spirit they are mighty to accomplish the conversion of the proudest rebels, not merely in the acts of their will, nor in their feelings alone, but in all those operations of their souls which are cognizable by the moral law of God.

The whole of man's duty to himself, his relatives, his fellow-citizens, his country and his God, must be preached by every ambassador of Jesus, and urged for right uses, by evangelical motives. Obedience performed with the desire of making satisfaction for past sins, and of procuring acceptance with God, is self-righteousness, which prevents multitudes from submitting themselves to the righteousness of God. That system of doctrine which connects salvation with a mere speculative faith, and leads men to expect eternal life through the merits of Christ Jesus, without conversion of heart and reformation of life, is damning Antinomianism. Good works must be performed from love to God; and they must be enjoined as the means of glorifying and enjoying God; of promoting our own happiness and that of our fellow-men; of evincing the genuineness of our faith and the certainty of our interest in Christ; and of becoming meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. The whole duty of man must be urged upon him, that being convinced of sin, the law, as a schoolmaster, may bring him to Christ, in utter despair of justification in any other manner than through his perfect righteousness. By the law is the knowledge of sin; and by the law men become dead to the law, that they may live unto God. For this very reason, as well as to exhibit the holiness of God, was the law given after the apostacy, and not with any design that a *sinner's* perfect or imperfect obedience should be regarded as the meritorious cause or condition of his salvation. When we were without strength, and the law was weak through the flesh, (that is, impotent to save us on account of our depravity,) God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to do for us that which the law could not do; to procure our justification by suffering in his flesh the condemnation of our sins; so that Christ having in due time died for us, the ungodly, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The performance of duty in the manner required by the Gospel, and for *necessary uses*, constitutes evangelical obedience: and none preach the Gospel fully, without enjoining it upon their hearers to be perfect, as their Father in Heaven is perfect. Not the least sin may be palliated or allowed; and he who gives a cup of cold water to a disciple from regard to Christ, shall in no wise lose his appropriate, gracious reward. In passing, let

we desire you to note what encouragement is here presented to induce Christian hospitality to the people, and particularly the ministers of Christ. Christian principles must regulate our conduct in all the duties of piety and morality, and we must in the name of God, require all men in their several stations and relations, whether public or private, civil or religious, to walk as Christ also walked. The religion of Jesus is a system of moral obligation, which binds all men to the duty of believing the doctrines, and following the example of the great God our Saviour.

Having now sketched an outline of evangelical doctrine, permit me to offer a few considerations concerning the MANNER in which we must preach, would we like Paul FULLY preach the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel may be preached by those who do not preach it FULLY; and if the Gospel is preached at all, even though it should be from envy and contention, and by unrenewed men, we rejoice and will rejoice; for Christ will be glorified by the truth, and sinners may be sanctified through it. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

If we would fully preach the Gospel of Christ, it is requisite—

1. That we should give every portion of divine truth its proper share of attention. The most prominent and important doctrines of the Bible must be most frequently insisted on in our discourses; and the less important must not be omitted. We must lay the foundation of repentance from dead works, of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment; and then, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, we must go on unto perfection. No better rule can be given, than to treat of subjects as nearly as possible in the proportion in which they are introduced in the sacred Scriptures; and that we may do this, the practice of reading the Bible from the pulpit, and of lecturing from extended portions, ought not to be forsaken; for the whole Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, either for private or public instruction. We should guard against the error of those, who so confine themselves to an isthmus of thought as to know nothing of the continents which it connects; and so magnify their own peculiar views, as always to insist on a few topics, and thus fail rightly to divide the word of God, and give every man a portion in due season.

2. It is requisite that we should preach the Gospel *understandingly*. What men know themselves they can commonly teach; but when they have no clear conceptions of the terms which they employ, and of the truths which ought to be exhibited, it may be expected that they will resemble trumpets which give an uncertain sound. Paul tells us of teachers who understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm; and, it is to be regretted, that too many preachers of this description are found in every land. They should preach for the present what they do know, and endeavour in future to understand the way of life more perfectly. If they merely know, that in some way all penitent and believing sinners shall be saved through Christ, let them make a right use of this ele-



mental truth; and strive to learn, that they may hereafter show, how grace reigns through righteousness, and how the Lord is at the same time, the Just God and the Saviour; both merciful and just in justifying him that believeth.

3. It is requisite to preach the Gospel *intelligibly* and *plainly*. To do this, we must suit our language to the language and understanding of our hearers; or if for the sake of convenience we employ terms with which they are not familiar, we must interpret our own speech, and illustrate our meaning. "Christ sent me," said Paul, "to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." Hence Paul went to the gentiles, not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring the testimony of God. His preaching was not with enticing words of men's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Instead of employing his time to be obscure and difficult of comprehension, that he may be thought learned and profound, every preacher ought to aim habitually at clearly understanding, and expressing, so that none can misapprehend, the meaning which the Holy Ghost intended to convey by the sacred theme of his discourse.

4. It is requisite to preach the Gospel *believingly*. If we do not deeply realize the truth of our own discourse, it will be likely to fall powerless on the ears of our hearers. If we are not fully persuaded ourselves, it is not probable that we shall be successful in our pretended attempts to persuade others. If on the other hand we so believe as to make Heaven, and Hell, and salvation by Christ, and damnation by continued unbelief, appear as realities to our souls, we shall be ready, like ambassadors of Christ, to pray sinners in God's stead to be reconciled to God, in the only provided way; and shall habitually seek to promote revivals of pure and undefiled religion. Without this realizing faith in the Gospel, we shall be blind leaders of the blind, and it will be a miracle if both do not fall into the ditch. Without this faith we are rebels against Christ ourselves, and shall not seriously endeavour to win our fellow-rebels to a state of submission and reconciliation. To preach the Gospel fully, we ought not only to believe all the doctrines inculcated to be true; but that the Gospel preached is ordained of God to be his chief instrument in the conversion of sinners. Let us assure our souls, that of his own will he begat he us with the word of truth; that we are born again, not of corruptible but of incorruptible seed, even by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever; and we shall be excited to go forth bearing precious seed, that we may sow it with an unsparing hand. We may be compelled to sow it even with weeping; yet doubtless we shall come again with rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us. The right kind of faith will lead ministers to calculate that the word of God shall not return void, and to expect, that sooner or later, more or less success will crown the ministry of reconciliation; until it shall become the honoured instrument of regenerating the world. Without this faith in the Gospel itself, and in its instrumental agency in converting the sinners of our race, I see not how any minister of the Gospel can seek the conversion of souls, or properly urge his hearers to the discharge of their duty in relation to the benevolent operations of

the age: and probably it is destitution of cordial faith in the appointed efficacy of the truth, which occasions so many pastors and congregations, at ease in Zion, with cold formality to say, "thy kingdom come;" while they regard all our concerts in prayer, and all our efforts in Education, Missionary, Bible, Tract, and Sabbath School societies, as the visions of a night, or the exploits of chivalry.

5. It is requisite to preach the Gospel *feelingly*. A cold, formal, heartless preacher of the good news of great joy, which shall be unto all people, seems to be inconsistency incarnate. He cannot fully preach the Gospel who is not animated in his sacred work by love to God, gratitude to Christ, and a tender compassion for the souls of perishing men. Persons of other feelings will soon tire in the work; but let a preacher of the truth be deeply impressed with the worth of the soul; let him sympathize with the damned and rejoice at the joys of the saved; let him feel the power of the Gospel on his own heart, and be sensible that his discourses will all be a savour of life or of death to his hearers; and he certainly will speak as a dying man to dying men: he will speak much about hell, without harshness; and more about Heaven with persuasive earnestness. He will solemnly offer men salvation on the terms of the Gospel; and sincerely endeavour to compel them to come into the Ark of safety, without a moment's delay. He will warn the wicked, with grief for their sins, and be in travail of soul for them, until they are born of the Spirit. He will watch for souls as one that must give account, and is solicitous that none of them may be required at his hands.

6. It is requisite to preach the gospel *prayerfully*. Our success depends on God, who quickeneth by our ministrations whom he will. He is that God who hears and answers prayer; and since the operations of the Holy Spirit are needful to direct and sanctify the activity of a hearer's soul, we must pray without ceasing, that the God of all grace would direct and prosper our labours. We must toil like the husbandman, and with him wait on the Lord of the harvest for the increase. Paul planted, and Apollos watered, not in vain; but God made the seeds of truth to germinate, and the plants to flourish in everlasting beauty and fruitfulness. As a general rule, if we preach the truth with fidelity, and seek the blessing of Heaven upon our work with humility, fervour, frequency, and perseverance, we shall be successful, and souls will be given us for our hire; for God has not said to his people "seek ye me in vain."

7. We must preach the Gospel in connexion with the use of all the other Scriptural means of salvation, and without any of our own inventions. If God will save sinners, he will do it in his own way; and if he will not render efficacious such ordinances as he has appointed, we need not expect that he will bless our new and unauthorized modes of attempting to awaken and convert sinners. To plead that new means of grace, and extra-ecclesiastical associations are *necessary* for the regeneration of the world, is to imply that God, in prescribing means, and in making his church instrumentally the pillar and ground for supporting the truth, was not wise; and that we can improve his counsels. The popularity of liberal,

national, catholic, and anti-sectarian associations, for doing good, should not lead any to disparage that visible society of which Christ is the Head, nor lightly to esteem the form of ecclesiastical government and discipline, of which the divinely inspired apostles have left us a sufficiently definite pattern. It will be an evil day, when Christians of our denomination think it bigotry to prefer the Church to every other association, and deem it necessary to apologize for being Presbyterians.

We must preach the Gospel with brotherly affection, and all due deference to our fellow-labourers in Christ. In a great house, there are many vessels fit for the Master's use. Our Lord condescends to employ a great variety of ministers, who are endowed with different talents, and different degrees of piety. They may not despise each other; nor should any man make his brother an offender for a word, in the use of which they cannot agree. Those who hold the essentials of the Gospel, and preach them, should be treated as brethren; and those only discarded, who bring not the Gospel which Paul preached. Let us agree, so far as we lawfully can, and differ only when we must, for Christ's sake.

Finally, if we would fully preach the Gospel of Christ, we must hold forth divine truth whenever we have ability and opportunity, in the best manner in our power, and especially by a holy life. We must inculcate the doctrines and duties of Christianity both in private and in public, by precept and example; in common conversation, and in the diligently prepared discourse. We must preach to all sorts of hearers whom we can procure to attend on our ministry, or bring within our influence; and not be discouraged from seeking to save souls through the word, by the charge of vanity. He who does not love to preach, and modestly seek opportunities of attracting the attention of his fellow-men to the things which concern their everlasting peace, has not the heart of Paul, nor such compassion as his divine Master. Let us be willing to be thought vain, proud, enthusiasts, bigots, and fools for Christ's sake, provided we may be the instrumental agents in saving some.

Brethren in the ministry, the time is rapidly coming to each one of us, when we shall realize that it is a small thing to be judged by man's judgment; and all important to be commended by our exalted Redeemer as having acted well the part of faithful servants. Let us endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; fight the good fight of faith; and girt in the armour which he furnishes resist all his enemies with the sword of the Spirit. We must contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and form no alliances with the hosts of heretics, who, like the Canaanites, will dwell within the land of promise. We must love the enemies of our Lord, while we hate and reprove their sins: we must be kind and courteous to the errorist, while we would, by the power of the truth alone, exterminate his pernicious sentiments. In this way, we may hope to save souls from death, and cover the multitude of their sins. In this way we may turn many to righteousness; and have the honour of shining as the stars, in the new firmament which the Lamb creates, for ever and ever.

Let us determine, in the strength of the Lord, that none shall be

lost through our neglect; that the blood of souls shall not be found in the skirts of our garments; and that we will prayerfully and perseveringly seek to have many, as our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

In conclusion, let me entreat my brethren to consider how great is the honour which God has conferred on them by the office of the Christian ministry; how glorious their prospect of future distinction; and how awful the thought, that they may not only be cast away themselves, but drag multitudes after them to endless perdition!

Let me plead also with those who should *always* be engaged in winning souls for Christ, and never neglect an opportunity of present usefulness; in behalf of the perishing thousands in this great city; that every member of the General Assembly would strive together with us for the conversion of sinners here; and would importunately pray that this ecclesiastical body, by a vigorous use of all Scriptural means, may promote an extensive revival among themselves and others, while they sojourn in Philadelphia. Then shall copious streams be diffused in every direction from this highly-favoured metropolis; and as the members of this body return to their respective charges, the churches of our God will be made glad with abundant salvation.

Brethren, pray for us; and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.



#### ERRATA.

Page 7, line 33, *After* Gospel, *insert* the duty.

Page 10, line 39, *For* them, and only them, *read* then, and only then.

Page 15, line 9, *At the beginning*, *insert* 8.













