

# THE BAPTIST PREACHER.

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## A NEW YEAR'S SERMON, OR TRUE GRATITUDE:

Preached by Rev. J. W. M. Williams to his church in Lynchburg, January 1, 1850, and published by request.

*"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not his benefits."*—Psalm ciii: 2.

Through another year the Lord has redeemed our lives from destruction, and crowned us with loving kindness and tender mercies. In view of all this kindness and of all these mercies, it becomes us here, to-day, to call upon our souls, and upon all that is within us, to cherish a grateful recollection of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

The divisions of time, both natural and artificial, whether of hours, days, weeks, months or years, but especially of years, are exclamation points in our history, at each of which, we may fitly awake our souls to gratitude and praise. Thus let us try to improve the present hour.

In the words of our text, the Psalmist, by a well known figure of speech, puts the soul for the whole man; and by another, he addresses himself in the second person, and speaks to himself in the language of solemn exhortation: "Bless the Lord, O my soul." It is a beautiful characteristic of any language when the opposing negative fortifies the intended affirmative. "To forget not," expresses the idea of "remember" more strongly than does the word itself, "remember." "Thou shalt not kill," is a positive command to respect the life of our fellows. The first Burman

convert, in his celebrated hymn, understands the use of this powerful form of expression:

"O thou, my soul, forget no more  
The friend, who all thy sorrows bore,  
Let every idol be forgot,  
But O my soul, forget him not."

In pursuance of our object, we remark

1st. That forgetfulness of the divine benefits, is among the clear indications of our utter depravity. What was true of Israel in the days of Isaiah, is true of all men in every age. How does the prophet begin his discourse? "Hear, O heavens, and give ear O earth: for the Lord hath spoken." What had he spoken? Words of commendation? "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me; the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider." Here we have *directly* charged upon the people the same offence that is *implied* in the language of our text.

Ingratitude is a great sin. Its companions are all forms of wickedness, and its end is ruin, unless divine grace prevnt. In the case of the ten lepers, the nine afford a miniature likeness of our race. Of the ten cured, only one returned to give glory to God. How many, think ye, of this congregation, at the close of the year just ended, attempted to recall the countless mercies of God showered upon us? Probably the great mass had not one single emotion of gratitude. What should we think of ingratitude like this from a fellow creature? What must God think of us?

To the dissatisfied, the fault-finding, the vain-glorious, the peevish, the fretful, our text administers a sharp rebuke. Most of what we call troubles, disappointments, sorrows, deserve not the name. They are misnomers.

One of the infatuations of our poor fallen race is, that we remember—that our memories dwell with morbid tenacity—upon what we call the ills of life, while of its blessings we are totally thoughtless. And to aggravate the misery of the case, we are both brooding over the supposed calamities of the past, and apprehending those that are never to come. Can there be in this life a more guilty and miserable picture? A rational and immortal being, made after the image of God, and actually enjoying the sun-shine of his favor in ten thousands of its manifestations, so morally bewildered and insane,

same sweet words, however, as the burden of his message. "Peace on earth and good will towards men." The gospel message which he is sent to preach, is literally good news. From the mount of Olives whence the Saviour ascended, the apostles, with his great commission in their hearts, went forth every where, as so many suns to pour forth their radiance upon a dark world, and to this day, the humbler pastor, and self-denying missionary, less gifted, but not less divinely commissioned, go forth on the same great errand, to show to sinners the way of salvation; to preach peace through Jesus Christ. Men are, by nature, ignorant of their own character and the way of life. The living preacher is sent to instruct them in these things. Men are bound by their own depraved will in a chain that makes their sin and misery one. The gospel proposes a remedy. It addresses the accusing conscience, the trembling heart. It brings hope before the guilty soul. It points to the crucified Lamb of God, and through him to heaven. It flashes a glorious light on the dim and dangerous pathway of existence. It delivers from painful suspense and doubt, and opens a way for the vilest and guiltiest to the Father's bosom. It is thus, that the gospel is a proclamation of peace, a message of immeasurable mercy; and men, *men*, not angels, are commissioned to make it known. Even as it pleased God, at first, to dispense with the direct agency of the angel, whom he sent to Peter, and employ the inferior agency of Peter himself, when he would make known to the gentiles, "words by which they might be saved." But this message does not meet a welcome from all, and therefore another light, in which the christian minister is to be viewed, is that of an *ambassador*. He is sent to treat with rebellious men, and even fasten the charge of guilt upon the conscience. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The world is in desperate hostility against its Maker, and the gospel presents terms of pardon and reconciliation. "Now then, we are ambassadors for God as though God did beseech you by us." This is the dignified language of the christian minister, and in the substance of his message as well as in the spirit with which it is announced, it is expected that he should justify it. "By manifestation of the truth" he is to "commend himself to every man's conscience in the fear of God." Were we to imagine an ambassador sent forth to a revolted people, of an

earthly kingdom, charged with the commission of their sovereign, offering a free pardon on condition of submission to his rightful authority, and denouncing a certain and fearful vengeance against all who should persist in their rebellion, we can easily conceive of the mode and spirit in which he should go forth; and of the importance and responsibility which would attach to his great trust. He should spread the royal edict every where. Like the sunbeams, it should shine on every city, and town, and village, and hamlet, that he could reach, either by person or proxy. His heart should be full of his embassy, and he should act ever under the most solemn sense of his accountability; as under the eye and in the bosom of his sovereign. Now whether any earthly potentate has a right to command such an allegiance of his subjects, or not, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, most undeniably has. Hear! O heavens, and give ear O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." But in the charge which he gives to his servant whom he sends to negotiate between God and man, as God's ambassador, while he denounces the final ruin which shall overtake the wicked in view of the dreadful probability of their continuing in sin, he adds, "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?" Who can properly estimate the responsibility of the charge, which these words convey? Nor has this charge been repealed, but on the contrary, renewed under more impressive circumstances. It has been greatly enlarged also, so as to include not the house of Israel only, but all the nations and inhabitants of the earth. The great commission under which the minister of Christ acts, reads: "*Go ye into all the world and preach my gospel to every creature.*" He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned." Now let us consider this commission in reference to its present obligations. This world contains about one thousand millions of inhabitants, the principal part of whom are now, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, ignorant of the way of life and salvation; and were we to ascend some commanding eminence in creation, from which the whole of this vast population could be surveyed at a glance, how would the sight affect

as to be insensible only to the good, and alive only to the ill. Nay, worse, often to mistake the one for the other—to pine over mercies, and to rejoice in judgments.

2dly. Let us enumerate a few of the "benefits" of the past year.

*Life* is a great blessing. The young, the strong, the elastic, the gay, think it a matter of course; but this is a sad mistake. "In God's hand our breath is, and his are all our ways." The withdrawal, for one moment, of his all-sustaining hand, and we fall as the withered grass, whose roots have been clipped by the passing plough.

*Of health*, no man has ever probably formed any just conception, who has not been deprived of it. To know its value, you must either lose it, or receive some hint from the paralytic, the dyspeptic, the consumptive, the rheumatic, or some poor invalid, whose emaciation and groanings intimate his helplessness and pain. *Health*. Write this down in capital letters in the bill of the benefits of the past year.

*Our wealth* is, of course, our own creation, and our own preservation. Singular, universal, error! If our possessions, it matters not what they are, they are all we have, have not been destroyed by the midnight flame, nor taken by the midnight robber, it is because God has made our dwellings fire-proof, and has stayed the hand of the assassin.

In the preservation to us of our families—in the life of our husbands, wives, children, God has greatly prospered us another year. It is a remarkable fact, that of the whole number of this church, we have lost in a year only one member by death.

But to some of you, the past year has been the most distinguished of your whole lives. Its beginning found you in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. Its close finds you fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. All your previous life you had been unconsciously standing upon slippery places, while fiery billows rolled below. But you have been snatched as brands from the eternal burnings. You are now firmly fixed upon the rock of ages; and you look forward to the period when these earthly tabernacles will be substituted by a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Engrave this with a pen of iron on a monument of granite. So much for individual benefits. But we have been collec-

tively, as signally blessed. This has been a remarkable year in our church affairs. In addition to the regular ministration of the word, we have been encouraged to labor in a protracted meeting of more than three months. A cloud which had hung over us, threatening disaster, has been dissipated, admitting the pure light of the glorious Sun of Righteousness. The Lord has been in our midst. Nearly forty precious souls have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Petitions sent up from hearts strongly bound together in the bonds of brotherly love, have been answered in the conversion of husbands, wives, children, relations, Sunday scholars, friends, strangers. We have had the privilege and the honor of administering, in the presence of this community, ten or twelve Lord's days in succession, the ordinance of baptism.

In our gratitude and joy for the greater favors, we had almost lost sight of minor blessings. That awful scourge, the cholera, stood in abeyance. It came not near us. Over other cities he spread his sombre wings. Their population was filled with distress, and multitudes were carried to the house appointed for all living. But we have been exempt in this march of the pestilence, as we were also in its former ravages. Ascribe it not to climate, or location, or prudence, or chance. "Shall there be evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?"

Add to these items the countless blessings known only to your own hearts—the many strong temptations which, by the grace of God, you have resisted—and the many escapes you have made by that same grace: and then tell me, have you not reason to bless the Lord with all your souls and all that is within you? *All* the divine benefits—*all* of them—we cannot remember. The Bible, the preached gospel, the Sabbath school, liberty to worship God according to the dictates of your own conscience: we cannot remember *all*. But we wind up the whole in one comprehensive sum, and say in the language of the Apostle Paul: "We beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

3dly. We have reached a point in our discussion, in which you must be your own preachers. You must take the pen and the paper, and make out the third column yourselves.

*Benefits reciprocated.* I can tell of what God has done for you. What have you done for him?

It is a thought that never enters the mind of the unconverted man, that previous to our conversion, we never perform one single act, nor cherish one single thought, which meets the approbation of God. Not only have you not, my unconverted friends, reciprocated one in a thousand of the divine benefits, but in your whole life, you never have reciprocated *one*.

But, my brethren, some of you have long labored in the vineyard. Others are now beginning the work. The language of you all is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Now is the time for action. Every hour delayed is an hour lost. Pitch your crop and lay down your order of work.

In this part of the account, I can afford you some assistance.

Remember your obligations as church members. We are associated as a body of baptized believers—as friends of Christ—to hold forth the word of life—to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints—and to propagate it, at all hazards, the Lord assisting us in our honest labors. The truth is not to be concealed, that we are against the world and the world is against us. Our warfare is a warfare of love; but we aim at the conquest of the world, and the defence of the gospel of Christ. What, under such circumstances, is our duty?

In the first place, every member should be a *working* man. It will not do to say, we have the truth, and this is mighty and will prevail. It is true, that we have the truth, and that the truth will prevail. But it will not prevail without the instrumentality of the church, because this is the very means that God has ordained for its prevalence. A miserly religion, if there can be such, is of no value to others, and of little to the possessor. To make the capital productive, it must be safely and wisely invested. A mite well used, is better than millions unused. One talent employed to its uttermost, is better than ten or ten thousand wrapped in a napkin and hid.

As in every church, so in this, there are diversities of gifts. We can all do something. Do you inquire, what can I do? I will tell you a few things, and leave the rest to your own reflections.

Be punctual in attendance at all your meetings. This will encourage the heart of your pastor—be a mutual prop,

holding up the whole church—and one of the most effectual means of impressing favorably all who behold you or the church to which you belong. What would become of a bank, whose directors neglected its regular meetings for business? It must itself become bankrupt. This is the great secret of the success of that society which is now exerting, next to the church, the most powerful influence against the greatest enemy to religion and morals, with which we are called to battle:—The Order of the Sons of Temperance. Punctuality encourages the heart of your pastor. He is a man of like passions with yourselves, and needs your sympathy and co-operation. And as regards the community, you cannot expect them to honor services and objects about which you are indifferent. If you expect the public to be here, and are yourselves absent, you are like those who invite guests and leave with their servants the message, *Not at home*. You cannot expect another visit, without explanation and apology.

It is the church that makes the minister. I do not mean that God does not bestow the talents, nor grant the success. He does both. I do not mean that schools and colleges are useless. They are not. But with inferior gifts and limited education—with a church rallying around him and cheering him onward by their personal presence and co-operation, a pastor will do more than the most towering intellect could do, with the vastest attainments besides, if he must drag his church after him. Either he is crushed, or he seeks relief in another field.

The Sunday school appeals to you for support. Be teachers, or pupils, or both, or visitors and advocates of the cause. Since I have been your pastor, nearly twenty from the Sunday school have been added to the church: almost one-half of its entire accession.

There are other ways of doing good, to enlarge upon which, time forbids. In this community there are four thousand people who attend no church. If you are acquainted with any of them, invite their attendance—if not, become acquainted for that very purpose. Bring them with you saying, "Come thou with us and we will do thee good."

Tract distribution opens a fine field for benevolent and pious effort. Ladies in other cities find this a convenient and useful department of labor. I earnestly hope the ladies

our hearts! what an amount of mental and moral beings should we behold groping their way in darkness to the grave. It is affecting to think that now, at this moment, there are about six hundred millions of our race, under the almost undisturbed domination of the Prince of darkness, and that even in christian lands, in our own land, which we claim to be the most highly favored of lands, there are even here, multitudes who scarcely have heard of a Saviour, or who, to say the least, are most lamentably destitute of the means of salvation. Truly the harvest even now is plenteous, and the faithful, heaven-commissioned laborers are yet few. Even here, if you could ascend some elevated spot, and look over the almost boundless extent of territory that belongs to this nation, how few places, comparatively, would you discover from which the voice of prayer and praise arose. Over how few tracts, comparatively, would your eye travel, on which the loveliness of a christian landscape would be seen to smile! How few lights burning amid the moral gloom! How few the number of those who publish salvation, appearing upon the mountains! How small a portion of our fellow-beings treading the upward path to heaven! What multitudes thronging the road to hell! Did Christ appoint the christian ministry as the channel for conveying his gospel to every creature? Then ought we not still "pray the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest?" The work is urgent. The call is loud. The motive is powerful. From every part of the earth we are addressed in tones of tenderest entreaty—"Come," and heaven utters its mighty mandate—"Go." Here is an errand of mercy that angels might desire. Here is a career of benevolence, that the Son of God himself has commenced, and by sending us forth upon it, he reminds us that our highest emulation is to imitate him, and that our noblest deeds are those which are consecrated to his cause and kingdom. How important, dignified, delightful, may I not say, dear brethren, is the errand on which we are sent into the world. Feeble though the instrumentality is, and tremble as we well may, under the tremendous pressure of its responsible nature, it is the errand of benevolence—the wrestling of heavenly charity with the woe of guilty man, and, in such an employment, we need despair of nothing, but may hope for every thing, in the great moral result. It is the cause of human happiness. It is the cause of God. It must

certainly triumph. The line that we carry out through all the earth, and the words which we bear to the end of the world, take hold on heaven. The desires which prompt us to go on this great errand find a sympathetic response in the bosom of Infinite Love. Silently and invisibly, but really and powerfully, other messengers are operating in various ways in connection with us, by casting up a highway for our feet, and at every step, we touch a spring that ensures the agency of Omnipotence.

II. Let us consider the *divine authority* of this mission. As the Father hath sent me, so send I you. Whose then is the authority to send any one on this divine errand. Can any one take up the official character of a minister of Jesus Christ as he would any other calling or profession? Certainly not. No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. Can any man or order of men themselves confer upon any one, by any form or ceremony, in virtue of any official standing they possess, the qualifications to preach, or the right to preach the gospel? Certainly not. What Paul said of himself, will apply in a qualified sense to every true minister of the gospel: "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." The whole subject seems to be contained within a very small compass, in 2 Cor. v: 18-19. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. God then is the source of all spiritual grace, and spiritual gifts, and spiritual authority. He is the giver of all spiritual gifts, and those gifts have been obtained for men, by the ascension of Jesus Christ on high. The Father of lights, giveth light, mental and spiritual, to his people; and special degrees of illumination to such as he would fit for special offices in his church. The first qualification of all from this Centre of Blessing, is personal piety. *"He hath reconciled us to himself."* Every minister should himself be a converted man. He should have experience of divine things. How is he to instruct, or guide, or comfort others, if he is a stranger to experimental piety himself? An unconverted, unholy minister is an awful character. Ministers should be men of God, which implies that they should be devoted to His service, conformed

of this church and congregation will engage in this good work.

The poor, too, have claims upon you which you will not resist. "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep one's self unspotted from the world."

With what we call the benevolent Societies of the day, you are all acquainted. These are so many auxiliaries of the church. And in connection with these, it is indispensable to your usefulness, that you read the religious periodical literature, especially of your own denomination, of the age in which you live. Ignorance is not the mother of devotion. Without a knowledge of the wants of the world, and what is doing to supply them, you cannot fulfill your high destiny as christians, nor meet the demands of the age in which you live. We hold it to be the duty of every man to acquaint himself with the history of his own denomination and the wants of the world. It is the active, the enlightened, the beneficent christian, who will, in the last day, hear the plaudit, "Well done good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Amen.

## THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN RELATION TO MAN:

Contemplated in a sermon, by the late REV. ELLIOTT ESTES, of South Carolina.

"Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."—Rom. ix: 14-18.

The condition of fallen man is truly lamentable. For his present aversion to the will of God is as real and obvious, as his future retribution is fearful and certain. Of this aversion to the divine will, the conduct of all men, in regard to the *holy law*, and no less to the *gospel of peace*, presents abundant evidence. Of the one, therefore, it is said truly, *they have made void thy law*; and of the other, *they made light of it and went their ways*. It is clear, then, that in man, there is nothing to encourage, for a moment, the hope of his future happiness. But the Lord hath said, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. And this is the foundation of our hopes. Here is an assurance that cannot fail. We learn, however, both from providence and revelation, that God is the *moral Governor*, as well as the *absolute Sovereign*, of the universe. And shall we conclude hence, that there is unrighteousness with him? God forbid. Who can question the propriety of his conduct, in condemning and punishing those who love darkness rather than light; and, regardless of his word, add sin to sin? And who will deny that he may not, in perfect righteousness, renew transgressors, many or few, in the spirit of their minds, and cause them to walk in newness of life? The Judge of all the earth does right then, it appears, when, as our moral governor, he punishes according to his law. His conduct,

too, is at least as free from just censure, when, in his merciful sovereignty, he quickens and makes obedient to his word those who were dead in trespasses and sins. In the one, he is the righteous law-giver; in the other, he is the omnipotent Saviour. As our Ruler, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne—as our Saviour, *free grace*, alone, actuates him in all he does. Men are slow to admit, however, that our progress will *certainly* be onward to remediless ruin, unless God exert, in our behalf, his gracious sovereignty. They imagine, after all that God has said of the *enmity of the carnal mind against him*, and their *love of darkness* which proves it, that they are not so deeply and entirely depraved. Exhibitions of sovereign grace are, consequently, generally unwelcome. But there is no other scheme upon which we may reasonably cherish the hope, that Christ shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; that the heathen shall be given to him, and the uttermost parts of the earth be his possession; or, that one sinner will be ultimately saved.

From the text may be fairly deduced the following propositions:—

I. That in his control of accountable beings, God proceeds righteously, as our moral Governor and gracious Sovereign.

II. That our hopes of mercy and compassion have, in reality, no other foundation.

Before the birth of Jacob and Esau, Rebecca was distinctly informed that the purposes of God respecting them were widely different. And that his designs in relation to them were eternal, is very evident. Now, the same may be said of every human being. For his vast creation is but the production of God's eternal designs. And if his intentions, in regard to man, were universally pleasing, no objection would be made against their eternal existence.

I. That there is no unrighteousness with God in his eternal purpose concerning the different and final states of men, will be sufficiently apparent, it is thought, from a few considerations.

1. His eternal purpose, in regard to his works, displays pre-eminently his own glory. He must be wonderful in counsel truly, and excellent in working, who accomplishes, his own purposes. And in strict accordance with this rule,

may be plainly shown, does God proceed in all his operations. For "whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas and all deep places;" and the incomparable dignity and glory of his name appears chiefly in his wise and fixed purpose concerning his works. "I am God," says he, "and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." His adorable perfections, not only made it just and proper that his will in all things should be settled and determined before the world began, but did certainly require it. That he did accordingly decree all that he has done, is now doing, or ever will do, cannot be fairly denied. And what appearance of unrighteousness is there in this well ordered and extensive scheme? An objector, it is presumed, would answer, Because it makes the salvation of some persons certain, and the damnation of others inevitable. And this objection, with all its importance, will vanish, it is believed, when the truth of the matter is clearly understood. The final condition of men will doubtless be as God has determined; but that his determination is, therefore, unrighteous, does not necessarily follow. On the contrary, if his determination be founded upon principles of consummate purity, nothing so fully proves his eternal independence and supremacy. The purpose of God then, in favor of his people, evinces simply his perfect freedom and holiness. It was entirely his own, and had especial regard to their sanctity and felicity. His purpose, too, respecting the rest, is equally free in its origin and holy in its nature. It was plainly the decision of his own perfect mind, and included only those who live and die enemies to God. And the great objection to his holy purposes after all, seems to be that God accordingly maintains his proper independence. Now, it is easily seen, that if God ~~can~~, with entire consistency, determines to wash some from their sins and save them, he may as consistently determine not to purify others, and punish them for their offences. Strict justice indicates the perfect freedom and supremacy of God, at least as promptly as the rights and interests of his creatures. To do as he *pleases* is, therefore, the prerogative of God in the great affair in question, as well as all others.

2. These decrees were made under the influence of ade-

quate motives. The endless happiness of that great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, was an object certainly of the gracious purpose by which it was secured. And intimately connected with that, was the filial devotion and obedience of the saints. Nor was there any assurance, or even a gleam of hope, that man would ever be either happy or holy, after the fall, without such a decree. That this self-abasing truth is offensive to the unsubdued and proud heart of the sinner, is at once an evidence of its validity. The just punishment also, which God will ultimately inflict upon the disobedient and the unholy, was an object of too much importance to remain, in any respect, undetermined. But to have settled unalterably, neither the condition of the just nor the unjust, would have indicated at least some indifference to an infinite concern or some absence of qualification to adjust it perfectly.

3. These purposes were formed with perfect knowledge of all things, in time and eternity. And he does this, too, with perfect discrimination. The sinner, therefore, polluted and helpless, and deeply conscious, too, that life is more than he merits, and peace more than he can claim, may humbly hope in that exercise of mercy which is at once independent and free, neither obtained by merit nor withheld for the want of it. He may seek it earnestly, for upon guilty sinners it is freely bestowed. Upon these main-springs of action, then, does the divine determination, properly understood, make an impression, in the highest degree subservient to the safety and felicity of man.

II. That our hopes of mercy and compassion have in reality no other foundation, comes, secondly, to be considered. Mercy, according to this position, is the proper consequence of a divine determination. The will of God alone, is the efficient cause. Of the fitness, then, of such a conclusion, there will, after an impartial examination, appear no ground to doubt. For upon what do the guilty build their hopes of pardon? If there be no sure foundation, hope, of course, must be vain. And that many cherish hopes that must certainly prove fallacious, adds seriousness to this important inquiry. Upon what, then, does the hope of pardon rest? How does it come? The text asserts, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of



*God that sheweth mercy.* That it is not obtained by man, therefore, is fully decided. It is a boon ascribable to neither his *will*, nor his efforts. "For the preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." God indeed is rich in mercy to all that call upon him; but the carnal mind is enmity against him. He waits to be gracious, but the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. The bread of God, which came down from heaven, is evidently set forth without money and without price; but sinners refuse to partake. They have forsaken God, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water; and still have no disposition to return to him. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting." And although there are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. That he will accordingly have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, the scriptures uniformly show. But sinners not unfrequently, from the exhibition of the divine determination in regard to man, are ready to conclude, Then some will be saved, let them live as they may; and others will be lost, let them do what they will. But the truth is, the people of God will, according to his counsel, be holy and without blame before him in love. For grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life; and forever excludes boasting. Nor is it true that the determination of God is unfavorable to any who seek him while he may be found, or call upon him while he is near. To this man will I look; saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. And blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. But in his objection to the divine determination, the meaning of the sinner is, that, regardless of his cries and tears, it shuts against him the door of mercy forever. His objection, however, is palpably groundless. For he does not seek to enter in. He does not hunger or thirst after righteousness. Nor will he do either, unless God, in accordance with the eternal determination of his own will, give him a new heart and put within him a new spirit. That his will and his desires are perfectly free, he cannot deny. And he that sins willingly, can certainly offer no good reason that the reward of his hands should not be given him. Sin,

therefore, the love and practice of which, nothing but sovereign grace can subdue, and not the divine determination, is the cause of endless pain. Nor can that determination, in its most awful aspects, be wrong or oppressive, unless it be wrong in God to determine to do right. For that men should sin as they do, with impunity, is wholly inadmissible. But the righteous determination of God to punish for sin, in every case, is not more certain than that all are guilty, and all liable. How then, may a sinner be delivered? Upon what foundation does he venture to hope? Upon the will of his Judge, unquestionably. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me," saith the Lord, "is thine help." He, therefore, who wields the flaming sword of justice, extends also the golden sceptre of mercy. He who has the keys of hell and of death, says to whom he will, Live forever. He pardons without respect to worth or works. But let none conclude hence, that the will of God is determined in any case, without an adequate reason. He never punishes arbitrarily, nor does he pardon indiscriminately. His decision in either way is, in every instance, equally justifiable. For in regard to the unhappy, wilful sin is plainly the ground upon which he decides. And upon others, he has compassion solely in consideration of the full and complete expiation made for their sins. Justice, therefore, is no less conspicuous in the mercy than in the wrath of God. For that expiation was made by Jesus Christ, "that he might bring us to God." He is, consequently, just, and yet the justifier of those who believe in Jesus, because he was delivered for their offences. But there is salvation in none other. And without respect to what he has done in behalf of, and in stead of his people, the forgiveness of sins has been, is now, and will be, forever unknown. This provision, too, for the exercise of mercy and compassion in consistency with the perfect character of God, was of his own devising. That it was eternal is evident, and that it was made with a proper regard to the purpose of God is manifest. Wherefore the conclusion is obvious, that as there is no provision made for it, so there is, in reality, no hope of mercy but in strict conformity with the divine purpose. Christ truly gave his life a ransom for many, but it is equally certain that he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. "In

whom also we have obtained an inheritance," says an apostle, "being predestinated according to the *purpose* of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The eternal purpose of God, therefore, discovers the only foundation upon which a sinner may hope, having a respect, doubtless, to the objects of mercy, and to the grounds upon which it is exercised. Vain and presumptuous, then, must be the scheme of salvation in which the perfect will of God is not distinctly recognized. It is indeed independent and absolute; nor would his own glory, or the best interests of man be otherwise secure. That it will ever fail or be changed in any case, is utterly impossible. It may excite fear for which there is no remedy but the blood of atonement; and that it is fraught with consolation, the experience of the humble invariably proves. By whom, then, may the purpose of God be reasonably opposed? Not by the impenitent, surely, who deserve in justice all that they fear from its holy nature. Nor by the penitent, to whom it opens the fountain of life; nor by the faithful christian either, whose prayers and efforts it crowns with success. But after all, it is offensive, because it makes a great difference in the *final* circumstances of man. That such a difference is justified by the conduct of men, however, is sufficiently manifest. But that God should determine to make this difference when he knew perfectly that human nature universally would become liable to punishment, is, with many, objectionable. And this plainly impugns the independence of God. He displays his grace truly, according to his will, and men in too many instances are offended because it is free. He is not, according to this objection, perfectly at liberty. He must, because he foresees the depravity of all, redeem the whole; or be deemed partial and tyrannical. Grace, in fine, must supersede justice. Nay, but, O man, who art thou that replicst against God? Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. And this work shall be accomplished. The foundation is laid; the superstructure is rising. It will not embody the whole family of man; but in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. And they shall come

from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. His design is perfect, and its execution shall be complete. Many, indeed, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. None are excluded, however, who fear God and work righteousness. "In my Father's house are many mansions. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be." But the disobedient must depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. The tree of life is effectually guarded, but its fruit is dispensed, according to promise. Israel, therefore, shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. For in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. There is then, no deficiency in the scheme of salvation. The provisions are ample, the dispensation consistent. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, the Lord will hear them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him; he will also hear their cry and will save them. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. But for those who do not feel poor and needy, who neither thirst nor desire, nor fear, nor call upon the name of the Lord, there are no such assurances. But the elect shall be saved. He who was made an offering for sin, shall see his seed; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. For he was exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. This is the Lord's doing: it is indeed marvellous in our eyes. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

## THEORY AND PRACTICE.

The practical part of religion includes the operations of the mind as well as the external acts. The doctrine of election as held by Calvinists, is sustained by the experience of every christian; we at least have never known an exception. Put these two thoughts\* together, and we have a beautiful practical illustration, and a strong practical proof, of the doctrines advocated in the foregoing sermon, by the late beloved brother, Rev. E. Estes. We never knew an Arminian who did not abandon his own theory as soon as he fell upon his knees. Prayer speaks the language of the heart much more clearly than argument does. When we get there, we see and feel our utter helplessness and dependence upon God, not only for power, but for disposition to do, or say, or think any thing good. We there acknowledge that if we differ from others, to our advantage and their detriment, it is grace that has made us differ. Ed.

## REGARD FOR THE POOR.

Not only is Christianity different from all other systems the world has ever seen, in law, philosophy, morals and religion; but in all its principles, regulations, maxims and opinions, it is superior to them all, and *opposed* to them all.

Take for example, the regard it inculcates towards the poor. In every age, all mankind have not only looked upon poverty as a calamity, but upon the poor themselves as pitiable, and the rich as honorable, from the very circumstances of their condition. The poor man himself does homage to wealth by despising poverty. But Christ *chose* to be poor, and his Father *exalted* him for him. Were the palace and the manger, were *either* at his option, he *preferred* the manger. And his representatives on earth now are the poor. He says so. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these, the least of my disciples, ye have done it unto me." A cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple, is a cup of cold water to the glorious Messiah himself. Charity in the popular sense, is the exposition of the phrase "good works" in the scriptural sense. Ed.