



Arthur T. Benson

THE PASTOR'S TRUE MONUMENT AND MEMORIAL,

AND

THE PASTOR'S LAST TESTIMONY AND TESTAMENT.

BEING

TWO SERMONS

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BIRTH OF C. H. SPURGEON.

BY

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## THE PASTOR'S TRUE MONUMENT AND MEMORIAL.

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"Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours."—John iv. 38.

THE whole passage reads: "*He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.*"

On John Wesley's monument, in Westminster Abbey, we have often read that significant sentence, "God buries his workmen, but he carries on his work."

There is something very sublime about this conception of God's work. It is eternal, infinite, universal; it reaches across the ages, like the pyramids or cathedrals, that it took centuries to build; God's work began in eternity, and reaches into eternity. As man is mortal, finite, limited in capacity and opportunity, there must be a succession in service. Man's time is short: God's eternity has no bounds. Man's faculties are finite: God's powers are infinite. And therefore if the work is to go on, where one workman dies, others must take it up. That is the great central thought of this entire passage. "Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours," one man taking up what another man has laid down.

But, back of this human succession, is a divine commission. "*I sent you,*" says God to every one of us, "*I sent you to reap.*" And so participation in the work implies also a share in the joy and in the reward.

There are three obvious applications of these words: "Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours"; three senses in which these words are divinely and sublimely true: first, there is a *harvest to be reaped*; second, a *structure to be reared*; and third, a *property to be administered*. As to the harvest, a crop is committed to us as the reapers, the gatherers, the garnerers. As to the building, the structure is committed to us as workmen, to carry on, and carry up toward completion. As to the property, something is committed to us in trust, as trustees or stewards, to be administered in the name of God, to be guarded from injury, and to be improved and increased in value as our opportunity and capacity may allow. I have been deeply impressed that this is, through me, God's message to this great congregation this morning.

I. First, there is a *harvest to be reaped*; that is the thought with which this passage starts. "The harvest field is already white," says

our Lord, "and he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein"—or in so far—"is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour." This, which is our Lord's own application of the words of the text, is naturally our introduction to other thoughts. Men sow, and pass away, leaving others to reap what they have sown.

Sowing is, in the Word of God, connected with the idea of toil and sacrifice, and even tears. The sower has to prepare the ground for the seed, to clear it of stumps and stones, to drive the plough through the solid soil, to break up the clods of earth with the harrow; and when he goes forth to scatter the precious seed he knows not whether shall prosper this or that, or whether they shall both be alike good, or both be alike a failure. He is sacrificing the "bread for the eater," in scattering "seed for the sower"; and he knows not whether it shall yield any crop at all. And so in the one hundred and twenty-fifth Psalm, the sower is represented as going forth weeping, bearing precious seed, sowing in tears. On the other hand, reaping is associated with rejoicing, not with fasting but with feasting; not with sighs and tears but with smiles and triumphs—"They joy before thee as the joy of the harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." The reaping is associated with the "harvest-home"—the song of the harvester, the shouts of triumph, the ecstasy of fruition. And so he that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed shall, without doubt, return again with rejoicing bringing with him his sheaves. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." When our Lord used that proverb that was already ancient, "One soweth, and another reapeth," he limited or qualified its application; that saying originally meant that one man does the work and somebody else gets the advantage. You remember the story of Virgil, how, when he affixed his verses to the gate of the Augustan palace, and somebody else claimed the honour of having written them, he added that famous line, "*Ego versiculos feci, tulit alter honores*"—"I composed the little verses, but another fellow has carried away the honours." Somewhat such is the sense of this proverb, as originally used, "One soweth, and another reapeth." One bears the hard toil of preparation; somebody else comes in to enjoy the fruition. Our Lord says, "In so far is this saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour." At that very time Christ beheld before him what, in sublime metaphor, he spoke of as a white harvest field. The woman of Sychar, who had met Christ at the well and found in him her Saviour, had hurried away, leaving her water-pot, forgetting her errand in her zeal to witness to the Messiah that she had found; and we are told in the thirtieth verse that she was even then coming out of the city, and that many of the people from the city followed her. I suppose that our Lord, looking at this approaching multitude, said, "Lift up your eyes. You say there are four months before harvest time, but here are fields white for the harvest," inviting not the sower but the reaper; suggesting the sickle, the sheaves, the ingathering; and he adds, "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour." They had done no seed sowing in Samaria. That had been done by the prophets, in the olden times, whose words had led the

woman to say, "We know that the Messiah cometh : when he is come, he will tell us all things." This sowing was also partly the work of John the Baptist, whose message had echoed over Samaria, as well as over Judea and Galilee ; and Christ himself had dropped the seed of the kingdom into that woman's heart at the well of Jacob : these were the sowers who had gone before, and already the white harvest was ready to be reaped.

Let me stop to add that this is the only white harvest field that our Lord saw through the period of his human pilgrimage. Marvellous was the self-sacrifice of the Son of man, who left all greater works to be done by those who should come after him, himself content to live and work among men for three-and-a-half years with a comparatively unfruitful ministry, because he was sowing in tears and in blood the seed of the kingdom, the white harvest of which was afterward to appear, as on the day of Pentecost. This, then, is the first thought of the text, somebody else has done the work, of which you are getting the advantage ; others, with tears and toils, have broken up the hard ground, pulverized the clods, gathered out the stumps and the stones, and then gone forth weeping, steeping the seed in tears ; and now we have the advantage of it, and are enjoying the fruits of it. There is nothing that comes to us, as English-speaking people to-day, in this Christian land, that was not purchased by the toils and the tears of those who went before us. The blessing of civil liberty, and above all, of religious liberty, where has it sprung from, if not from the very blood of martyrs that was the seed of this tree of life that overshadows us with its boughs, and of whose fruit we to-day partake ? In every department of life there have been these dearly-bought blessings. Have they been the only martyrs, who were literally burned at the stake or torn to pieces in the arena ? There has scarcely been a man who has projected great scientific discoveries and inventions before the human race, who has not been put in the pillory of public contempt and ridicule. Of all the great inventors that have helped to multiply the comforts and conveniences of our life, and the facilities of our world-wide work, how many have been tied to the stake and burned by the hot fires of public scorn and hatred ! How many have been driven into the prison of exile and pinching poverty for the sake of human progress ! And how many have been torn to pieces in the arena of public opinion by that wild beast, the mob ! It has not been without risk that men have sought the advancement of humanity in intellectual and moral and spiritual life. Let us understand that the white harvest that we are reaping, in which to-day we find not only the seed for the sower, but the bread for the eater, has been thus bought by tears, and toils, and trials, by sighs and groans, by the heart-blood as well as with the brain-sweat of others ! And let us thank God that men and women have been willing to toil and suffer that we might have such fruit.

II. The second thought suggested by the text is, that there is a *building to be constructed*. Paul seems to refer to these very words of our Lord, in that most striking utterance in the third chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, which has so much to do with my present plea, that I will read it in full : "I have planted, Apollos watered ; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that

planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."

"Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." The figure of the husbandry, or tilled field, will not serve his full purpose, and so he adds, "Ye are God's building." The figure of the tilled field is inadequate because it stops short of the full truth; for not only is there a harvest to be reaped and enjoyed by us, which has been purchased for us by the tearful toils of others, but there is a building whose foundations they have laid, and which we are bound to carry on and carry up. "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder." The Jews called the wise teachers of the law "builders"; and their chief teachers, or Rabbis, they called "master builders." "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

There is no mistaking such language! God has begun a building through holy men, both of old, and of modern times, who have carried on the structure; and now, when like the departed pastor of this great Tabernacle, these workmen are withdrawn, the building is not yet complete, and it must go forward, the work must not stop here. As there is a crisis in the harvest field, when the harvest is ripe, and if it be neglected it will be no longer worth the gathering; so there is a crisis in the building. If, after what has been done in the laying of foundations and the carrying on of the superstructure, the work should lie neglected, there is danger of disintegrating the whole building, so far as our neglect could wreck and ruin the work of God.

There are three things that a builder must take heed to, when he follows others who have begun the structure, and by reason of death have not been able to finish it: he must observe what *plan has been adopted* for the building; what *work has already been done* upon it; and *what materials* have been employed in the work. That is Paul's thought here, "I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereupon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." God has a great plan that reaches through the ages. This written Word of God is the draughtsman's drawing, which indicates what is the general plan and outline, and even the exact pattern of that cathedral of the ages; and that drawing has been, and is being, transferred into living forms, all through the course of history, and under the providential and gracious guidance of the almighty Architect.

Our first duty, then, as builders for God, is *to study God's plan in*

*our generation*; to find out from the Word of God, what that plan is, and follow history to see how that plan is being embodied in the progress of humanity, and especially of the Church of God; and then, finding out the plan, we should fall into our own place in it, and see to it, that we do not violate God's Scriptural and spiritual pattern in the work we undertake for him.

In the second place, we are to look at the *work already done* by holy men, and spiritual women, who have gone to their reward. The work must be a unit, it must be carried on in the spirit of conformity to one pattern; we must not violate the symmetry of the building, disturb its proportions, or disregard its general purpose, by doing our work wildly, and carelessly, and loosely. We must study the work already done, and on which God's blessing has rested, which has been built into, and become an integral part of God's eternal work; and we must seek to carry out, on the same lines, and in the same grand proportions, the part of the work that God has given us to do.

We must also look after the *material* we build into this structure. "If any man build on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble." Those of you who have read of the ruins of Babylonia and Egypt, will know that in these great countries the most stupendous structures actually had built into them layers of wood, and hay, and stubble, as well as of bricks and stones; and to-day in the ruins of Nineveh, and Babylonia, where fire has overtaken human work, we find the bricks and the stones that have survived, glazed by the fire, but the wood, and the hay, and the stubble, have been utterly burnt up. What a sin for a nominally Christian disciple to build into God's eternal work, wood, and hay, and stubble! Not to consider the spiritual materials to be wrought into a spiritual edifice! What a crime to introduce into the Church of God, its policy and its polity, its doctrine and its teaching, its plans of administration and its principles of conduct, the miserable stuff and stubble of this world, that cannot stand God's trial fires! Yet, how many Christian people are actually building into their own lives, this wretched, worthless, and wasteful material which belongs only to the perishable structures of this world!

Ye builders, look out! God is carrying on the building; the divine plan of it is here, in his Word. See that you do not disregard those magnificent drawings of the holy Artist and Architect. The divine plan is already, to some extent, wrought into history; see that what work you do is a unit with the work that has been done, and which God has owned and crowned with blessing; and whatever material you bring to the temple platform, on which that great cathedral of the ages goes up, be sure that no wood, hay, or stubble finds its way into that sacred structure; for, if that be the case, you will forfeit both your work and your reward. You may be saved because you have built on the right foundation, but your work will be burned, and you will thus suffer eternal loss and damage.

III. The third thought of the text, which is equally obvious, is that *there is a property to be administered* committed to us as stewards and trustees. I want especially to emphasize this thought, because it is most frequently overlooked of all the solemn considerations that concern this succession in service.

Now, observe that whatever others have done for God, and have left behind them in their exodus from this world, comes to us *as a sacred legacy*, we are heirs of an estate which is committed to us as trustees. We are "allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel," and gospel institutions; "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" we are put in charge of divine property. What is a trustee? He is one who receives in trust something that has belonged to another, and is to be administered in another name. What is a steward? One that has control of his master's property, and who is to manage the estate for his master's emolument, profit, and honour. What is all work done by previous disciples but a solemn property accumulated, to be protected from injury, improved, increased in value; a property at their death transferred to us, who are their heirs, successors, trustees, legatees, stewards. I am sure this thought is not in the minds of God's people as it should be. It is not a matter of mere choice whether we shall carry on God's work or not. There is *no choice about it*. We must do it or be condemned as unfaithful. If we do not feel it to be a divine privilege, conscience must lay it upon us as an imperative duty. What is the duty of an heir or a trustee when a property or estate is committed to him? First, to *guard* that estate or property from neglect or decline; secondly, to prevent its possibly *falling into a state of bankruptcy*, and passing into other hands; and thirdly, to prevent *possible perversion* to ends not contemplated by him that accumulated the property or transferred it to the legatee. I insist upon it, in the presence of God and this great audience to-day, that any work done for God in past ages, or in the present age, and which comes to us from the hands of the dead in solemn trust, we are bound to administer for God; and that, if by reason of neglect, apathy, indifference, we allow that divine property to fall into neglect, to decrease in value, so that we limit the range and scope of opportunity and blessing, we are solemnly responsible to almighty God. If we allow such property to go into a bankrupt condition, embarrassing its work, hindering all its outreachings, and possibly bringing to a disastrous closing its entire period of service, we must give account of our stewardship to the divine owner. And if, under any circumstances, we allow such a property to be diverted to strangers' hands, and perverted from its original purpose, we have committed an absolute crime, both before God and before man.

I am not going to "mouth words" this morning; I mean to discharge my conscience of a grave responsibility. We are met here to-day to keep the fifty-eighth birthday of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, of whom some say, he would have been fifty-eight years old to-day if he had lived; I say he is fifty-eight years of age to-day, for he does live, only his life is now henceforth to be measured by those eternal years of God which are, in company with God, his possession. Mr. Spurgeon was a labourer for God, now called to his reward, and we have entered into his labours in the three ways already mentioned: first, we are reaping the harvest from seed that he sowed; second, we are carrying on the building, the foundations of which he reared; and third, we are accepting and administering as a solemn trust the property that he has handed over to us as stewards. This very congregation is a white harvest field of his sowing. He began

in this city, about forty years ago, to tell the story of redeeming love from one of its pulpits, and this vast audience, gathered in this immense place of assembly, is the fruit of the seed he scattered. This church, of five thousand five hundred members; the almshouses, with their occupants; the Pastors' College, with its eight hundred students, now in the class-room or in the field; the Orphanage, with its hundreds and thousands of children, that either are or have been blessed by its benefactions; the great outreaching of his influence from that wider pulpit, the Press—all of these represent the work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the results of which we are enjoying. This congregation, perhaps the largest gathered to-day in the world; this college, training young men to preach the simple gospel; these orphan homes for boys and girls; this immense influence of the printed page; all this great charitable work, what is all this but the harvest of the seed he sowed in tears, with many sighs and prayers, and of which we are getting the advantage? We are putting in the sickle where he scattered the seed.

But that is only one aspect of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's work. During the last forty years he laid the foundations of a great structure for God, that you are going to carry on—I do not say which you are *bound* to carry on, though you are—but which you are *going* to carry on. It is in the hearts of this people to do for God this great work; for it belongs to “the perseverance of the saints.” Where, and as he built, go on building; mark his plan, for it was a Scriptural plan; observe the work he has done, and build in unity with it on the same lines; and mark the material he built into that work. I know of no work on earth to-day that is more purely Scriptural and spiritual, than the work Charles Haddon Spurgeon did. I see less of wood, and hay, and stubble in it than almost any other work that I know of in the wide world; and that is the reason why for eight months I have felt honoured in leaving all other spheres to serve this people.

Moreover, all this comes as a trust to you to administer in the name of the Lord, and if you should not administer it faithfully, three consequences would follow: you would dishonour your *ancestry* in the Lord; you would impoverish your *posterity* in the Lord; you would disgrace *yourselves* in the Lord. There is no use in trying to get rid of that threefold consequence.

We talk of “a memorial” for the Pastor; and I join most heartily with you in a memorial to Charles Haddon Spurgeon; but *the best kind of memorial is the continuance of his work on the lines on which he began it.* What did Peter say? “I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance,” or “ye may make a permanent remembrance of these things.” I believe that, if the glorified Pastor could himself be consulted to-day, he would say, build any monument that you choose to erect which shall call attention not to him but to his Master, and shall be a tribute of your love, and your gratitude for the service he rendered to God and the saints; but he would most of all say, “Whatever else you do, or do not, be careful to follow the work on which I wrought, and build on Scriptural and spiritual lines toward its completion; what I left in your charge, administer it by the grace of God as trustees of divine property.” I have confidence that this is going to be done, and that this memorial week

on which we enter, is to give testimony to the willingness of this, ~~the~~ greatest congregation in Christendom, to stand by the work of ~~the~~ departed and lamented Pastor.

How shall this work be carried on? Four things are necessary. First, and above all else, by *prayer*. Without that, no business <sup>can</sup> be carried on for God. Prayer projects the very lines of our work in a heavenward direction. Prayer takes his plan from his Word, and incorporates it into his work. Supplication enables us upon the true basis already laid, to erect the beautiful pillars and graceful arches, and advance toward the completion, when the headstone is to be brought forth with shouts of rejoicing. Again, there must be *giving*, sanctified, self-sacrificing giving. There is a financial basis for all work of evangelization, and of philanthropy, and unless the tithes are brought into the storehouse, there will not be meat in God's house to feed hungry and starving souls. There must be larger giving than there has ever been before. However generous your giving has been, it can be tenfold increased, and you will all be the larger gainers by being the larger givers. I pray you to remember, that by reason of the simplicity of his faith, and the genuineness of his character, this great man that has departed from among you became a reservoir into which God, through his people, poured abundant streams of beneficence, and I am very glad to say that the streams did not stay in the reservoir. I have known some people that claimed to be the distributing hands for God's bounty, but in some strange way, the bounty seemed to *stick* in their hands and got no further; but while the gates were open in this blessed man to receive, they were also equally open to distribute, and his benefactions spread all over his work, in constant benedictions. This great receiving and distributing reservoir is no more among us, and we have no other to take its place. There seems no other heart whose faith is capacious enough, and no other's actual experience has proven in resources sufficiently ample to become the source of such distribution. We must have a thousand little reservoirs to take the place of one. God wants each of you to be one of these reservoirs. Open your heart to God's gifts and blessings, and be sure that there are gates that open out as well as open in, and let the outgo be as constant as the income, and then the work of God will not suffer. There must be not only praying and giving, but individual *working*. Let each co-operate by a self-denying activity. I do not like to say much about my official brethren in this church, for I should be sorry to tempt them to spiritual pride; but as a matter of honest tribute, I will say that I never knew fifty men who stood by any church as they do. When a man will rise at half-past five in the morning, and go early to his workshop that he may be here at the Tabernacle at ten o'clock to spend the rest of his day, that is more self-sacrifice than most people are quite ready to exercise. When a man leaves to others the conduct of an important and far-reaching business, that he may be here to look after the interests of God's house; when a man will habitually go from his home in the early hours of the Lord's-day through rain and shine, heat and cold, to stand at the doors of this great Tabernacle and direct the incoming multitudes, it seems to me very like the spirit of service to Christ and his cause. It is not generally

known that the deacons and elders in this Tabernacle habitually make a place for God's work in their own daily business, and do it as a matter of course. I would to God I could multiply a thousand-fold the number of people that thus expend themselves for God and lay their time on his altar! If we have not much else to give, we can give ourselves, our prayers, our efforts, our sacrifices, our activities for God.

Last, and perhaps best of all, as the means of building up these institutions, and carrying on this work, besides praying, giving, working, there must be a *holy jealousy in guarding the inheritance that has fallen to you*. The peculiar preciousness of this whole work at the Tabernacle, to my mind, lies in this, not that there is a great crowd of people, with the enthusiasm, the excitement, the inspiration that goes with numbers, but that *the gospel pattern has been built into this Tabernacle worship and work!* As from the hidden glory I hear a voice, saying, "As a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon; but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." The curse of God will fall on any man or woman that builds hay, wood, and stubble into this sacred structure! What do you think was, to him, the dearest thing of all the work Charles Haddon Spurgeon did? The College? No. The Orphanage? No. The gathering of this great church of six thousand members? No. The press work in books, and pamphlets, and sermons? No; not even the preaching in this pulpit of the gospel of the grace of God! I believe there was something dearer to him than all the rest, though it pervaded all the rest, and that was—hear me!—*the guarding, in these days of apostasy and defection from the faith, of the apostolic style and type of doctrine and practice!* And I believe that, to-day, if Charles Haddon Spurgeon were called upon to sacrifice any one of all the things that he has laboured for, the last of all would be the energy of grace by which he held up the standard for God in the time when some of the very leaders of the hosts of God were in treacherous league with the enemy! That is my opinion, and if it is not yours so much the worse for you: for I fear you have not caught the true significance of one of the grandest lives that has blessed the generation and the century.

Brethren, to this holy trust, left you by one who is gone, be faithful, if you would rear to him your true monument and memorial. Go and read the story of the fiery cross, borne from clan to clan over the heights of old Scotland. Go and read the story of that standard-bearer in the American War, who, with the Stars and Stripes in hand, mounted to the breastwork of a fortress, his body pierced with ball after ball, and who, when he could no longer stand, crept on his knees, and held himself up by one arm, while the other grasped and held aloft the flag, till he could set it on the parapet of the foe; and no wonder if the army followed through that storm of shot and shell, until they stood where the flag stood before them! Go and read the story of John Maynard, the pilot on the American lakes, who had a vessel in his charge, with hundreds of passengers, and discovered that the ship was on fire. The fire was raging round about the pilot-house, and there was a possibility of reaching the shore if the pilot could stand at his post. The captain, through his trumpet, said, "John Maynard, are you there?" "Here, sir." "Can you hold on?" "I'll try, sir." And while the flames

were rising about him, that martyr kept his hand on the wheel, and steered the ship against a powerful wind blowing from the shore. They were within a few hundred yards of the beach when the captain again shouted, "John Maynard, are you there?" "I'm here, sir." "Can you hold on?" "I'll try, sir." And he lifted from the wheel the right hand that was burned to a crisp, and put on the wheel the left hand to be burned! A few moments after that the prow of the vessel grated on the shore, and the passengers were safely landed. But John Maynard's soul had fled Godward!

From the eternal glory there comes down a voice which I seem to hear: to-day, when in the pulpits of Evangelical churches, and in the very chairs of theological professors, men are diminishing and destroying public faith in the inspiration of Scripture, when faith stands weeping at the doors of the very churches of Christ, and even believers despairingly cry: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him," I seem to hear that clarion voice sounding down like a trumpet blast from above to the believers at the Metropolitan Tabernacle: "Can you hold on?" "We will try, Spurgeon; we will try." And if our right hand is burned at the wheel, the left shall follow it; but we will stand by the ship—the testimony of almighty God shall be maintained! Souls shall not be ruined, and the very faith itself be wrecked, because we were unwilling to die, if need be, for the sake of Christ and his truth!

## THE PASTOR'S LAST TESTIMONY AND TESTAMENT.

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"And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."—Acts xx. 25—28.

THERE WAS, perhaps, no occasion in the life of the apostle Paul which, in many respects, was more solemn and significant than that which is recorded in this chapter. It contains his valedictory address, his farewell words when, at Miletus, he summoned the elders of the Ephesian church. He is on his way to martyrdom, and that martyrdom is not far off. Like a man who stands on a mountain summit, he gives a glance, first backward over the way that he has trodden, and then forward over the path that lies before him. We might call these words Paul's *last testimony and last testament*: his last testimony, concerning the life that he had lived among them; his last testament, in the solemn charge that he lays upon them as his legacy.

First, there is a solemn *testimony*, and a wonderful testimony it is. "I take you to record this day,"—as though he challenged them to write down the words of his witness—"that I am pure from the blood of all men." His garments were clean. God had said to the watchmen, in the thirty-third of Ezekiel, that if, when the warning was given by His mouth, it was not faithfully transferred to the imperilled soul, the blood of that soul would be on the garments of the watchman; and in the entire New Testament we find this figure apparently reflected from the metaphor of the Old. Paul says, "I take you to record this day, that of the blood of all men I am clear; it is not on my skirts." And why?

First, because of his declared *fidelity*. There are four expressions of this fidelity in the paragraph from which the text is taken. "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house"; "testifying repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"; "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God"; "By the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." I wonder whether any other man that ever lived could, with more truth, have uttered those words. What a remarkable record of fidelity! The whole divine message, un mutilated. He wrote to the Corinthians, "We are not as the many that corrupt"—huckster, adulterate—"the Word of God", *i.e.*, seek to get more people to accept the gospel by making that gospel more palatable to the natural man,

and the carnal mind, as the hucksterer adulterated what he sold in order to increase his profit and enlarge his sales. Paul could conscientiously say now, as he wrote then, "I have not been as the many that adulterate the Word of God." He had given the people an unmixed and unadulterated message. There was nothing in all the counsel of God that he kept back from men, for it was all profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness; and the years that he spent in Ephesus were one ceaseless round of warnings against sin, and invitations to salvation.

How sweetly Paul hints that there had been *tenderness* joined with all this *faithfulness*. "I ceased not to warn every one day and night *with tears*." How often we are not tender, even when we are faithful! Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that like as a father he had admonished them, but like as a nursing mother he had cherished them; and as the mother suckles her babe at her own breast, he said, "Ye were so dear to us that we would have imparted our own souls to you." What a wonderful man he must have been, stern as John the Baptist in the denunciations of sin and wrong and the exposures of the penalty and the guilt of transgression, and yet gentle as John the Apostle, in the encouragement of the timid and the penitent; a father for faithful warning, and a mother for gentle entreaty.

I wonder how many of my dear fellow-ministers and fellow-labourers in the gospel have ever thought of the influence that our own disposition has upon our proclamation of the truth. A devout Scotch clergyman, when he heard that a younger minister had preached on the divine anger, asked, "Did he do it with unction? If not, he did more harm than good." I once heard a minister preach on the wrath of God, and he reminded me of some savage that cuts open a man's breast and takes out his living heart and holds it up in exultation. He seemed to delight in excoriating people. The wrath of God in that man's mouth blasphemed God; and there was present a little boy of six years of age, who went home and told his mother that he had heard a man preach about a wicked God. Even the instinct of the child rebelled against the picture of divine wrath, as he drew it. The difficulty was that the man elevated to divine honours his own bad passion, and gave that to men as the image of God's wrath. As light takes its hues from a coloured glass through which it shines, God's light may take a false glare from an un sanctified temper and disposition; and that is one reason why no unconverted or un sanctified man ever ought to preach the gospel. Away with all merely professional preaching! Preaching is not a profession; it is a divine vocation. A man cannot take up the work of the pulpit as he could go into the lawyer's or the doctor's calling, the army or the navy. Only an experience of divine things can interpret the divine message. And so we all need to cultivate a heart that is holy and a disposition that is Christlike, so that when the word is spoken that is severe, majestically awful, that is terrible, as the disclosures of hell are terrible, we may be able, by the disposition through which the message passes to men, by the lens through which the truth shines into human souls, to avoid putting any wrong interpretation upon God. Warnings are dreadful, but warning becomes winning, when, like Paul's, seen through tears. "I ceased not night and day to warn every one of

you with tears." Would that we had a great many more such ministers as that!

Notice Paul's unselfishness. He says, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, you yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities," in tent-making. While he had a right to support, as a minister of Christ, he was enabled to forego what was his right, lest he should be burdensome to an infant church in days of persecution. What an awful contrast to all this is a minister of Christ who is a greedy, avaricious, covetous man, an envious man; when he who comes into the pulpit is after salary more than he is after souls, seeking public position and social influence, and human applause and approval, rather than studying to show himself approved unto God!

On one occasion two brethren in New England were going to the Assembly Hall of the Legislature, one of whom was going to preach the "election sermon." He felt very timid and even timorous, being afraid to face the illustrious body of legislators and judges and magistrates; and he said, "Brother, I feel that I cannot do it." But his brother replied, "All that you have to do is to remember that there is another Presence there, in comparison with which the greatest in the assembly is insignificant." Oh, for a godly race of ministers who covet no man's silver, or gold, or apparel, who dissociate money just as far as possible from the Lord's work, who care little for social prominence or human opinions, while they think of that divine and invisible Presence that is, after all, the only presence worth thinking of.

And then look at Paul's *resoluteness*. "And now I go bound in the Spirit, not knowing what things shall befall me in Jerusalem, save that in every city the Holy Spirit witnesseth that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry that I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Did you ever ask the secret of such calm resoluteness? How often when I have felt myself hesitating and vacillating have I turned to that Psalm in which David says, "O God, my heart is *fixed*, my heart is *fixed*, trusting in thee"; and to the book of Daniel where, in the sixfold conflict between the children of God and the children of this world, God's holy ones came out victors in every contest, because their heart was thus fixed on God. Paul was not moved by afflictions, or trials, or oppositions, or even at the prospect of martyrdom. *He had settled that question long before.* Mr. Harrald, in connection with the memorial services, tenderly said that, when the late Pastor lay ill at "Westwood," and was felt to be dying, and felt himself to be, the beloved wife gave him up into the hands of God; and when the Lord, in answer to prayer, brought him back, as it were, to life, she considered that "the months that remained were just so much extra"—just so much blessing that had been surrendered to God in that awful sickness, but given back to her. When Paul, in the first place, came to God in Christ, he laid his whole self on God's altar, and henceforth, as he owned nothing of himself, in every new temptation to self-reservation, the whole question was settled in advance. Temptations and trials came up, but there was no interrogation of himself as to whether he

should undergo them. *Of course* he should undergo them. Was not he wholly the Lord's? Dangers threatened him. There was no shrinking back. Had he not submitted himself absolutely to do and bear the will of his Master? The lions might face him in the arena at Rome, or the wild beasts at Ephesus, or the axe of the executioner under Nero, but there was no hesitation or vacillation. There had been settled originally the all-inclusive question that settled all other minor questions. And I think, beloved, that not only in the ministry, but in the membership of the church, one of the greatest needs of the hour is to have all possible temptations and crises settled in advance by absolute self-surrender to God. When such surrender is once made, it carries with it the answer to every other question that can arise in life. But as long as you are seeking to serve Jehovah and at the same time hold fast your idols, there will come up ten thousand questions which you are unable to settle because that first question has never been decisively and finally answered.

II. Let us now with Paul look forward and hear the words of his last will and testament. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." Two solemn admonitions: "Take heed to *yourselves*," and "Take heed to the *flock*." Self-heed is the most important of all possible duties, for no other duty can be properly performed unless one's duty to oneself is first done. It is the genuine man, the true man, the conscientious man, the man who is at peace first with God and second with himself, who is prepared to be a man of power. When a man can stand, like Samuel before Israel, and challenge all the people to find a flaw in his character, or a blemish in his conduct among them; when a man can live like Daniel, and all the gainsayers and blasphemers and idolaters of Babylon can find no fault in him except that he serves the living Jehovah, what a preparation for service! Take heed first of all to yourself.

My brethren in the eldership and diaconate of this church, you cannot take the oversight of this great flock unless you take care of yourselves. Vainly will you attempt to keep this great vineyard of God when your own vineyard is overgrown with weeds and briars, thistles and thorns, and when in the interstices of the hedge round about that vineyard there are gaps into which the little foxes can creep to spoil your vines. "Take heed to yourselves."

I have no conviction, in respect of service, that is deeper than this, that many of us are trying to do so *much* that we cannot do it *well*, hurrying to and fro in the activities of a so-called Christian life, rushing to this and that meeting, hurrying to this and that duty, while we have not time for prayerful, personal, spiritual communication, and communion with God. We overlook quality in quantity. We forget how Moses, already forty years old, was kept another forty years in the desert before he was prepared for the forty years of leadership; that Paul was three years in the deserts of Arabia Petrea before he was fully fitted to preach the gospel of the Son of God. We forget that even Christ was forty days in the desert before he began his precious ministry, and spent whole nights in prayer to God in the crises of life. I say to all of you believers that the first thing that you are to do is to take heed

to yourselves, or you cannot take heed to the flock. I say to you Sunday-school teachers that you cannot take care of that little parish, of which you are the teacher, that little flock of which you are the pastor—your Sunday-school class—unless you first of all take heed to yourselves. It is *character* that tells in this world—character, anointed by God, sanctified of God, conformed to God; and such sanctity and conformity and unction are to be found only in the secret place where the light of God shines upon you, and you learn to reflect that glory in your own radiant image.

So we come to the other of these great exhortations. "Take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops." That is the Greek word. There are some people who think that there are no bishops in the Baptist church. They are greatly mistaken. The elders are all bishops. A bishop is an overseer. The word "bishop" expresses, as we believe, one of the functions of an elder, the function of *oversight*. "Take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops." And there is only one "archbishop," and that is the chief shepherd, or bishop, who shall by-and-by appear and give the true and faithful bishops the mitre, which is their crown.

Now, notice the double warning of the apostle to the Ephesian elders: "I know that after my departure shall grievous *wolves enter in among you*, not sparing the flock. Also *of your own selves shall men arise*, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Mark that double warning, *wolves* and *perverters*—wolves from outside, perverters from inside. What is the wolf? Look in Matthew vii. 15: "Beware of false teachers, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." How do you know the wolf? Suppose the wolf were in sheep's clothing, how do you know the wolf? By the wolf nature. It is not the skin or hair which determines the wolf. It is the maw; it is the wolfish appetite; the wolfish propensity *to tear in pieces the flock*. How do you know the perverter who, teaching perverse things, draws away the disciples after him, but by his obvious perversity, his unscriptural, unspiritual mind? There is no warning, given in the New Testament, more appropriate to our own day. Wolves in sheep's clothing are those who, outside of the proper flock, arrayed perhaps in the garments of scholarship, are tearing in pieces the faith of disciples, supplanting their confidence in God, and in the Word of God. And who are the perverters, but the worldly-minded disciples inside the church, who would bring into the church worldly standards of art and culture, worldly standards of character and administration, and draw away weak and worldly-minded disciples after themselves?

We have come to this fifty-eighth anniversary of the birthday of the departed and lamented Pastor. Although this is my last Sabbath among you, I have not the slightest thought of any application of these words of Paul to myself and my own brief ministry. Looking farther back than these eight months, to one who stood in this place before me, but shall never stand here more, it has seemed to me that, if any man since the days of the Apostle Paul could adopt the very words which are in this passage of Scripture, it was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. I can imagine that if, in the last days of that fatal illness, he could have summoned the elders and officers of this church to his bedside at Menton,

he might have spoken to them the very words of the Apostle Paul, leaving out only the limitations of time and the purely local and personal references. Let me venture on a sort of revised version of those words, with only such changes as would adapt them to this beloved Pastor. "And from Menton he sent and called the elders of the church, and when they were come to him, he said unto them, 'Ye know, from the first day that I came among you, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying to all alike repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now I know not what things are to befall me; but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am free from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of more than thirty years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.' And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more.

We might fancy that we hear the Pastor saying these very words from his dying bed. Could any brief biography better describe his history among you? Every sentence might have been exactly appropriated by him, and can be reverently applied to him. And that last tender touch! how like him! "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all." In my last interview with him, at Westwood, when the dear man was unaccustomed to kneel because of the weakness of his frame, he said, "Dear brother, we must have a little season of prayer before you go," and down on his knees he went, and prayed with tears for my ministry among you. It almost breaks my heart anew as I think of it.

These words of warning come to us to-night as a kind of last will and testament of this dear departed man. Let me give one more word of testimony. I may be wrong, but I am convinced that I am not, in

thinking that the Church of Christ is on the verge of the most perilous times of her modern history ; that on her shores already is the breaking surf of a tremendous storm. With amazing rapidity it has come to pass in these days that questions which it would have been considered the rankest heresy to raise in the Church of God twenty-five years ago are raised on every side by professed believers, and even preachers of the gospel. And what is, to my mind, the most amazing and alarming thing is that it is the professed leaders of Christian thought, the very preachers in the pulpit and pastors in the church, and teachers in the higher schools, who are leading God's flock in a wrong and perilous direction, towards the edge of an awful precipice ! The heart of the *people* of God is more sound to-day than the heart of the *ministers of Christ*.

It was not one hour too soon that Charles Haddon Spurgeon lifted his trumpet note of warning ; events show us that he was a seer who foresaw the conflict, and who sought to arm the dear saints of God for the fight. From his dying bed he did testify : "I know that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." "Also of your own own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." And who are these *wolves* ? German rationalists clothed in the sheepskin of universities, the parchment certificate of a high scholarship ; rationalistic critics from across the German Ocean coming in among us, among the very flock of God, and tearing the flock to pieces, destroying faith by destroying the foundations of faith, teaching "another gospel which is not another," declaring our Bible to be inspired only as any other book is inspired when genius has created it, declaring the Word of God not infallible or inerrant, and venturing to say that when Jesus Christ quoted from the Psalms and attributed them to David, or quoted from prophecy and attributed the words to Isaiah, "Jesus Christ was mistaken." "Grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock."

"Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Who are these but the worldly-minded professors, nominally disciples, who would displace simple primitive apostolic praise in the house of God, by the performances of an operatic quartette, and allow an unsanctified man at an organ to play out the impressions of the gospel by profane music, borrowed perhaps from corrupt and debauched musical composers ; who would bring into the pulpit lectures of all kinds, on literary, and social, and philanthropic topics, instead of preaching the simple gospel of the Son of God, as though there were no longer in the world a need for the gospel, or were no longer in the gospel a supply for the need of the world ; who would even address human audiences in prayer more than the Most High God ; and consult a fastidious carnal taste in the whole administration of the church ?

Bless God for Charles Haddon Spurgeon's testimony against the wolves without and the perverters within. If ever these wolves tear this flock in pieces, it will not be because a faithful shepherd has not given warning of their approach. And if ever the perverters corrupt the simplicity of gospel worship and preaching here, it will be in disregard both of the teaching and the example of that illustrious man whose record is in our hearts, and consciences, and homes to-day.

One of the Erskines said, "I call God to witness that I have done the very best I could to bring on a decisive issue between the enemies and the friends of God; between the errors of these times and the truths of this gospel"; and Spurgeon could have said the same words. He did all that he could to bring on the issue in a final and decisive conflict. I thank God for him with every breath; and I miss him sorely as the great conflict approaches, and which seems to me the very Armageddon of the Apocalypse.

And now, in closing an eight months' ministry that has been to me like days of heaven upon earth, I have but two brief messages, in conclusion.

First, a word to you who are yet *unsaved*. From heaven there comes a testimony to you to-night, "I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you: I have testified to all repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. I have not kept from you anything that was profitable, but I declared the whole counsel of God, and warned you ceaselessly night and day with tears." How are you going to confront God, and confront the remembrance of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, if you go to your graves unsaved? There is no blood on *his* garments. He not only warned you, but he warned you with tears. He not only admonished you, but he admonished you with tenderness. There were many of you that, perhaps, meant to take his hand at some time during his life, and say, "Pastor, you have been a blessing to me." I have a letter from one who recently became a member of this church, in which he confesses, "During all the years that I heard Charles Haddon Spurgeon, I felt in my heart that I must some day take his hand, and say, 'Pastor, you have sought to lead me to Jesus Christ, and now I come to him;' but I put it off from time to time, and never did it; and God took him, and now I cannot do it; and I have said to myself, 'As I have put off saying that to him, I put off saying it to God; and if God should summon me as he has my pastor, what will become of me?'"

As I may never see your faces again in this changing world, may I not humbly say, "I take you to record I am free from your blood"? It is a most solemn thought that some in this house to-night, have, during the time of my eight months' ministry here, been doing just what they did during the long ministry of Mr. Spurgeon, hearing the gospel and rejecting it; and you are thus worse off than when I came, as you are far worse off than you were when you first began to hear him; for the very fact that you can continue to hear this gospel and not respond to it, shows how real and alarming your danger is! I beseech you, once more, let this birthday of the pastor be your birthday into a new life in God. Let the question be for ever settled that carries every other question with it. Say with all your heart, "I do take Jesus Christ to be my Saviour, and surrender my whole self henceforth to him as Lord"! Then your life becomes part of God's plan, and your soul is in God's hand; and every other minor issue is for ever settled because that great decision is absolutely fixed.

One word to these beloved saints. I entreat you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to stand by the flag and hold the fort for God. On one occasion William Pitt said to George III., "If this is done, I shall resign." The King turned to Pitt and said, "*I cannot resign.*" The

monarch cannot abdicate his throne; though the Prime Minister may leave his chair in the cabinet. Fellow-believers, do you know this—that there are responsibilities that you cannot resign? God has set you on the throne of conscience, and you cannot get down from that throne. You are a fixture there. There is no such thing as resigning. You cannot evade responsibility, or shirk duty. You dare not be silent when testimony is demanded, or remain inactive when duty imperatively calls for action. To attempt to resign, or abdicate your throne, is to be false to man and to God, and imperils your soul.

I pray you, who have heard such preaching from those anointed and now glorified lips, and have witnessed such an example from that now glorified life, determine that you will never attempt to vacate the throne of your responsibility, but that, come what will, you will stand by Christ and a pure gospel, and a true, unworldly, saintly life in him. May that dear son of your pastor, into whose hands I surrender this golden sceptre, find in you the same prayerful support, the same generous and considerate treatment, the same upholding and uplifting co-operation that I have found among you.

Once more, dear unsaved friends, do not let this night pass without a decision for Christ. There is awful risk in trifling with your own souls! Let me hear of you, when I am across the ocean that, by hundreds, you have turned unto the living God, and joined yourselves to his people! May God continue to work mightily among you all by the power of his Spirit, so that many of you may make that great choice which carries with it eternity itself! God grant it for Jesus' sake! Amen.