

Home Truths

BEING MISCELLANEOUS ADDRESSES AND TRACTS,

BY THE

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FOR THIS EDITION.

SEVENTH SERIES.

*“If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare
himself to the battle?” (1 Cor. xiv. 8.)*

IPSWICH:
WILLIAM HUNT, TAVERN STREET.

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WERTHEIM, MACINTOSH, AND HUNT,
24, PATERNOSTER ROW, AND 23, HOLLES STREET,
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M.D.CCC.LIX.

“Give thyself wholly to them.”*¹

1 TIM. IV. 15.

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MY REV. BRETHREN,

I need hardly remind you, that the Greek expression which we have translated, “give thyself wholly to them,” is somewhat remarkable. It would be more literally rendered, “Be in these things.” It answers to the Latin phrases, “totus in illis,” and “omnis in hōc sum.” We have nothing exactly corresponding to the expression in our language, and the words which our translators have chosen are perhaps as well calculated as any to convey the idea which was put by the Holy Ghost in St. Paul’s mind.

When the apostle says, “give thyself wholly to these things,” he seems to look at the “things” of which he had been speaking in the preceding verses, beginning with the words “Be thou an example of the believer, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

We have here, a mark set before the ministers of the New Testament, at which we are all to aim, and of which we must all feel we come short. Yet it is an old saying, “He that aims high is the most likely to strike high; and he that shoots at the moon, will shoot further than the man who shoots at the bush.”

The apostle appears to me to suggest, that the minister must be a man of one thing—to use his own words, a “man of God.” We hear of men of business, and men of pleasure, and men of science. The aim of the minister should be, to be a “man of God;” or, to employ a phrase used in some heathen countries, to be “Jesus Christ’s man.” An expression is sometimes used with reference to the army, which we may apply to the soldiers of the Great Captain of our salvation. Some men are said to be “drawing-room soldiers,” and “carpet knights.” They are said to have entered the army for the sake of the uniform, and for no other cause. But there are many of whom public opinion says, such a man is “every inch a soldier.” This should be the aim which we should place before us; we

¹ An address delivered at the aggregate clerical meeting, at Weston-Super-Mare, in August, 1869.

should seek to be “every inch the minister of Jesus Christ.” We should aim to be the same men at all times, in all positions, and places; not on Sunday only, but on week days also; not merely in the pulpit, but everywhere—in the drawing-room of the rich, by our own fire-side, and in the cottage of the poor man. There are those, of whom their congregations have said, that when they were in the pulpit they never wished them to come out, and when they went out they never wished them to go in. May God give us all grace to lay that to heart! May we seek so to live, so to preach, so to work, so to give ourselves wholly to the business of our calling, that this bitter remark may never be made upon us. Our profession is a very peculiar one. Others have their seasons of relaxation, when they can altogether lay aside their work. This can never be done by the faithful minister of Jesus Christ. Once put on, his office must never be put off. At home, abroad, taking relaxation, going to the sea side, he must ever carry his business with him. A great lawyer could say of his official robes, “Lie there, Lord Chancellor.” Such ought never to be the mind of the minister of Christ.

There are some things which the high demand of this text suggests, as needful to be followed after and practised.

It demands, firstly, entire devotion to the great work to which we are ordained. When one was commanded by the Saviour to follow Him, he replied, “Suffer me first to bury my father;” but then there came that solemn saying, “Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the Gospel.”—“Suffer me first to bid them farewell who are at my house,” said another; and to him there came the remarkable sentence, “No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”—“Salute no man by the way,” was Christ’s charge to the seventy disciples. Surely these scriptural expressions teach us, that in all our dealings in our office, we must have a high standard, We must strive to be men of one thing that thing being the work of Jesus Christ.

It demands, secondly, a thorough separation from the things of the world. I hold it to be of the greatest importance to keep the ministerial office, so far as we can, distinct and separate from everything that is secular. I trust we shall hear every year of fewer and fewer ministers of the Gospel who are magistrates, and fewer and fewer ministers who take part in agricultural meetings, and win prizes for fat pigs, enormous bullocks, and large crops of turnips. There is no apostolical succession in such avocations. Nor yet is this all. We should be separated from the pleasures of the world, as well as from its business. There are many innocent and indifferent amusements, for which the minister of Christ ought to have no time. He ought to say, “I have no leisure for these things. I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down.”

It demands, thirdly, a jealous watchfulness over our own social conduct. We ought not to be always paying morning calls of courtesy and dining out, as others do. It will not do to say, that our Lord went to a marriage feast, and sat at meat in the pharisee's house, and therefore we may do the same. I only reply, let us go in His spirit, with His faithfulness and boldness, to say a word in season, and to give the conversation a profitable turn, and then we may go with safety. Unless we do this, we should be careful where we go, with whom we sit down, and where we spend our evenings. There was a quaint saying of John Wesley to his ministers, which Cecil quotes, as containing the germ of much truth. "Don't aim at being thought gentlemen; you have no more to do with being gentlemen, than with being dancing-masters." Our aim should be not to be regarded as agreeable persons at the dinner table, but to be known everywhere as faithful, consistent ministers of Jesus Christ.

It demands, fourthly, a diligent redemption of time. We should give attention to reading, every day that we live. We should strive to bring all our reading to bear on our work. We ought to keep our eyes open continually, and be ever picking up matter for our sermons, as we travel by the way, as we sit by the fire-side, as we are standing on the platform at the railway station. We should be keeping in our mind's eye our Master's business, observing, noting, looking out, gathering up something that will throw fresh light on our work, and enable us to put the truth in a more striking way. He that looks out for something to learn, will always be able to learn something.

Having suggested these things, I will next proceed to ask, what will be the consequence of our giving ourselves wholly to these things? Remember, we shall not receive the praise of men. We shall be thought extreme, and ascetic, and righteous over much. Those who want to serve God and serve mammon at the same time, will think our standard too high, our practice too stringent. They will say, that we are going too far and too fast for a world such as that in which we live. May we never care what men say of us, so long as we walk in the light of God's Word! May we strive and pray to be wholly independent of, and indifferent to man's opinion, so long as we please God! May we remember the woe pronounced by our Master, when he said, "Woe be unto you, when all men shall speak well of you," and the words of St. Paul, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

But though "giving ourselves wholly to these things" we shall not win the praise of men, we shall attain the far more important end of usefulness to souls. I acknowledge to the full, the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners. I acknowledge that those who preach best, and live nearest to God, have not always been

honoured in their lives to the saving of many souls. But still, the man who is most entirely and wholly Jesus Christ's man—a man of one thing, who lives Sunday and week-day, everywhere, at home and abroad, as a man whose single endeavour is to give himself to the work of Jesus Christ—this is the man, this is the minister, who will generally, in the long run, do most good. The case of Mr. Simeon will apply here. You all know how he was persecuted, when he began to testify for Christ in Cambridge. You know how many there were who would not speak to him, how the finger of scorn was pointed at him continually. But we know how he went on persevering in the work, and how, when he died, all Cambridge came forth to give him honour, and how heads of houses, and fellows of colleges, and men who had scoffed at him while he lived, honoured him at his death. They testified, that the life he had lived had had its effect, and that they had seen and known that God was with him. I once saw in Dundee one who had known much of that godly man, Robert McCheyne. She told me that those who read his letters and sermons had a very faint idea of what he was. She said to me, "If you have read all his works, you just know nothing at all about him. You must have seen the man, and heard him, and known him, and have been in company with him, to know what a man of God he was."

Furthermore, giving ourselves wholly to these things will bring happiness and peace to our consciences. I speak now amongst friends, and not amongst worldly people, where I should need to fence and guard and explain what I mean. I shall not be suspected of holding justification by works by those I see before me. I speak of such a good conscience as the apostle refers to: We trust we have a "good conscience." (Heb. xiii. 18.) To have this good conscience is clearly bound up with high aims, high motives, a high standard of ministerial life and practice. I am quite sure, that the more we give ourselves wholly to the work of the ministry, the more inward happiness, the greater sense of the light of God's countenance, are we likely to enjoy.

The subject is a deeply humbling one. Who does not feel, "My leanness, my leanness! my unprofitableness! how far short I come of this high standard!" What reason have we, having received mercy, not to faint! What reason have we, having been spared by God's long suffering, to abound in the work of the Lord, and to give ourselves wholly to our business! The grand secret is, to be ever looking to Jesus, and living a life of close communion with him. At Cambridge, the other day, I saw a picture of Henry Martyn, bequeathed by Mr. Simeon to the public library. A friend informed me that that picture used to hang in Mr. Simeon's room, and that when he was disposed to trifle in the work of the ministry, he used to stand before it and say, "It seems to say to

me, Charles Simeon, don't trifle, don't trifle; Charles Simeon, remember whose you are, and whom you serve." And then the worthy man, in his own peculiar way, would bow respectfully, and say, "I will not trifle, I will not trifle; I will not forget."

May we, in conclusion, look to a far higher pattern than any man—Martyn, M'Cheyne, or any other. May we look to the Great Chief Shepherd, the great pattern, in whose steps we are to walk! May we abide in Him, and never trifle! May we hold on our way, looking to Jesus, keeping clear of the world, its pleasures, and its follies,—caring nothing for the world's frowns, and not much moved by the world's smiles,—looking forward to that day, when the Great Shepherd shall give to all who have done His work, and preached His gospel, a crown of glory that fadeth not away! The more we have the mind of Christ, the more we shall understand what it is to "give ourselves wholly to these things."