

A MINISTRY DEVOID OF GOSPEL GRACE

By Charles H. Spurgeon

Is a frequent cause of long delay in finding the Saviour. Some of us in the days of our sorrow for sin were compelled by circumstances to sit under a legal preacher who did but increase our pain, and aggravate our woe. Destitute of all savour and unction, but most of all wanting in a clear view of Jesus the Mediator, the sermons we heard were wells without water, and clouds without rain. Elegant in diction, admirable in style, and faultless in composition, they fell on our ears even as the beautiful crystals of snow fall upon the surface of a brook, and only tend to swell its floods. Good morality, consistent practice, upright dealing, amiable behavior, gentle carriage, and modest deportment, were the every-day themes of the pulpit; but, alas! they were of as little service to us as instructions to dance would be to a man who has lost both his legs. We have often been reminded by such preachers of the doctor who told a poor penniless widow that her sick son could easily be cured if she would give him the best wine, and remove him at once to Baden-Baden—the poor creature's fingers staring all the while through the tips of her worn-out gloves, as if they wished to see the man who gave advice so profoundly impracticable.

Far be it from us to condemn the preaching of morality by such men, for it is doubtless all they can preach, and their intentions being good, it is probable they may sometimes be of service in restraining the community from acts of disorder; but we do deny the right of many to call themselves Christian ministers, while they constantly and systematically neglect to declare the truths which lie at the very foundation of the Gospel. A respected bishop of the Episcopalian denomination, * in addressing the clergy of the last century, said, "We have long been attempting to reform the nation by moral preaching. With what effect? None. On the contrary, we have dexterously preached the people into downright infidelity. We must change our voice; we must preach Christ and Him crucified; nothing but the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation." We fear that in some measure this is the case even now—would that we dared to hope otherwise! Let such of us as are engaged in the work of the ministry take heed to ourselves, and to our doctrine, that we cause no needless pain, and retard no man's progress to a Saviour; and let our reader look to his own soul's salvation, and select his pastor, not for his eloquence, learning, amiability, or popularity, but for his clear and constant testimony to the Gospel of Christ. The witness of the pulpit must be incessantly, evangelical, nor is a single exception to be allowed. * Bishop Lavington.

A venerable divine justly writes, " Faithful preachers *never* preach mere philosophy, nor mere metaphysics, nor mere morality." * How many poor souls may now be in bondage by your lifeless preaching, O ye who love anything better than the simple Gospel! What are ye but polished bolts on the dungeon-door of the distressed, or well-dressed halberdiers, affrighting men from the palace of mercy? Ah! it will be well for some if they shall be able to wash their hands of the blood of souls, for verily in the cells of eternal condemnation there are heard no yells of horror more appalling than the shrieks of damned ministers. Oh, to have misled men—

to have ruined their souls forever! * Emmons

Happy suicide, *1 who by his own hand escapes the sound of the curses of those he victimized! happy in comparison with the man who will for ever hear the accusing voices of the many who have sunk to perdition them for their support. Here, on our knees we fall, and pray for grace that we may ever hold up Jesus to the sinner; not doctrine without Jesus, which is as the pole without the brazen serpent, but Jesus—a whole Jesus—to poor lost sinners. We are sure that many convinced souls have tarried long in the most distressing condition, simply because, by reason of the poverty of their spiritual food, their weakness was so great that the cry of Hezekiah was theirs—"This day is a day of trouble; for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth." 2* May our glorified Jesus soon come into His Church, and raise up shepherds after His own heart, who, endowed with the Holy Spirit, full of sympathy, and burning with love shall visit those who are out of the way, and guide the wanderer to the fold. Such men are still to be found. O reader, search them out, sit at their feet, receive their word, and be not disobedient to the commands which they utter from heaven. 1* Mr. Sadleir, 2* Isa.37:3