

The Outline of the Apostles Preaching.

by Thomas Reade

The Gospel is the only power that can change the heart and new-create the soul, and we must turn away from our sinful ways and turn to God to seek forgiveness and cleansing through the blood of Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 46:1, Isaiah 55:6, Lamentations 3:22, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 2:8, 2 Timothy 3:1, Hebrews 12:14

Topics: "Gospel Truth", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches about the power of Christ Crucified to transform hearts, emphasizing that human eloquence and moral essays cannot change the heart, but only the preaching of the Gospel can dislodge the powers of darkness and bring about a radical change. He outlines the comprehensive truths of Ruin, Redemption, and Regeneration as the core of Gospel Truth, highlighting the Apostle's preaching on man's apostasy, recovery through Christ, and renewal unto holiness. Reade urges believers to experience a personal transformation through faith in Christ, warning against false peace and nominal Christianity that lacks true holiness and spiritual discernment.

Transcript

THE OUTLINE OF THE APOSTLES PREACHING.

HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE HEATHEN.

HIS DESCRIPTION OF THE NOMINALLY CHRISTIAN WORLD.

Though virtue be exhibited in all her loveliness, and vice in all its deformity; though everything attractive be brought before the sinner, to win him over to the charms of moral excellence- yet, eloquence, with all its powers, can never change the heart. The moral essay, by its musical cadence and well-selected words, may please the ear and gratify the taste; but Satan despises such a feeble effort to overthrow his kingdom. It is as weak as chaff before the wind. With undisturbed repose he keeps his goods in peace, and still remains secure within the citadel of the heart.

What power, then, can dislodge this mighty foe? What voice can bid the dying sinner live? Important question! The preaching of Christ Crucified, through whom grace abounds to the chief of sinners, is the weapon with which the Almighty Spirit destroys the powers of darkness- the instrument which he employs to new-create the soul. No human eloquence can effect so great a work. The glory belongs to Him, who

said, "Let there be light and there was light." The power is from him who is pleased through the "foolishness of preaching, to save those who believe." How all-commanding are the words of Jesus, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live."

"Unlike human discipline, which advances by a slow and imperceptible progress, gaining at one time and losing at another, the Gospel works a radical change of the heart, and accomplishes such a revolution in its principles, that the effect immediately appears in the reformation of the life. Philosophy, with much labor, may extort from the barren soil, a few dwarfish and sickly plants; but the Gospel makes a rich harvest of heavenly graces and virtues spring up in the desert of the soul." O that every heart may experience this glorious change!

Let us unite with the spouse in her ardent longings after Christ, "Awake, O north wind, and come south; blow upon my garden that the spices may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Were this the universal prayer, the Church would soon experience the gracious presence of her Lord, and taste the sweetness of his love, "I have come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly O beloved." Lord, do not delay your coming. Visit every heart with your salvation; and fill the world with the blessings of your grace.

RUIN, REDEMPTION, and REGENERATION are three comprehensive words, which form the great outline of Gospel Truth. The amplification of the truths which are contained under these terms, with all their various bearings on the present and future destiny of man, composed the substance of the great Apostle's preaching.

How humbling are his views of mans APOSTASY from God- "We are by nature the children of wrath. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

How consoling are his views of man's RECOVERY through Christ- "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He gave himself a ransom for all. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. We are justified freely by his grace. He has made peace through the blood of his cross. He is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is all, and in all."

How purify in- are his views of man's RENEWAL unto holiness. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

This minister of righteousness, receiving his commission immediately from Christ, proclaimed, through divine inspiration, these glorious doctrines of grace; preaching everywhere, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ The Spirit accompanied the Word by his sovereign power, and multitudes became obedient to the faith.

The doctrine of a Redeemer, obeying the Law, and dying on the cross for man, is the very hinge of all evangelical revelations; the very life of all evangelical blessings. The doctrine of the atonement, is the grand peculiarity of the Gospel; it is the central point in which all the lines of duty unite, and from which all the rays of consolation proceed.

Faith draws all its hope, strength, and assurance; from the word, the fullness, and the promises of Christ. It receives from him, pardon with the one hand, and holiness with the other; both, being equally the design of his mediatorial work, and equally the desire of every new-born soul. Paul had no greater joy, than to set forth the glories of his Redeemer. Knowing where lay the blessed spring of all his privileges and comforts, his heart glowed with delight, when engaged in making known to others the unsearchable riches of Christ. By blessed experience, he had learned, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin has reigned unto death, so now grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore he could tell every weeping penitent, these glad tidings of great joy, that, Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.

And what returns did such ambassadors of Christ receive? From the world, hatred and persecution; from false brethren, grief and treachery; but from the faithful in Christ Jesus, an abundance of love and reverence. Pastors and ministers were then looked upon as the common parents of Christians, whom, as such, they honored and obeyed; and to whom they applied for counsel and direction in all important cases. A pious and faithful minister was in those days dearer to them than the most valuable blessings upon earth; and they could lack anything rather than be without them. When Chrysostom was driven by the Empress Eudoxia into banishment, the people, as he went along, burst into tears, and cried out, "It were better the sun should not shine, than that John Chrysostom should not preach." They could not then lose their spiritual guides, without looking upon themselves as widows and orphans, bewailing their death with a general sorrow, as if they had lost a common father. Such was the love which cemented ministers and people together in those early ages of the Christian church.

How transforming are the doctrines of grace, when applied by faith to the conscience, through the power of the Holy Spirit. They remove the burden of sin by revealing a sin-bearing Savior; they strip man of his boasted excellence, by laying him low at the foot of the cross; they change him into the image of Jesus, by shedding abroad the love of God in his heart; they destroy the weeds of selfishness and strife, by sowing the gracious seeds of unity, peace, and concord in the soul. The moral wilderness becomes the garden of the Lord; the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. What but Almighty energy could produce so great a change. Man is naturally proud; the Gospel makes him humble. Man is naturally carnal; the Gospel makes him spiritual. Man is naturally worldly; the Gospel makes him heavenly. Man is naturally dead in sin, and blind to his condition; the Gospel quickens him to a life of holiness, and enlightens his mind to know himself, and Christ as his only Savior.

The Gospel is good news to poor sinners; the proclamation of a full and free forgiveness of all sin, through faith in a crucified Redeemer. The Gospel is the most glorious Revelation of God to man; the brightest display of his Justice, Holiness, and Love, ever vouchsafed to intelligent beings. Here, we behold the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, planning, executing, and applying the gracious work of human redemption. In the Gospel we have the strongest motives to gratitude and obedience. It is full of the sweetest promises to every penitent believer, who flies to Jesus for life and salvation.

Let us enquire how this Gospel has come to us. Has it convinced us of our lost condition? Has it truly humbled us in the sight of God? Has it made us apply to Christ in faith, and earnest supplication? Have we experienced a change of heart, being renewed in the spirit of our mind? Do we feel joy in the Holy Spirit, and peace with God through Jesus Christ?

It is easy in these days of the Church's quiet, to pass for religious characters, since few events occur to try the principles of professors. But all is not sterling that dazzles the eye. Many seem to take delight in religious institutions, and to be on friendly terms with their religious neighbors, who yet remain, through life, satisfied with barren notions of the Gospel, and strangers to its renovating power. May the Holy Spirit preserve us from this fatal error. Let us beware of false marks, of a false peace, and groundless hopes; for this truth stands immovably fixed in the Word of God- "Those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all."

The doctrines of grace, systematically arranged in the mind, while the heart is estranged from God, will profit us no more than the idea of a valuable estate would benefit a person on the verge of bankruptcy, because its fields, woods, and mansions were vividly painted on his imagination. Without a personal interest in the merits of Christ, and an experimental acquaintance with his salvation, it is vain to expect admission into the celestial city.

Nominal Christianity neither receives nor confers a blessing. Thousands pride themselves in the name of Christian, as if that were sufficient to secure salvation, in the absence of every holy affection. Blessed are they, who can unite with John in all the fullness of his assurance; "We have known and believed the love that God has to us. We know that we are of God. We know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."

As fallen creatures, we need a spiritual discernment, and a spiritual taste. Without the former, a thick darkness respecting the things of God would ever shroud the understanding; without the latter, no real delight in the riches of his grace would be felt in the soul. When these blessings are imparted, we then love Christ above every other object, and obey his will above every other principle.

Pride and the lust of the flesh, are continually opposing the humbling and the holy doctrines of the Gospel. Salvation by grace, through faith, is offensive to our pride. Salvation by grace, through the sanctification of the Spirit, is equally distasteful to our fleshly mind.

The leaven of pride is not wholly eradicated, even in the bosom of the humble Christian. There are seasons when it works with painful violence; and then, the darkness of our minds, and the deadness of our hearts, indicate that the Holy Spirit is grieved, and that Satan has gained an advantage over us. Spiritual pride is a subtle evil. It slides into our prayer, and entwines itself about our praise. It spoils our best duties, and creates that fondness for human approbation, which puffs up the heart, and steals it away from God.

When the Gospel of Christ, that word of life and reconciliation, shall be exhibited in its spirit and power by all professing Christians, happy indeed will the period be! Then the knowledge of the Lord will overspread the earth; for many will go to and fro in the name of the Lord, and knowledge shall be increased.

But have we attained this consummation, so devoutly to be wished? Is this the aspect of the nominally Christian world? Can we say, that in every place, "judgment runs down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream?" Alas! we have to mourn over thousands, who, while they eagerly grasp after the fruit of the tree of knowledge, despise the infinitely richer fruit of the tree of life. If knowledge is power, how important, for the well being of society, that it be founded upon, and drawn from, the Word of God. Unsanctified knowledge puffs up. It engenders schisms in the Church, and disorders in the state.

As a Christian people, we may value ourselves upon our benevolent institutions and religious societies, and think we have done much good in aiding their establishment and enlargement; but has inward piety been the spring of our outward exertions? Has love to Christ been our daily constraining motive? "Bodily exercise profits little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." This, says the Apostle, is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance.

Let us view the two portraits of mankind as drawn by the pencil of eternal Truth, by which we shall see that man, while unconverted to God, is the same internally, whatever change may have taken place in his outward condition.

Behold first the picture which Paul draws of the Heathen world, and which is a faithful representation of modern Paganism- "When they refused to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their evil minds and let them do things that should never be done. Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, fighting, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They are forever inventing new ways of sinning and are disobedient to their parents. They refuse to understand, break their promises, and are heartless and unforgiving. They are fully aware of God's death penalty for those who do these things, yet they go right ahead and do them anyway. And, worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too."

O what a deluge of evil has sin brought upon the earth! Surely, where the Gospel shines, the prospect will be cheering. Happy could we find it so.

Look at the picture which the Apostle again draws of the nominally Christian world, and the heart must sicken at the view. "You should also know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel and have no interest in what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act as if they are religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. You must stay away from people like that."

How awful in their features of evil, are these two portraits of mankind. The Heathen world, and the nominally Christian world, are essentially the same. Have we not entered upon these predicted times of peril? Does not iniquity, to a frightful extent, abound among us? Are not the elements of confusion now at work? Do not these detailed enormities, both disfigure and convulse the nations of Christendom? The Papal apostasy is gathering its forces against the truth of the Bible; infidelity is waving its banners in proud defiance. Worldly mindedness and indifference are sapping the foundations of the visible Church. Sensuality and profaneness stain the Christian name. Pure and undefiled religion is branded as wild enthusiasm while the humble follower of Christ, who mourns in secret over his country's crimes, and pleads for God before a sneering world, is made a butt for ridicule, and the sport of scorn.

The heart of man naturally revolts against this faithful exposure of its enormities. Our pride fondly shelters itself under the 'dignity of human nature'. We cannot bear to be told how wicked we are, how very far gone, even as far as possible, from original righteousness. But the Bible is no flatterer; it is a faithful mirror, in which we may clearly see, (if we have eyes to see) our real state, divested of all paint and covering. This offends our pride; we cannot endure the sight; therefore we turn away with disgust from this Holy Book, and consider it our enemy, because it tells us the truth.

Is not the language of our hearts too much in unison with those of old, "They tell the prophets, "Shut up! We don't want any more of your reports." They say, "Don't tell us the truth. Tell us nice things. Tell us lies. Forget all this gloom. We have heard more than enough about your 'Holy One of Israel.' We are tired of listening to what he has to say."

And, are there not too many ministers who apply the flattering ointment to the conscience, like those, of whom the Lord thus speaks, "These evil prophets deceive my people by saying, 'All is peaceful!' when there is no peace at all! It's as if the people have built a flimsy wall, and these prophets are trying to hold it together by covering it with whitewash! Tell these whitewashers that their wall will soon fall down. A heavy rainstorm will undermine it; great hailstones and mighty winds will knock it down. And you shall know that I am the Lord!"

How awakening is the command of Jehovah to all his ministering servants, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. Blow the trumpet, in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord comes, it is near at hand." But, when the alarm is sounded, and when sinners are warned to flee from the wrath to come, they treat both the messenger and his message with contempt. They are like the sons of Lot, of whom it is recorded, "And Lot went out, and spoke unto his sons-in-law who married his daughters, and said up, get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law."

As it was in the days of Lot, even so it is now. When the faithful servant of Christ, with the Bible in his hand, and the love of souls in his heart, lifts up his voice, saying, "Arise , and depart; for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction;" his voice is unheeded; and with Isaiah he has to mourn- "Lord, who has believed our report? I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people."

Regardless alike of the displeasure of the world, or worldly- professors of godliness, Paul boldly declared, "God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. he who sows to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God."

Let us compare these works of the flesh which exclude the soul from heaven, with the already enumerated sins of the heathen, and of the nominally Christian world, and we must tremble for the millions who are living in the constant indulgence of these iniquities, and who are traveling, if grace does not intervene to save them, to eternal ruin. It may sound uncharitable to the fastidious ear, but the Word of God cannot be broken, "He that believes not shall be damned. If you live after the flesh ve shall die."

How faithful is the pen of inspiration. The very evils which we now lament, prove the truth of that Book, which has foretold those miseries that are coming upon the earth. But let us not despond, "The Lord reigns, be the earth ever so unquiet." He guides the complicated machine of human events, and can, by his overruling power, make all these evils finally to promote the spirituality and enlargement of his Church.

Is any thing too hard for the Lord, whose wisdom is as infinite as his power, and whose love is commensurate with eternity? Let us then, with fervency pray for the gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for that promised season of refreshing from His presence, which, descending in showers of blessings upon our country and the world, will transform the moral desert into the garden of the Lord.

Blessed Jesus! look in mercy upon your inheritance; cause your face to shine, and we shall be saved. Show your servants your work, and their children your glory.

"From your seat of mercy bending,

Where you sit enthroned on high,

Lord, in pity condescending,

Hear a helpless sinner's cry.

By unwearied foes surrounded,

Without strength to fight or flee,

Let me never be confounded,

For my hope is placed on thee.

In the hour of tribulation,

To your promise, Lord I cling;

From the storm of fierce temptation

Shield me with your guardian wing.

Let the weight of earthly trials

Drive me nearer to your breast

And afflictions, bitter trials,

Make your blessings doubly blessed.

Then, though dangers' troubled ocean,

Threat me with its rudest shock,

Safe I view its wild commotion

Anchored on the Eternal Rock."

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