

SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON PREACHED BY MR. C. HEMINGTON, AT
SOUTHILL, ON SUNDAY MORNING, 24th JANUARY, 1892, THE DAY
BEFORE THE BURIAL OF MR. WARBU@TON.

Immediately before the reading, Mr. Hemington said: I shall try, with the help of the Lord, to speak His truth to you on this solemn occasion; and I do really sympathize with you as a people in the loss of your minister. I sincerely hope that the God of all grace will confer upon you that wisdom of which at the present time you are particularly in need, and that He will make His grace to you to be all-sufficient in this time of much sorrow.

Text: "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." (I Cor.i.4).

I am obliged this morning to follow the leadings of my own mind - or, rather, I would say, of the blessed Spirit in my soul. When at home, I never preach what is call a set, funeral sermond. If any of my members depart this life, I make my observations on the text without binding myself to comply with the wishes of any of my people to preach a direct funeral sermon. In my opinion, such sermons place the servant of Christ under an obligation to make too much of the creature. May the Lord help me this morning to preach His truth to you, and may He put forth a measure of His blessed power in my words; for my words are nothing in themselves. How encouraging to hear the truth of God - being not the word of man, but the word of the living God! With much feeling dependence upon the Lord's help, we shall notice three things:-

- I. The grace of God
- II. Grace given by Jesus Christ
- III. The way that the real servants of Christ, through the grace they receive, are led in their ministry in reference to the living church of God.

I. The grace of God. My dear friends, the time will come (and it is coming very fast indeed) when all of us here this morning will be made to feel, in one way or the other - either in a blessed way or in a terrible way - that the very best gift that the God of heaven can give to man, woman, or child is grace. When the wicked see the righteous in the day of judgment standing at the right hand of Christ, as He will sit upon the throne of His glory, the wicked will see and feel, with such an intensity

of feeling as will be indescribable, that the very best thing that ever could be possessed by sinners is grace, and that the worst thing that could possibly befall them is to live and die without grace. The righteous will see and feel with equal interest, but they will see and feel it in a blessed way, with such overflowings of joy and shouts of praise to God as will resound throughout the whole earth and heavens; the very heavens will ring with the acclamations of praise to God from the mouths of His saints for God's redeeming grace. The very mention of grace is enough to melt the hardest heart; and it would melt the hardest heart of all who are the partakers of it if they only felt more of what they profess. Did we, from day to day, more deeply feel, by the invincible power of God's Spirit, our awful ruin by the fall of man, our salvation by the grace of God, and the free, sovereign, distinguishing mercy of God in having saved us, we should never be able to hear grace so much as mentioned without dropping tears for our sins, tears for the agonies and sufferings of the Son of God, and tears at the thought of the immutable, eternal love of God in sending His own Son into this world to save us. Even as creatures, we are so sympathetic and emotional, so susceptible to grief and pain, sorrow and joy, that the mere mention of some things pertaining to this life will touch the tenderest chords of our nature, bring tears from our eyes, and make the smile of gladness to show itself in our faces. Only let our fellow creatures converse together about their successes and failures, their profits and their losses; let conversation turn upon the more notable events of human life - how easily we are moved! The inward spirit is touched, emotion will show itself in the very countenance.

But, my brethren, the grace of God may be mentioned in many a house: you may mention it to the young, and you may mention it to the aged, without seeing a tear or a smile. And I tell you plainly that it may often be mentioned even to the children of God without much emotion being manifested.

Now this eminent servant of Christ, the apostle Paul, loved to see the grace of God in men. Nothing did him more good than to see grace in poor sinners. And I am persuaded that this was the character of your departed minister. I have known him personally for more than thirty years; I have heard him preach a good many times. Sure I am that I am delineating his character in strict accordance with truth when I say - not to flatter you, but to the honour of God - that he loved nothing so much as declaring to poor sinners the grace of God. This apostle, in going about as the Lord's servant, could see some in wealth, some in health, some in poverty, some in sickness, and with Paul it was like this: "Let me see the grace of God in you, if it be His

will." So felt, and so desired, your minister. He went away from home, as he frequently did, to lift up the blood-stained banner of the cross. That was the predominant feeling of his very heart - in a word, the grace of God. The Apostle says: "I thank my God"; and this was not a mere word spoken formally, dropped like an icicle from his lips. There was a wonderful feeling in his heart when he spoke these words, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God"; because Paul knew that, if they had grace, they were saved, pulled out of the fire, delivered out of the darkness of the devil's kingdom, rescued from the damnation of sin and from the curse of that inexorable law of God which curses the man that breaks it in a single iota: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal.iii.10). Paul knew that these people stood upon a foundation against which the gates of hell could not prevail; and these Corinthians - some of them at least - had been a bad lot. I know nothing of you, nor of your lives; but, were we to meet after I descend from the pulpit to speak privately with you about our past lives, I might be constrained to say the same of you - you have been a bad lot. And I should have to put myself with the bad lot. When I think of my past unregenerate life, I could not put myself with the godly, nor yet with the partially wicked, but, to my shame be it spoken, it would have to be with the exceedingly wicked. That cuts me to the heart even to this day. Many a time I have to cry to my God not to remember against me the sins of my youth. I was quite a young man when the infinite God arrested me in my wild career of seeking the pleasures of sin and the vanities of the world. I was like the sow that wallows in the mire - not of little sin, but of great sin, gross, defiling sin. So it was with some of these Corinthians, and the apostle said to them, after mentioning those atrocious iniquities: "Such were some of you" (I Cor. vi.ii).

And I am sure my dear brother has felt these very words applicable to himself - yea, I have heard him say so. "Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." "I thank my God," then, says the apostle, "always on your behalf, for the grace of God." Grace made the apostle very unselfish, and that is what grace will do when it is really in exercise, which I believe from my own experience. I look at the young people in the gallery of our own chapel at home; I love to speak to them, and I say sometimes: "My heart's desire to God is that you may be saved. O that it may be the will of God to probe your consciences - that you may not come here Sunday after Sunday, listening to my preaching, just consenting to it and to the orthodoxy of my ministry, and never be more impressed than

that." I love thus to speak to them and to warn them as to the error of their ways. Paul gloried in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. His heart leaped with joy when he saw the effects of grace - the blessed results of his ministry on the hearts and consciences of the people to whom he preached. Feeling his mind constantly impressed in the very deepest way as to the worth, value, and blessedness of grace, he rejoiced to see its effects, as may be seen in this and in all his epistles. In another place he says: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (I Cor.x.33). O that my coming here, in the express providence of God to speak to you today to drop a token of loving esteem to the memory of our dear departed brother, might be made a means of awakening the dormant conscience of some poor sinner in this chapel at Southill! What a mercy if, at some future time, the sorrowing church here should have the joy of hearing some young man or woman come before them to testify that, "on the Sunday that dear Mr. Warburton was sleeping in the arms of death in his own house, God's word struck my heart, and sent me home trembling lest I should quit this mortal life and have to appear before God."

Paul's great concern, subject to the will of God, was that sinners might be saved. I pity the minister that preaches Calvinism without a concern for the salvation of sinners. I have never done so, and I trust I may never be a minister of that stamp. Another great object of Paul in preaching the gospel to the living children of God was to stir them up to an appreciation of the blessedness and the value of grace - to hold out the glorious immortality of the gospel before them, as we find him saying in another place, "Rejoice, Rejoice" (Phil.iv.4). And I would say, beloved, to you this morning, though it is a time of sorrow with you: "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (I Pet.iv.13).

II. A remark or two now, secondly, about grace being given by Jesus Christ. "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." We cannot merit it, we cannot get it by works. We never have deserved and we never shall deserve it, and I thank God it is so. In my old days, grace would not be half so sweet to me if I had obtained it by some meritorious act. It is because I feel myself to be such a vile wretch; and often I have to tell my God very plainly: "Lord, the damned in hell do not more richly deserve to be there than I do; nothing but Thy grace makes the difference." There never could have been any grace for sinners but for Jesus Christ. If divine grace flows at all, it must flow freely, unhindered, unrestrained, and unchecked; its course is through Christ, it

flows through no other channel; and, if it flows at all, it will flow back to its origin. It flows on and on into the hearts of sinners only through Christ. Why? Because Christ is the eternal Son of God, the glorious Mediator through His assumption of our nature, and because His sufferings on behalf of sinners were stamped with all the power and efficacy of the eternal deity; because Christ is pure and holy in His Person, in His life, His offices, His death, His resurrection. Therefore grace flows freely and unrestrainedly through Him; "for it pleased the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell" (Col.i.19). Perhaps you differ from me, but I will say this only as an expression of my honest opinion, that there is nothing in this world that is more undervalued than the grace of God. Nothing is thought less of, sought less after, prized less in its glorious work and operation, than grace. That this should be the case with the millions who are ignorant of its blessedness is no great matter of surprise to us; but it does surprise us that grace should be so undervalued - not absolutely, but comparatively undervalued - by many who profess to be the subjects of it.

It often grieves my very soul to see those who, I hope, are the living children of God so given up to worldliness, carnality, and selfishness as to slight the ordinances and the means of grace. This proves how much they undervalue them, and this is to be deplored by every man that loves his God and the grace of God. Oh, my dear friends, this only shows (as scripture declares) what an immense amount of profession there is in the present day without any grace. Jesus said: "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt.vii.21). "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure: but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus i, 15,16). Depend upon this, as sure as I speak to you today: that grace in the heart will sometimes make a man tremble lest he should be plucked up by the roots; grace in the heart will, in your dark moments when you are deeply tempted, make you fear lest you should have begun only apparently in the Spirit and are now being "made perfect in the flesh" (Gal.iii.3). I know what it is sometimes even now to fear lest, after all, I should prove to be nothing better than the figure of a man painted on a sign-board, not a live man at all. This will make a man fly to God in secret. If you and I, and all others that make a profession of religion, depend very little upon the grace of God, all our lives and our actions must be hypocritical. Rely upon it, the time will come when we shall be made to feel in one way or the other, as I said

at the beginning of my remarks (and God grant that it may not be to our eternal doom and banishment!), that the best thing a poor sinner could have is the grace of God.

III. I have now briefly to show how the servants of God, through the grace they receive, are led in their ministry. Time is too short now to go fully into this; so I must be brief. I was greatly tried before coming here as to what I should preach from, and I had to cry to God that He would give me strength and grace to open my mouth. I said: "Lord, I am willing to go, though my poor ministry is nothing to be compared with their own minister's. Lord, help me to go, if I may be but a little comfort to them. Help me to go into the pulpit and to preach Thy truth in an acceptable way to the consciences of a godly people." This, my dear friends, is the way that the living servants of Christ are led, through the grace they receive. Paul says: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (II Cor. i, 3,4). Now let any man come into this pulpit, whoever he may be, and let him preach to you about comfort and consolation, affliction and trouble; and let it be a man that has himself never been plunged into deeply sanctified afflictions, and it will all be theory, nothing but a notional religion. Better have a little man that is an honest man, under the leading of God's Spirit. I can say this to you - that the sweetest and the most blessed consolation that I have ever known in religion since I have professed the name of God has been given to me when I have been crushed under tribulation. Of many trials I will mention just one: Like a rose that is just bursting from its bud, a lovely girl of mine was afflicted. She had been endeared to me; and sometimes, during the anxious watches by her bedside, such was the rebellion of my spirit that I felt as if I could fight it out with God. I felt that God must be wrong; that I would never serve a fellow creature as God was serving me. And then, after all, Christ spoke into my soul, so melted me down with His mercy, that I could drop upon my knees with tears streaming from my eyes, and could say: "My God, Thou art good; take the girl if it be Thy will. Lord, it will be well if my wretched soul should at last step into the glorious world above through Thy free grace." And the way that God burst into my spirit was through that blessed hymn by Mr. Hart. I read it as I was sitting up that night:

"Faith in the bleeding Lamb,
O what a gift is this!
Hope of salvation in His name,
How comfortable 'tis!" * (792)

And such comfort was poured into my heart in my tribulation that I was enabled in that trial (and not only in that, but have been enabled throughout the whole course of my ministry) to go before the living children of God - not merely talking about tribulation as I have learned it in books, but real tribulation which I have myself been brought through, and of the great comfort which God has given me in my tribulation. So that I have lived to prove that He is a faithful God, and that He cannot deny Himself. He will try the faith of His people to the very uttermost, and they will wonder whatever it means. It means that their darkness and fears will be such as to make them ready to give up, especially when the wicked one throws out his blasphemies.

In looking at the Bible sometimes, when infidelity seems uppermost, I say: "Is there any truth in religion?" And sometimes, after being cut and torn to pieces with conflict and temptation, God has burst my bonds. Then I have felt the gospel to be real and God to be real; I have felt religion to be real and comfort in tribulation to be real. Then I have been enabled, with a good conscience, to stand in my pulpit, and in other pulpits too, and say, on the lines of my text: "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given unto me by Jesus Christ." And in this way God bids His own living servants to comfort His people in all their tribulation by the comfort with which they themselves are comforted. Amen.

* See G.S.1879, pp.18-21 for a sweet account of this event.

At the close of the sermon, Mr. Hemington said:- What has been put into my hands and written upon this sheet by Mrs. Fane, a daughter of Mr. Warburton, will embody more than all the remarks I could possibly have made in reference to our departed brother had I done nothing else but refer to him all the time I have been in the pulpit.

On Monday, January 18th., a few hours before he died, he did not seem so well. In the evening I asked him if he thought he should get better; he said, "I don't know." I said, "Is the Lord good to you in your affliction?" He answered, "Precious! precious!" Soon after he repeated the following verse, slightly altering it:

"Weary of earth, myself, and sin,
Dear Jesus, set me free;
O come, Lord Jesus, take me in
To where I long to be." (386)

He also said: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, bless the Lord."
Again in the evening he said: "Bless the Lord, O my soul."
Soon after: "Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus!" He then added:
"God is faithful." Later: "The blessing of the Lord it maketh
rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." I said: "You have that
blessing, father?" He answered: "Yes, I have no sorrow."
These were his last words; then he quietly and peacefully passed
away at 25 minutes past 2 without a sigh or groan. (The
foregoing appeared in the G.S. 1892, p.112).

Mr. Hemington then went on:

What a blessed confirmation of that scripture: "Thou
wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee:
because he trusteth in Thee" (Isaiah xxxvi.3). Again, how
sweetly he realised the truth of Jeremiah's words: "It is good
that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation
of God" (Lam.iii.26). The dear servant of Christ came down to
Devizes last October, and I went to the station to meet him.
When we came out of the station I suggested that we should have a
conveyance, but he vigorously refused and said he would walk.
Going up rather a steep hill, I said: "I am older than you -
older in constitution, though younger in years." I was greatly
struck with his firm step up the hill, and I had hard work to
prevail upon him to let me carry his bag. My people observed
how wonderfully well he looked - yes, and I observed how
wonderfully well he preached. In the morning he preached from
these words: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and
not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song:
He also is become my salvation" (Isaiah xii.2). I heard him
with power, and the people had a remarkably good time.

I cannot dwell further. God Almighty bless what we have
been attending to this morning! The Lord God of Jacob be with
you! May He supply what His own hands have deprived you of,
and give you wisdom, judgment, and all you need, for Christ's
sake! Amen.