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The Successful Minister's Fixed Resolve.

BY REV. JNO. S. HARDAWAY.

Sermon preached at Mt. Zion Church at the ordination of Joseph Blalock, June 4, 1893, and requested for publication in the RECORDER by Mt. Zion Church. Flat River Association.

Text—"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."—1 Cor. 2: 2.

[CONCLUDED FROM LAST WEEK.]

(8). Another temptation that will confront you, will be the desire to be a popular preacher. There are many things that will heavily press upon you to force you in that direction. The churches now everywhere are calling for popular preachers. They do not ask, when desiring to secure a pastor, "Is he a godly man? Is he well versed in the Scriptures? Is he sound in doctrine? Is he a son of consolation? Is he a faithful pastor? No; the question that is asked, that is pressed, is this: Does he draw? Besides that consideration, oftentimes in one's ministry, the fact that a thin audience greets him, will lead a preacher to think very seriously of the question, How can I become a popular preacher? When Mr. Jones, the preacher over the way, announces that he will preach on Sunday at 11 a. m. to the Odd Fellows, or to the military company, or to the Knights of Pythias, or to the

United Workmen, or to the Y. M. C. A. men, or to C. E. men, or to the Knights of Labor, or to some other organization, (for "their name is legion,") a very serious question with a man who believes that much of all that is tomfoolery, will be, how can I keep my congregation? It is a grave temptation. Some men try to meet the trouble by what is known as sensational preaching. The gospel of the "steamboat disaster," of the "railroad accident," of the "lessons from the Johnstown flood," and from the "Charleston earthquake," begins to come upon the scene; and from subjects of a somewhat dignified nature, the tendency is to go into the political canvas—the scandal of the court room—and even to the uttermost lengths in the absurd and grotesque, until at last he who should be a teacher of righteousness has degenerated into one who merely panders to the cravings of a silly set of floating sensation seekers. O man of God, there is no word in the Scriptures that encourages you to believe that a preacher should be, or will be, popular. Our Saviour distinctly declares that the world will hate them that are his chosen ones. We sing very often,

"Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Saviour too;"

but how often does the fact that the world leaves us drive preachers into a ministry that seeks not to save men, but to please men. Let it not be so with you.

(9). Another temptation that will come to you will be to quit the ministry when difficulties and opposition encounter you. See your newly painted ship. How trim is her rigging! How gracefully she sits upon the waves! How full of hope and brightness does she weigh anchor and turn her bow to the untried ocean! Oh, did she but know what storms would assail her! how the winds and waves would buffet her! how billow after billow would spend its huge strength, as with a mad desire to dash her into pieces! ah, did she but know that storm scarred, and weather-beaten, and wave-tossed, she would come into her harbor like a weary fugitive from wrath, how could she set forth upon the voyage before her? And so I sometimes feel that if we ministers knew the trials that would tax us, that would test all our strength and patience, we, too, would think well before we embarked upon so tempestuous a sea. Discouragements without, discouragements within; the animosity of foes, the indifference of friends; a tide of worldliness within the church co-operating with the world without; the depression that comes with the feeling that even those who should uphold you are unconcerned whether you sink or swim; the unreasonableness of many men, as well as their wickedness—all these things will make you exclaim, "And who is sufficient for these things?" Blessed art thou, if when these things come, thou canst say with an undaunted spirit, "But our sufficiency is of God."

Much of the unrest in the ministry to day; many of the pastoral changes; much of what seems to be a disposition to flit from church to church, is positively due to pusillanimity and cowardliness on the part of the ministry. There are some ministers that fly if a single member of the church says "shoo." They leave the church in the hands of an evil element that are thus taught that they can drive away any minister whose ministry they do not like. May God grant unto the ministry the willingness to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." Make up your mind, my brother, that these things are coming, and pray God for strength to meet the temptation.

Having discussed some of the temptations that assail the minister of the gospel, and that interfere with his success, let us now consider how he may best meet these temptations, overcome them, and secure the highest possible success for his ministry. He cannot encounter successfully these temptations except through the power of the fixed resolve "to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

II. THE FIXED RESOLVE.

To be entirely dominated by this fixed determination to "know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," is to realize the great fact that Jesus Christ is the only "mediator between God and man;" is to realize that there is "none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved;" is to understand that "Jesus Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" is to accept and to rejoice in the great gospel truth that we "are saved by grace through faith; and that not of (ourselves), it is the gift of God." When a man has determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified, he has anchored all his hope in Christ, in the crucified Christ; and he hath learned the great truth of truths that "Christ is all and in all."

The minister who enters upon the work of the gospel and prosecutes it with this resolve, must attain to success. He cannot fail in his work.

(1). He must be successful, because knowing nothing among men but Christ, and him crucified, he hath buried self and selfish ends, and his heart is set upon the glory of God. I cannot believe that God will signal-bless a ministry that has selfish ends as a moving principle. I cannot believe that God will bless a man who is seeking a big church, a fat salary, or a commanding reputation. While it is admissible to desire to enlarge one's field and influence, the object sought in all this must be the glory of God,

and not the enlargement of self. A man with half an eye can see that there is much self-seeking in the ministry. Why is it that so many men feel that they are called to the pastorate of a large church that is vacant, and so few feel called to a contracted field? Why is it that evangelists feel called to work in towns where they get "big pay," and not in country districts where the pay is less?

Brethren, we cannot expect that God will honor us when we seek the honor that cometh from men and not the honor that cometh from God only. But if we set our heart upon God's glory, if we know nothing among men but Christ and him crucified, what will we care about the philosophy of the day? What desire will we have to air our human learning? What concern will it be to us to catch the intellectual element? How will it disturb us whether our preaching pleases the worldly-minded or not? What matter will it be if our ministry is not popular, so we please Christ? How could discouragements and oppositions and embarrassments daunt us and tempt us to give up our work, when we have the inner consciousness that we are doing all, enduring all, suffering all, for his glory who hath sent us out among men to preach the gospel of salvation! Yes, such a ministry could not fail of success, for it is undertaken and prosecuted for the glory of God.

(2). The ministry which is carried on with this fixed resolve—to know nothing among men but Christ, and him crucified—cannot fail of success, because this gospel of Christ crucified is the power of God unto salvation. Did you mark the word? "The power of God unto salvation." What a mistake the preacher makes who supposes that the power unto salvation lies in human oratory, human pathos, human logic, human argument, all of which combined are "the enticing words of man's wisdom!" There is no human power that can save a soul. It must be done, if done at all, by the power of the omnipotent God. His word tells us that the gospel of Christ crucified is "the power of God unto salvation." The preacher, then, who knows nothing but Christ, and him crucified, cannot fail because God is at the back of him, and God's power cannot fail.

(3). Lastly, such a ministry cannot fail because it will be accompanied by "the demonstration of the spirit and of power." Paul declares that his preaching was attended by the Spirit's blessing. Apart from the Spirit's blessing, what can we hope for our ministry? Nothing at all. We may, like Canute the Saxon king, command the tides of the sea to be still, but the waters, regardless of our petty words, rush madly upon us. We may, like the disciples, charge the evil spirit to come out, but he will not heed our vain and impotent imprecations. We may, like the seven sons of Sceva, a Jew, come to those possessed with devils and name over them the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preached," and the evil spirits will make answer, "Jesus I know; and Paul I know; but who are ye?"

But on the other hand, if we have the aid and blessing of the Holy Spirit, our preaching will be mighty, all mighty, because he is with us. Then can we stand like the prophet Ezekiel in the midst of the valley of dry bones; and we can cry out in faith, "O ye dry-bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you and bring flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord." And as we prophesy, there will be a noise and a shaking as the bones come together, bone to his bone. Then can we call unto the wind in the name of the Lord, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." And as we prophesy, the breath will come into them, and they will live, and stand upon their feet a very great army.

Yes, blessed be God, our ministry cannot fail if we determine to know nothing among men "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," for the Spirit of God will add his power to the preaching of the pure gospel.

In my last word, then, let me urge upon you, my brother, as to day you are solemnly and publicly ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, to make this your fixed and unalterable resolve, "to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Then will your work be blest; successful in the highest and truest sense; wanting, it may be, in a mere worldly eclat, but not wanting in the elements that constitute the best success; wanting, it may be, in results that can be measured up in awards of earthly eulogy and honors bestowed of men; but not wanting in the only true honor, that which cometh from God. For when he cometh whom you have loved and served, he will say of your ministry which knew only him and his glory, "Well done."

Sermon of Dr. H. W. Battle.

DELIVERED TO THE GRADUATING CLASS OF THE A. AND M. COLLEGE.

In the eighth verse of the first chapter of the book of Daniel we find these words: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank."

The scene of this heroic resolution, on the part of this young man, was the great and magnificent capital, "Babylon, the glory of

kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency." The circumstances add luster to the moral grandeur of the brave purpose. Conceive, if you please, a captive boy—perhaps fourteen years of age—daring to oppose his moral convictions to the social habits of great Babylon and the despotic pleasure of the King! It is the fashion of the times to so accentuate the influence of environment that many are tempted to wonder if a man is, after all, more than the concrete expression of his surroundings, and life other than "the science of circumstances." Young gentlemen, I would have you find an answer in my text. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not." To appreciate the splendid courage of this purpose, you must imagine yourself placed in Daniel's position. A captive boy, selected by command of the king, for special supervision in mental, physical and social discipline, he suddenly found himself in the line of such promotion as might well fire the ambition and dazzle the imagination of a less ardent nature. But an inconvenient difficulty looms up at the very threshold of this brilliant career. The thing we call "conscience" whispered, "You cannot, you must not!" and the hero within answered, "I will not!" Can you find a grander exhibition of moral courage in all history?

Why, he is a boy, and in Babylon! Yesterday one of his tutors said: "Come, Belteshazzar, and walk with me; I will show you Babylon." [Here the speaker drew a picture of Babylon as seen by Daniel—its walls, its temples, its palaces, its statues, its vast commerce, its social institutions—over all the glamour of the most seductive luxury—and the Euphrates, emblem of national power.]

We can well fancy the proud Babylonian saying, with a curl of the haughty lip, "Young man, I congratulate you. The gods meant you well when they brought you from the miserable town of Jerusalem, and east your lot in splendid Babylon. Rejoice, O young man, and embrace the golden chance of destiny.

Shall he do it? that is the question. "And he purposed in his heart that he would not." They tell us that Babylon, with walls, palaces, temples, hanging gardens, wonderful commerce, mighty Euphrates, marvelous culture and boundless wealth—that Babylon was great; they tell us that the genius of "the mighty king" was greater still; but I tell you that greater than Nebuchadnezzar, greater than Babylon, or aught that Babylon afforded, was that young, heroic nature, when, planted upon the eternal adamant of moral integrity, and breathing appalling odds, he calmly resolved, "I will not!"

Young men, such a purpose, under such circumstances, would deserve to be pronounced the rashness of a madman, were it not for one fact. A fact which, alas! does not always enter into our disposition of life's great emergencies—a fact in comparison with which all other facts are trivial—the central sun in the system of facts! I mean that stupendous, supreme fact: there is a God! Better be on God's side than on the side of Babylon and the king. Believe me, it is the highest wisdom, the noblest policy.

The sequel shows that young Daniel did the best thing for himself when he purposed in his heart that he would not. "And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." "Natural law," somebody whispers. Yes, but read further in the record: "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." After awhile his royal master dreamed a dream. The magicians and astrologers were utterly helpless; their bungling legerdemain could not invade thought's interior sphere and cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff that weighs upon the mind. Daniel's time has come, the supreme moment is upon him! Young gentlemen, he was master of the situation because the present lays hold upon the past. The life, whose foundation was laid in the heroic resolution of the boy, grew up into secret sympathy with God, and in the help of the Divine found the hidings of its power. The miraculous element (as we call it) may have well nigh faded out, but the principle, and its abundant illustration in history, continues, and must continue as long as the moral government of God endures! I repeat, better be on God's side! But God is immaterial, impalpable,—who ever saw God?—and Babylon is so splendidly present to the senses! God is abstract, and Babylon so gloriously concrete. But, young gentlemen, the spiritual is greater than the material, and the abstract imparts beauty and value to the concrete. While I speak, a circuit court of the United States is deliberating upon a question which could only be made a question by ignoring this fundamental truth. Caliphass stood in the council of the chief priests and Pharisees and said, "Ye know nothing at all * * * it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people." Never mind whether he be innocent or guilty—whether it be abstractly right or wrong—it is expedient! it is expedient! God made the wrath of man to praise him, but will anybody say the hand that drove the nail and guided the spear was not the red hand of murder! Only the other day we were told, with much of the insolence of the high priest's, ye know nothing at all, and the speciousness of the argument of expediency. The six days are not enough; God's seventh shall, entirely in principle and partially in practice, be wrested from him, for the people. But is it right? Where stands God on this question? Who was it said,

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy?" Who was it said, "Verily, my Sabbaths ye shall keep?" Who was it said, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shall honor him, nor doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth." I will tell you, it was God! Yet a syndicated letter, advertised as from the pen of a great correspondent, and widely published, poured out, without rebuke, vials of foaming wrath and bitter contempt upon the fanatical, low browed set (the ministry) and their ignorant and deluded sympathizers, who dared to stand by their convictions. And the august mayor of Chicago, like Olympean Jove grasping the lightning in his puissant fist, confesses to some loss of temper (truly a terrible thing to contemplate!) when he thinks of those "non-producers" presuming to protest. Non-producers! and are they only producers for the good of the race, who manufacture lard, lay railroads and build houses? Was Homer a non-producer? Were Milton, and Shakespeare, and Bunyan, non-producers? Were Luther, and Wesley, and Spurgeon, non-producers? Must they who do not manipulate the material into other forms, but deal in the subtler essences of mind, the spiritual and eternal—must they be insulted with a place among the drones in the great hive of life! Non-producers! the honorable mayor of Chicago might have been mounted upon his wooden Pegasus, and at the end of a thousand years he would have found himself unable to produce one line of Paradise Lost. Non-producer! Then must our Lord have lost in intrinsic manhood when he left off driving nails and manufacturing yokes to teach a divine philosophy and point the way from earth to heaven! I tell you, we are envied by a world infinitely greater than our physical conditions. This was the great truth which Daniel recognized as a controlling moral force, more than two thousand years ago. It is the one truth that can save this age and this nation.

Daniel was no fanatic. It is evident that he looked the situation straight in the eye. We have in the text the evidence of deliberation: he "purposed in his heart." He thought, he pondered. [The speaker here spoke of the dignity and blessedness of right thinking.] And when he had reached his conclusion, the process of thought helped to fortify him there: it made him solid, it made him brave. Young men, learn to think! Be brave! Louis stood behind his palace door; the mob thundered without. On surged the Sans Culotté flood. The door is about to be battered in. Louis flings it open, and steps forth. For a moment, that fierce beast, a mob, quails under the calm eye of the king. The royal voice rings out, "What do you want?" The tone of the voice has broken the mesmerism of the eye; like the sound of many waters, comes the shout, "Veto! Patriot Ministers! Remove the veto!" The king makes answer, "This is not the time, nor this the way." They surge upon him, press him and his handful of grenadiers into the embrasure of a window. Place the red cap of the commune on his brow and thrust a bottle to his parched lips. "Sire, don't fear," says one of the grenadiers. "Fear?" exclaims Louis, "feel that!" laying the man's hand on his royal heart. So stands the man who has resolved. Sometimes in red woolen cap, the rage of passion, beating about him far and near, shouting in wild, discordant notes, "Veto! Patriot Ministers! Remove the veto," and the man calmly answers, "Fear! feel that!" There is but one thing on earth a true man, made after the fashion of young Daniel should fear. That thing is sin. He should fear it, because sin corrupts—it defiles. "And Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself." Oh, the defilement of sin! Oh, the deep, accursed stain! The great actor, whose life's drama has just closed, beheld the mysterious stain on the tongue of marvelous eloquence, and telegraphed his physician in an agony of anxiety, "Black! Black! Black!!! Booth." How much that brief telegram meant only Booth knew. The man who beholds the stain of sin on his soul, as sin is, is appalled by the defilement, and cries "Black! Black! Black!!!" to a merciful God. Young brother, I beg you, as you love your family, as you respect yourself, as you value your soul, as you honor your God, fear sin! Form this night a brave and noble purpose and admit God into the compact. Mark you, the element of time was of supreme importance with Daniel. Ah, well for him that in the bloom of his young manhood he said, I will not! A great surgeon stood, with his class, in the presence of a chloroformed subject. Before the keen knife was pressed into the unconscious form, the famous teacher and surgeon said: "Young gentlemen, one year ago that man could have been saved by a simple and safe operation; two years ago, he might have been saved by a moral reformation; to-night, with all the aid of science and the best instruments, there is only the ghost of a chance. I shall do my best, and reverently wait for nature to render her uncertain verdict."

[The speaker emphasized the idea of the importance of purity in youth, and closed with an illustration from the great fire in New York in 1835, illustrating the value of good material and good workmanship in the structure of character, sure to be subjected to fiery ordeals.]

Three things to do—think, live, not sleep.