

TESTIMONY

FOR

THE CHURCH.

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THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

GOD selected Abraham as his messenger, through whom to communicate light to the world. The word of God came to him, not with the presentation of flattering prospects in this life, of large salary, of great appreciation and worldly honor. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee," was the divine message to Abraham. The patriarch obeyed, and "went out, not knowing whither he went," as God's light-bearer, to keep his name alive in the earth. He forsook his country, his home, his relatives, and all pleasant associations connected with his early life, to become a pilgrim and a stranger.

It is frequently more essential than many realize, that early associations should be broken up, in order that those who are to speak "in Christ's stead" may stand in a position where God can educate and qualify them for his great work. Kindred and friends often have an influence which God sees will greatly interfere with the instructions he designs to give his servants. Suggestions will be made by those who are not in close connection with Heaven that will, if heeded, turn aside from their holy work those who should be light-bearers to the world.

Before God can use him, Abraham must be separated from his former associations, that he may not be controlled by human influence, or rely upon human aid. Now that he has become connected with God, this man must henceforth dwell among strangers. His character must be peculiar, differing from all the world. He could not even explain his course of action so as to be understood by his friends; for they were idolaters. Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned; therefore his motives and his actions were beyond the comprehension of his kindred and friends.

Abraham's unquestioning obedience was one of the most striking instances of faith and reliance upon God to be found in the Sacred Record. With only the naked promise that his descendants should possess Canaan, without the least outward evidence, he followed on where God should lead, fully and sincerely complying with the conditions on his part, and confident that the Lord would faithfully perform his word. The patriarch went wherever God indicated his duty; he passed through wildernesses without terror; he went among idolatrous nations, with the one thought, "God has spoken; I am obeying his voice; he will guide, he will protect me."

Just such faith and confidence as Abraham had, the messengers of God need to-day. But many whom the Lord could use will not move onward, hearing and obeying the one Voice above all others. The connection with kindred and friends, the former habits and associations, too often have so great an influence upon God's

servants that he can give them but little instruction, can communicate to them but little knowledge of his purposes; and often after a time he sets them aside, and calls others in their place, whom he proves and tests in the same manner. The Lord would do much more for his servants, if they were wholly consecrated to him, esteeming his service above the ties of kindred, and all other earthly associations.

Ministers of the gospel have a sacred work. They have a solemn message of warning to bear to the world,—a message which will be a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. They are God's messengers to man; and they should never lose sight of their mission or of their responsibilities. They are not like the world; they cannot be like them. If they would be true to God, they must maintain their separate, holy character. If they cease to connect with Heaven, they are in greater danger than others, and can exert a stronger influence in the wrong direction; for Satan has his eye constantly upon them, waiting for some weakness to be developed, whereby he may make a successful attack. And how he triumphs when he succeeds; for when one who is an ambassador for Christ is off his watch, through him the great adversary may secure many souls to himself.

Those who closely connect with God may not be prosperous in the things of this life; they may often be sorely tried and afflicted. Joseph was maligned and persecuted because he preserved his virtue and integrity. David, that chosen messenger of God, was hunted like

a beast of prey by his wicked enemies. Daniel was cast into a den of lions, because he was true and unyielding in his allegiance to God. Job was deprived of his worldly possessions, and so afflicted in body that he was abhorred by his relatives and friends; yet he preserved his integrity and faithfulness to God. Jeremiah would speak the words which God had put into his mouth, and his plain testimony so enraged the king and princes that he was cast into a loathsome pit. Stephen was stoned, because he would preach Christ and him crucified. Paul was imprisoned, beaten with rods, stoned, and finally put to death, because he was a faithful messenger to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. The beloved John was banished to the Isle of Patmos, "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ."

These examples of human steadfastness, in the might of divine power, are a witness to the world of the faithfulness of God's promises,—of his abiding presence and sustaining grace. As the world looks upon these humble men, it cannot discern their moral value with God. It is a work of faith to calmly repose in God in the darkest hour,—however severely tried and tempest-tossed, to feel that our Father is at the helm. The eye of faith alone can look beyond the things of time and sense to estimate the worth of eternal riches.

The great military commander conquers nations, and shakes the armies of half the world; but he dies of disappointment, and in exile. The philosopher who ranges through the universe, everywhere tracing the manifestations of

God's power, and delighting in their harmony, often fails to behold in these marvelous wonders the Hand that formed them all. "Man that is in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." No hope of glorious immortality lights up the future of the enemies of God. But those heroes of faith have the promise of an inheritance of greater value than any earthly riches,—an inheritance that will satisfy the longings of the soul. They may be unknown and unacknowledged of the world, but they are enrolled as citizens in the record books of Heaven. An exalted greatness, an enduring, eternal weight of glory, will be the final reward of those whom God has made heirs of all things.

Ministers of the gospel should make the truth of God the theme of study, of meditation, and of conversation. The mind that dwells much on the revealed will of God to man will become strong in the truth. Those who read and study with an earnest desire for divine light, whether they are ministers or not, will soon discover in the Scriptures a beauty and harmony which will captivate their attention, elevate their thoughts, and give them an inspiration and an energy of argument that will be powerful to convict and convert souls.

There is danger that ministers who profess to believe present truth will rest satisfied with presenting the theory only, while their own souls do not feel its sanctifying power. Some have not the love of God in the heart, softening, molding, and ennobling their lives. The psalmist declares of the good man, "His de-

light is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." He refers to his own experience, and exclaims, "Oh, how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day." "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word."

No man is qualified to stand in the sacred desk, unless he has felt the transforming influence of the truth of God upon his own soul. Then, and not till then, can he, by precept and example, rightly represent the life of Christ. But many in their labors, exalt themselves rather than their Master; and the people are converted to the minister, instead of to Jesus Christ.

I am pained to know that some who preach the present truth to-day are really unconverted men. They are not connected with God. They have a head religion, but no conversion of the heart; and these are the very ones who are the most self-confident and self-sufficient; and this self-sufficiency will stand in the way of their gaining that experience which is essential to make them effective workers in the Lord's vineyard. I wish I could arouse those who claim to be watchmen on the walls of Zion, to realize their responsibility. They should awake, and take a higher stand for God; for souls are perishing through their neglect. They must have that sincere devotion to God that will lead them to see as God sees, and take the words of warning from him and sound the alarm to those who are in peril. The Lord will not hide his truth from the faithful watchman. Those who do the will of God shall know of his doctrine.

“The wise shall understand ;” but “the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand.”

Said Jesus to his disciples, “Learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” I would plead with those who have accepted the position of teachers, to first become humble learners, and ever to remain as pupils in the school of Christ, to receive from the Master lessons of meekness and lowliness of heart. Humility of spirit, combined with earnest activity, will result in the salvation of souls so dearly purchased by the blood of Christ. The minister may understand and believe the theory of truth, and be able to present it to others ; but this is not all that is required of him. “Faith without works is dead.” He needs that faith that works by love, and purifies the soul. A living faith in Christ will bring every action of the life and every emotion of the soul into harmony with God’s truth and righteousness.

Fretfulness, self-exaltation, pride, passion, and every other trait of character unlike our holy Pattern, must be overcome ; and then humility, meekness, and sincere gratitude to Jesus for his great salvation, will continually flow out from the pure fountain of the heart. The voice of Jesus should be heard in the message coming from the lips of his ambassador.

We must have a converted ministry. The efficiency and power attending a truly converted minister would make the hypocrites in Zion tremble, and sinners afraid. The standard of truth and holiness is trailing in the dust. If those who sound the solemn notes of warning

for this time, could realize their accountability to God, they would see the necessity for fervent prayer. When the cities were hushed in midnight slumber, when every man had gone to his own house, Christ, our example, would repair to the Mount of Olives, and there, amid the overshadowing trees, would spend the entire night in prayer. He who was himself without the taint of sin,—a treasure-house of blessing; whose voice was heard in the fourth watch of the night by the terrified disciples upon the stormy sea, in heavenly benediction; and whose word could summon the dead from their graves,—He it was who made supplication with strong crying and tears. He prayed not for himself, but for those whom he came to save. As he became a supplicant, seeking at the hand of his Father fresh supplies of strength, and coming forth refreshed and invigorated as man's substitute, he identified himself with suffering humanity, and gave them an example of the necessity of prayer.

His nature was without the taint of sin. As the Son of man, he prayed to the Father, showing that human nature requires all the divine support which man can obtain that he may be braced for duty and prepared for trial. As the Prince of life, he had power with God, and prevailed for his people. This Saviour, who prayed for those that felt no need of prayer, and wept for those that felt no need of tears, is now before the throne, to receive and present to his Father the petitions of those for whom he prayed on earth. The example of Christ is for us to follow. Prayer is a necessity in our labor

for the salvation of souls. God alone can give the increase of the seed we sow.

We fail many times because we do not realize that Christ is with us by his Spirit as truly as when, in the days of his humiliation, he moved visibly upon the earth. The lapse of time has wrought no change in his parting promise to his apostles as he was taken up from them into heaven, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." He has ordained that there should be a succession of men who derive authority from the first teachers of the faith for the continual preaching of Christ and him crucified. The great Teacher has delegated power to his servants, who "have this treasure in earthen vessels." Christ will superintend the work of his ambassadors, if they wait for his instruction and guidance.

Ministers who are truly Christ's representatives will be men of prayer. With an earnestness and faith that will not be denied, they will plead with God that they may be strengthened and fortified for duty and for trial, and that their lips may be sanctified by a touch of the living coal from off the altar, to speak the words of God to the people. "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned."

Christ said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Who can estimate the

result of the prayers of the world's Redeemer? When Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied, then will be seen and realized the value of his earnest prayers while his divinity was veiled with humanity.

Jesus pleaded, not for one only, but for all his disciples, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." His eye pierced the dark veil of the future, and read the life-history of every son and daughter of Adam. He felt the burdens and sorrows of every tempest-tossed soul; and that earnest prayer included with his living disciples all his followers, to the close of time. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Yes; that prayer of Christ embraces even us. We should be comforted by the thought that we have a great Intercessor in the Heavens, presenting our petitions before God. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." In the hour of greatest need, when discouragement would overwhelm the soul, it is then that the watchful eye of Jesus sees we need his help. The hour of man's necessity is the hour of God's opportunity. When all human support fails, then Jesus comes to our aid, and his presence scatters the darkness, and lifts the cloud of gloom.

In their little boat upon the Sea of Galilee, amid the storm and darkness, the disciples toiled hard to reach the shore, but found all their efforts unsuccessful. As despair seizes them, Jesus is seen walking upon the foam-capped billows. Even the presence of Christ

they did not at first discern, and their terror increased, until his voice, "It is I, be not afraid," dispelled their fears, and gave them hope and joy. Then how willingly the poor, wearied disciples ceased their efforts, and trusted all to the Master.

This striking incident illustrates the experience of the followers of Christ. How often do we tug at the oars, as though our own strength and wisdom were sufficient, until we find our efforts useless. Then, with trembling hands and failing strength, we give up the work to Jesus, and confess we are unable to perform it. Our compassionate Redeemer pities our weakness; and when, in answer to the cry of faith, he takes up the work we ask him to do, how easily he accomplishes that which seemed to us so difficult.

The history of God's ancient people furnishes us with many encouraging examples of prevailing prayer. When the Amalekites came to attack the camp of Israel in the wilderness, Moses knew that his people were not prepared for the encounter. He sent Joshua with a band of soldiers to meet the enemy, while he himself, with Aaron and Hur, took his position on a hill overlooking the battle-field. There the man of God laid the case before Him who was alone able to give them the victory. With hands outstretched toward heaven, Moses prayed earnestly for the success of the armies of Israel. It was observed that while his hands were reaching upward, Israel prevailed against the foe; at which time through fatigue they were allowed to fall, Amalek prevailed. Aaron and

Hur stayed up the hands of Moses, until victory, full and complete, turned upon the side of Israel, and their enemies were driven from the field.

This instance was to be a lesson to all Israel to the close of time, that God is the strength of his people. When Israel triumphed, Moses was reaching his hands toward heaven, and interceding in their behalf; so when all the Israel of God prevail, it is because the Mighty One undertakes their case, and fights their battles for them. Moses did not ask or believe that God would overcome their foes while Israel remained inactive. He marshals all his forces and sends them out as well prepared as their facilities can make them, and then he takes the whole matter to God in prayer. Moses on the mount was pleading with the Lord, while Joshua with his brave followers was below, doing his best to meet and repulse the enemies of Israel and of God.

That prayer which comes forth from an earnest, believing heart is the effectual, fervent prayer that availeth much. God does not always answer our prayers as we expect, for we may not ask what would be for our highest good; but in his infinite love and wisdom he will give us those things which we most need. Happy the minister who has a faithful Aaron and Hur to strengthen his hands when they become weary, and to hold them up by faith and prayer. Such a support is a powerful aid to the servant of Christ in his work, and will often make the cause of truth to triumph gloriously.

After the transgression of Israel in making the golden calf, Moses again goes to plead with God in behalf of his people. He has some knowledge of those who have been placed under his care; he knows the perversity of the human heart, and realizes the difficulties with which he must contend. But he has learned from experience that in order to have an influence with the people, he must first have power with God. The Lord reads the sincerity and unselfish purpose of the heart of his servant, and condescends to commune with this feeble mortal, face to face, as a man speaketh with a friend. Moses casts himself and all his burdens fully upon God, and freely pours out his soul before him. The Lord does not reprove his servant, but stoops to listen to his supplications.

Moses has a deep sense of his unworthiness, and his unfitness for the great work to which God has called him. He pleads with intense earnestness that the Lord will go with him. The answer comes, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." But Moses does not feel that he can stop here. He has gained much, but he longs to come still nearer to God,—to obtain a stronger assurance of his abiding presence. He has carried the burden of Israel; he has borne an overwhelming weight of responsibility; when the people sinned, he suffered keen remorse, as though himself were guilty; and now there presses upon his soul a sense of the terrible results, should God leave Israel to hardness and impenitence of heart. They would not hesitate to kill Moses, and

through their own rashness and perversity they would soon fall a prey to their enemies, and thus dishonor the name of God before the heathen. Moses presses his petition with such earnestness and fervency that the answer comes, "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name."

Now, indeed, we would expect the prophet to cease pleading; but no, emboldened by his success, he ventures to come still nearer to God, with a holy familiarity which is almost beyond our comprehension. He now makes a request which no human being has ever made before: "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." What a petition to come from finite, mortal man! But is he repulsed? does God reprove him for presumption? No; we hear the gracious words, "I will make all my goodness to pass before thee."

The unvailed glory of God no man could look upon and live; but Moses is assured that he shall behold as much of the divine glory as he can bear, in his present, mortal state. That Hand that made the world, that holds the mountains in their places, takes this man of dust,—this man of mighty faith,—and mercifully covers him in a cleft of the rock, while the glory of God and all his goodness pass before him. Can we marvel that the "excellent glory" reflected from Omnipotence shone in Moses' face, with such brightness that the people could not look upon it? The impress of God was upon him making him appear as one of the shining angels from the throne.

This experience,—above all else the assurance that God would hear his prayer, and that the divine presence would attend him,—was of more value to Moses as a leader than the learning of Egypt, or all his attainments in military science. No earthly power or skill or learning can supply the place of God's immediate presence. In the history of Moses we may see what intimate communion with God it is man's privilege to enjoy. To the transgressor it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But Moses was not afraid to be alone with the Author of that law which had been spoken with such awful grandeur from Mount Sinai; for his soul was in harmony with the will of his Maker.

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God, as to a friend. The eye of faith will discern God very near, and the suppliant may obtain a precious evidence of the divine love and care for him. But why is it that so many prayers are never answered? Says David, "I cried unto the Lord with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." By another prophet, the Lord gives us the promise, "Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Again, he speaks of some who "have not cried unto me with their heart." Such petitions are prayers of form,—lip-service only, which the Lord does not accept.

The prayer which Nathaniel offered while he was under the fig-tree, came from a sincere heart, and it was heard and answered by the

Master. Christ said of him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." The Lord reads the hearts of all, and understands their motives and purposes. "The prayer of the upright is his delight." He will not be slow to hear those who open their hearts to him, not exalting self, but sincerely feeling their great weakness and unworthiness.

There is need of prayer,—most earnest, fervent, agonizing prayer,—such prayer as David offered when he exclaimed, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." "I have longed after thy precepts;" "I have longed for thy salvation." "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments." This is the spirit of wrestling prayer, such as was possessed by the royal psalmist.

Daniel prayed to God, not exalting himself, or claiming any goodness: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O my God." This is what James calls the effectual, fervent prayer. Of Christ it is said, "And being in an agony, he prayed the more earnestly." In what contrast to this intercession by the Majesty of Heaven are the feeble, heartless prayers that are offered to God. Many are content with lip-service, and but few have a sincere, earnest, affectionate longing after God.

Communion with God imparts to the soul an intimate knowledge of his will. But many

who profess the faith know not what true conversion is. They have no experience in communion with the Father through Jesus Christ, and have never felt the power of divine grace sanctify the heart. Praying and sinning, sinning and praying, their lives are full of malice, deceit, envy, jealousy, and self-love. The prayers of this class are an abomination to God. True prayer engages the energies of the soul, and affects the life. He who thus pours out his wants before God, feels the emptiness of everything else under heaven. "All my desires are before thee," said David, "and my groaning is not hid from thee. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me."

As our numbers are increasing, broader plans must be laid to meet the increasing demands of the times; but we see no special increase of fervent piety, of Christian simplicity, and earnest devotion. The church seems content to take only the first steps in conversion. They are more ready for active labor than for humble devotion,—more ready to engage in outward religious service than in the inner work of the heart. Meditation and prayer are neglected for bustle and show. Religion must begin with emptying and purifying the heart, and must be nurtured by daily prayer.

The steady progress of our work, and our increased facilities, are filling the hearts and minds of many of our people with satisfaction and pride, which we fear will take the place of the love of God in the soul. Busy activity in