

TESTIMONY FOR THE CHURCH. NO. 19.

ADDRESS TO MINISTERS.

DEAR BRETHREN: God has shown me (Oct. 25, 1868) that not all who profess to be called to teach the truth, are qualified for this sacred work. Some are far from meeting the mind and will of God. Some indulge in slothfulness in temporal things, and their religious life is marked with spiritual sloth. Where there is a deficiency in persevering energy and close application in temporal matters and business transactions, there will be the same failure apparent in spiritual things.

Some of you are heads of families, and your example and influence give shape to the character of your children. Your example will be followed by them in a greater or less degree. Your lack of thoroughness is setting a bad example for others. But where your deficiencies are more sensibly felt, with more weighty results, is in the cause and work of God. Your families have felt this deficiency, and suffered on account of it. They have lacked many things which diligent industry and perseverance might have supplied. But this deficiency has been seen and felt in the cause and work of God in as much greater degree as the cause and work of God is of higher importance than the things pertaining to this life.

The influence of some ministers is not good. They have not set a good example to the people, in industry, carefully guarding their moments. They spend their moments and hours in indolence, which, when once passed into eternity with their record of results, can never be recalled.

Some are naturally indolent, which has made it difficult for them to make any enterprise they should undertake a success. This deficiency has been seen and felt all through their religious experience. Those at fault are not alone the losers. Others are made to suffer by their deficiencies. Many have at this late period lessons to learn which should have been learned at a much earlier date.

Some are not close Bible students. They are disinclined to apply themselves diligently to the study of the word of God. They have, in consequence of this neglect, labored at great disadvantage. They have not in their ministerial efforts accomplished one-tenth part of the work they might have done had they seen the necessity of closely applying their minds to the study of the word. They might have become so familiar with the Scriptures and with Bible arguments that they could be fortified to meet opponents, and so present the reasons of our faith as to make the truth triumph, and silence their opposition.

Those who minister in the word must have as thorough a knowledge of that word as it is possible for them to obtain. They must be continually searching, praying, and learning, or the people of God will advance in the knowledge of the word and will of God, and leave these professed teachers far behind. When the people are in advance of their

teachers, who will instruct them? All the efforts of such ministers are fruitless. The people need to teach them the word of God more perfectly before they are capable of instructing others.

Some might now have been thorough workmen had they made a good use of their time, and had they felt that they would have to give an account to God for their misspent moments. They have displeased God because they have not been industrious men. Self-gratification, self-love, and selfish love of ease, have kept some from good, and withheld them from obtaining a knowledge of the Scriptures, that they might be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Time, by some, is not appreciated. Hours have been idled away by them in their beds, that might have been employed in the study of their Bibles. There are a few subjects that they have dwelt upon the most, that they are familiar with, and can speak upon with acceptance; but they have in a great degree rested the matter here. They have not felt altogether satisfied themselves. They have realized their deficiencies at times, but have not been sufficiently awakened to the crime of their negligence, in not becoming acquainted with the word of God, when they profess to be teachers of that word. The people are deprived of the intelligence they might obtain from them, and which they expect to obtain from ministers of Jesus Christ, but on account of their ignorance of the word of God, they do not receive it, and are disappointed. By rising early and economizing their moments, they can find time for a close investigation of the Scriptures. They must have a perseverance, not to be thwarted in their object, per-

sistently employing their time in a study of the word, bringing to their aid the truths which other minds, through wearing labor, have brought out for them, and with diligent and persevering effort, prepared to their hand.

There are ministers who have been laboring for years, teaching the truth to others, who are not themselves familiar with the strong points of our position. I beg of such to have done with their idleness. It is a continual curse to them. God requires of them to make every moment fruitful of some good to themselves or to others. "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." I have been shown that there is a decided lack with some who preach the word. It is important for ministers of Jesus Christ to see the necessity of self-culture. This is necessary in order to adorn their profession, and maintain a becoming dignity. Without mental training they will certainly fail in everything they may undertake. God is not pleased with the ways, manners, and ideas, of some who profess to be ministers. Their haphazard manner of quoting texts of Scripture is a disgrace to their profession. They profess to be teachers of the word, and yet fail to repeat Scripture correctly. Those who give themselves wholly to the preaching of the word should not be guilty of quoting one text incorrectly. God requires thoroughness of all his servants.

The religion of Jesus Christ will be exemplified by its possessor in the life, in the conversation, in the works. Its strong principles will prove an anchor. Those who are teachers of the word

should be patterns of piety, ensamples to the flock. Their example should rebuke idleness, slothfulness, lack of industry and economy.

The principles of religion exact diligence, industry, economy, and honesty. "Give an account of thy stewardship," will soon be heard by all. What an account, brethren, would you *have* to render if the Master should now appear? You are unready. You would as surely be reckoned with the slothful servants as that they exist. You have precious moments left you. Redeem the time, I entreat of you.

Paul exhorted Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

In order to accomplish the work God requires of ministers, they need to be qualified for the position. The apostle Paul writing to the Collossians, in speaking of his ministry, says: "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the

Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory; whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus; whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."

No less devotion to, and sacred appreciation of, the work of the ministry does God require of his ministers who are living so near the end of all things. God cannot accept the work of laborers unless they realize the life and power of the truth they present to others in their own hearts. God will not accept of anything short of earnest, active, zealous heart-labor. Vigilance and fruitfulness are required for this great work. God wants unselfish workmen who will labor with disinterested benevolence, and who will give their undivided interest to the work.

Brethren, you lack self-devotion and consecration to the work. Your hearts are selfish. The deficiencies in you must be supplied, or you will meet with a fatal disappointment ere long—you will lose Heaven. God does not lightly regard a neglect of the faithful performance of the work he has left his servants to do. Enduring energy, and a constant reliance upon God, are lacking in many of those who are laboring in the ministry. The result of this lack brings upon the few who possess these qualities, great burdens, and they are necessitated to make up the deficiencies so apparent in those who might be able workmen if they would become so. There are a few who are working day and night, depriving themselves of rest and social enjoyments, taxing their brain to the utmost, performing the labor of three men,

wearing away their valuable lives to do the work that others might do, but neglect. They are too lazy to perform their part; therefore those who feel the sacredness of the work, and realize the worth of souls, feel that it must move forward, and are doing extra labor, making superhuman efforts, and using up their brain-power, to keep the work moving, while many ministers are carefully preserving themselves, by shunning burdens and remaining in a state of inefficiency, and accomplishing next to nothing. Were the interest, and devotion to the work, equally divided, and were all diligent who profess to be ministers, devoting their interest wholly to the work, and not saving themselves, the few earnest, God-fearing workmen, who are fast wearing away their lives, would be relieved of this high pressure upon them, and their strength might be preserved, that, when actually required, would tell with double power, and accomplish far greater results than can now be seen, while under so great a pressure of overwhelming care and anxiety.

God is not pleased with this inequality. Men who profess to be called of God to minister in word and doctrine do not feel, many of them, that they have no right to claim to be teachers unless they are thoroughly furnished by earnest, diligent study of the word of God. There are some who have neglected to obtain a knowledge of the simple branches of education. Some cannot even read correctly; some misquote the Scriptures; and some, by their apparent lack of being qualified for the work they are trying to do, injure the work of God, and bring the truth into disrepute. These do not see the necessity of cultivating the

intellect, and especially encouraging refinement without affectation, and seeking to attain to the true elevation of Christian character. The certain and effectual means of attaining this is the surrendering of the soul to God. He will direct the intellect and affections, that they will center upon the divine and eternal, and then will they possess energy without rashness; for all the powers of the mind and the being will be elevated, refined, and directed in the loftiest, holiest channel. From the lips of the heavenly Teacher was heard, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." When this submission is made to God, true humility will grace every action, while at the same time, those who are thus allied to God and his heavenly angels will possess a becoming dignity savoring of Heaven.

The Lord requires his servants to be energetic. It is not pleasing to him to see them listless and indolent. They profess to have the evidence that God has especially selected them to teach the people the way to life; yet frequently their conversation is not profitable, and they give evidence that they have not the burden of the work upon them. Their own souls are not energized by the mighty truths they present to others. Some preach these truths of such weighty importance in so listless a manner that they cannot affect the people. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Men whom God has called must be trained to put forth efforts and work earnestly and with untiring zeal for him, and pull souls out of the fire. When ministers

feel the power of the truth in their own souls, thrilling their own being, then can they possess a power which will affect hearts, and show that they firmly believe the truths they preach to others. They should keep before the mind the worth of souls, and the matchless depths of a Saviour's love, which will awaken the soul, that with David they may say, "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned."

Paul exhorted Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." What a weight of importance is here attached to the Christian life of the minister of God! What a necessity for his faithful study of the word, that he may be sanctified by the truth himself, and may be qualified to teach others.

Brethren, you are required to exemplify the truth in your life. Men who think that they have a work to do to teach others the truth are not all converted, and sanctified by the truth, themselves. Some have erroneous ideas of what constitutes a Christian, and the means through which a firm religious experience is obtained; much less do they understand the qualifications that God requires his ministers to possess. These men are unsanctified. They have occasionally a flight of feeling, which gives them the impression

that they are indeed children of God. Depending thus upon impressions is one of the special deceptions of Satan. Those who are thus exercised make their religion a matter of circumstance. The firm principle is wanting. None are living Christians unless they have a daily experience in the things of God, and daily practice self-denial, cheerfully bearing the cross and following Christ. Every living Christian will advance daily in the divine life. As he advances daily toward perfection, he experiences a conversion to God every day; and this conversion is not completed until perfection of Christian character is attained, and a full preparation for the finishing touch of immortality. God should be the highest object of our thoughts. Meditating upon him, and pleading with him, elevates the soul, and quickens the affections. A neglect of meditation and prayer will surely result in a declension in religious interests. Then will be seen carelessness and slothfulness.

Religion is not emotion of feeling merely. It is a principle which is interwoven with all the daily duties and transactions of life. Nothing will be entertained, no business engaged in, which will prevent the accompaniment of this principle. To retain pure and undefiled religion, it is necessary to be workers, persevering in effort. We must do something ourselves. None can do our work. None can work out our salvation with fear and trembling, but ourselves. This is the very work the Lord has left for us to do. Some ministers who profess to be called of God, have the blood of souls in their garments. They are surrounded with backsliders and sinners, and yet

let no burden rest upon them for their souls, and manifest an indifference in regard to their salvation. Some ministers are so far asleep that they do not seem to have any sense of the work of a gospel minister. They do not consider that they are required to have skill as spiritual physicians, to administer to souls diseased with sin. The work of warning sinners, of weeping over them, and pleading with them, has been neglected until many souls are past all cure. Some have died in their sins, and will in the Judgment confront those with reproaches of their guilt who might have saved them, but who did not. Unfaithful ministers, what a retribution awaits you!

The ministers of Christ need a new anointing, that they may the more clearly discern sacred things, and have clear conceptions of the holy, blameless character they must form themselves in order to be ensamples to the flock. Nothing that we can do, of ourselves, will bring us up to the high standard where God can accept us as his ambassadors. Only a firm reliance upon God, and a strong and active faith, will accomplish the work that God requires to be wrought in us. Working men God calls for. It is a continuance in well-doing that will form characters for Heaven. In plainness, in faithfulness and love, they must appeal to men and women to prepare for the day of God. Some will need to be entreated with earnestness before they will be moved. Let the labor be characterized by humility and meekness, yet with earnestness that will make them understand that these things are a reality, and that life and death are before them for them to choose. The salvation of the soul is not a matter to be

trifled with. The deportment of the laborer for God should be serious, and characterized with simplicity, and with true Christian politeness; and yet he should be fearfully in earnest in the work the Master has left him to do. A decided perseverance in a course of righteousness, disciplining the mind by religious exercises to love devotion and heavenly things, will bring the greatest amount of happiness while thus exercised.

We have it in our power to control the mind in these things, if we make God our trust. Through continued exercise the mind will become strong to battle with internal foes, and to subdue self, until there is a transformation of the mind. The passions, appetites, and will, are brought into perfect subjection. Then there will be a daily piety at home and abroad. When engaged in labor for souls, there will be a power which will attend the efforts that are made. There will be, with the humble Christian, seasons of devotion, which are not spasmodic, fitful, or superstitious, but calm and tranquil, deep, constant, and earnest. The love of God, the practice of holiness, will be pleasant when there is a perfect surrender to God.

Why the ministers of Christ are no more successful in their labors is because they are not unselfishly devoted to the work. The interest of some is divided. They are double-minded. The cares of this life engage the interest. They do not realize the sacred work of a minister. Such may complain of darkness, of great unbelief, of infidelity. The reason of this is, the men are not right with God. They do not see the importance of making a full and entire consecration

to him. They serve God a little, but themselves more. They pray but little. The Majesty of Heaven, while engaged in his ministry, prayed much to his Father. He was frequently bowed all night in prayer. His spirits were often sorrowful as he felt the powers of the darkness of this world. He sought retirement to make his intercessions. He often left the busy city and the noisy throng, to seek a retired place for prayer. The Mount of Olives was the favorite resort of the Son of God for his devotions. Frequently after the multitude had left him for the retirement of the night, he rested not, although he was weary with the labors of the day. In St. John we read, "And every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives."

While the city was hushed in silence, and the disciples had returned to their homes to obtain refreshment in sleep, Jesus slept not. His divine pleadings were ascending to his Father from the Mount of Olives for his disciples, that they might be kept from the evil influences which they would daily encounter in the world, and that his own soul might be strengthened and braced for the duties and trials of the coming day. All night, while his followers were sleeping, was their divine Teacher praying. The dew and frost of night fell upon his head bowed in prayer. His example is left for his followers.

The Majesty of Heaven, while engaged in his earthly mission, was often in earnest prayer. He did not always visit Olivet, for his disciples had learned his favorite retreat, and often followed him. Therefore he chose the stillness of night,

when there would be no interruption. Jesus could heal the sick and raise the dead. He was himself a source of blessing and strength. He commanded even the tempests, and they obeyed him. He was unsullied with corruption, a stranger to sin; yet he prays, and that often with strong crying and tears. He prayed for his disciples, and for himself, thus identifying himself with our needs, our weaknesses, and our failings, which are so common with humanity. He was a mighty petitioner, possessing, not the passions of our human, fallen natures, but compassed with like infirmities, tempted in all points even as we are. Jesus endured agony which required help and support from his Father. Christ is our example.

Are the ministers of Christ tempted and fiercely buffeted by Satan? so also was He who knew no sin. Christ turned to his Father in these hours of distress. He came to this earth that he might provide a way whereby we could find grace and strength to help in every time of need, by following his example in frequent, earnest prayer. If the ministers of Christ will imitate this pattern, they will be imbued with his spirit, and angels will minister unto them.

Angels ministered to Jesus Christ, yet the presence of these angels did not make his life one of ease and freedom from severe conflict and fierce temptations. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. If the ministers, while engaged in the work the Master has appointed them to do, have trials and perplexities and temptations, should they be discouraged, when they know that there is One who has en-

dured all these before them? Shall they cast away their confidence because they do not realize all that they expect from their labors? Christ labored earnestly for his own nation; but his efforts were despised by the very ones he came to save, and they put Him to death who came to give them life.

There are a sufficient number of ministers, but a great lack of laborers. Laborers, co-workers with God, have a sense of the sacredness of the work, and the severe conflicts they must meet in order to carry it forward successfully. Laborers will not faint and despond in view of the labor, arduous although it may be. In the epistle of Paul to the Romans, he says: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We are without excuse if we fail to avail ourselves of the ample provisions made for us that we might be wanting in nothing. The shrinking from hardships, the complaints while suffering under tribulation, make the servants of God weak, and inefficient in bearing responsibilities and burdens.

All those who unshrinkingly stand in the forefront of the battle, must feel the especial warfare of Satan against them. As they realize his spe-

cial attacks, they will flee to the stronghold; for they feel their need of special strength from God. They labor in his strength; therefore every victory they gain does not exalt them, but leads them in faith to lean more securely upon the Mighty One. Deep and fervent gratitude to God is awakened in their hearts, and a joyfulness in tribulation, which they experience while pressed by the enemy. An experience is being gained by these willing servants. A character is being formed which will do honor to the cause of God.

It is a season of solemn privilege and sacred trust to the servants of God. If these trusts are faithfully kept, great will be the reward of the faithful servant when the Master shall say, "Give an account of thy stewardship." The earnest toil endured, the unselfish work of patient, persevering effort, will be rewarded abundantly; while Jesus will say, Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends, guests. The approval of the Master was not given because of the greatness of the work performed, because of having gained many things, but the fidelity in even a few things. It is not because of the great results that the reward is given; but the motives weigh with God. Goodness and faithfulness God prizes more than the greatness of the work accomplished.

I have been shown that there is the greatest danger of many failing of perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. Ministers are in danger of losing their own souls. Some ministers, after they have preached to others, will themselves be cast away, for they have not perfected Christian characters. In their labor they do not save