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A S E R M O N ,

PREACHED IN

ST. LUKE'S CHURCH, NEW-YORK,

September 25, 1831,

ON TAKING LEAVE OF HIS CONGREGATION:

*For Mr. C*

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND LEVI SILLIMAN IVES, D. D.

BISHOP OF NORTH CAROLINA.

Published by Request.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED AT THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL PRESS.

AT a Meeting of the Teachers attached to St. Luke's Church Sunday School, New-York, the following preamble and resolution were unanimously adopted.

Whereas it would be highly desirable, in the opinion of the Teachers of this School, to retain in permanent form the farewell address of their late beloved Pastor to his congregation, whereby they may the better be enabled to profit by his salutary and parting admonitions ;—therefore,

*Resolved,* That a committee of three be appointed to wait on the Right Rev. Bishop Ives, and request a copy for publication.

*New-York, October 3d, 1831.*

RIGHT REV. AND DEAR SIR,

We have the honor to present to you the request contained in the preceding resolution, a compliance with which, we are convinced, will not only afford general gratification, but also materially advance the truths you intended to inculcate. With the highest respect, Sir,

Your obedient servants,

JOHN DOWDNEY, JUN., }  
L. SAXBURY WADDELL, } *Committee.*  
CHAS. W. VAN NESS, }

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MY DEAR FRIENDS,

It affords me much pleasure to accede to your request, made with so much kindness, for the publication of my farewell discourse. Although it may not possess much of interest to the general reader, yet to those for whose instruction it was chiefly designed, I flatter myself it will neither prove uninteresting nor unprofitable. Committing it to Him whose blessing alone can make it *a savor of life unto life*, I beg you to accept for yourselves and the worthy and devoted body of Teachers whom you represent, the assurance of my constant prayer for your present and eternal good.

With much regard,

Your affectionate friend,

LEVI SILLIMAN IVES.

MESSRS. JOHN DOWDNEY, JR.,  
L. SAXBURY WADDELL,  
CHAS. W. VAN NESS.

## S E R M O N.

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ACTS, xx. 32.

“And now, Brethren, I commend you to GOD and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them *which are sanctified.*”

No stronger arguments of consolation can be urged at an hour like the present, than are suggested in the text.—Here, the mind oppressed with the sadness of earthly separations, is taught to look forward to the enjoyment of an eternal *inheritance with all them which are sanctified*,—And in the pursuit of that inheritance, to consider the way made clear, by Him *who ordereth all things well*, to full and triumphant success.

There are trials, I know, which unsupported nature could not well bear,—which no earthly philosophy could view with indifference, or suffer without distraction. *Trials* calculated to arrest the wildest spirit, relax the sternest features of insensibility, and expose the blindness and feebleness of human reason. And such may be deemed the character of those to which, as pastor and people, we are now subjected.

But if, when the scenes of this troublesome life shall have come to an end, we can be admitted to the bliss of an eternal state,—and if, amid the difficulties of our way thither, we are allowed to confide in the sure protection of an almighty Saviour and friend, where, even at the most fearful crisis of our existence, is reasonable cause for discouragement or alarm?

Beloved Brethren, did the present scene bound our hopes, there would be much in it, I admit, too difficult to be cleared up by any theories of man, or revelations of heaven. The sufferings of the good, and the prosperity of the bad, with the unnumbered mysteries and inequalities of human life, can be explained only by reference to a future and better state. But

let it once be admitted that such a state exists, and that its blessedness is open to the attainment of all, and we need no other ground on which to stand in our expostulations with you, to bear patiently, yea joyfully, the evils of your earthly condition. It is enough, therefore, Brethren, to lighten the depressions of this parting hour, that "I can commend you to GOD, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are *sanctified*."

I. Our first proposition then, is, that we are the transient sojourners of a probationary world, destined to an eternal state.

The thought, though *familiar*, has a striking fitness to the present occasion. Though oft repeated, and oft put aside as uninteresting, it now pleads with the energy of a final appeal, and will not, I trust, be wholly unheeded.

I know we every day hear that we should live for eternity, and almost every day live as if eternity were stamped on the *present*. Yes, I know that in the lessons of almost every hour, we read the uncertain and capricious tenure by which we hold the days of our probation, and that we trifle them away, or mourn over their disappointments, as if they could never end. But may not the awakening truth that I, as your minister, am now entreating you for the last time, to meditate upon the realities of another life, have the effect to fasten upon the hearts of us all the solemn lesson of our immortal destination?

*We are strangers and pilgrims on the earth; we seek a better country. An inheritance with the saints in light is placed within the reach of all the guilty beings of our race: what characters of vanity is the thought calculated to impress upon every thing terrestrial. An inheritance with the saints in light! Alas! beloved Brethren, do we know its nature and extent? Have we any just conception of the scenes of bliss it unfolds—have our thoughts yet reached the summit of perfect felicity in the presence of GOD and the LAMB? An inheritance with the saints in light! Conceive, if you can, the finished beauties of the most perfect landscape—the refined delights of the most exalted society—the fond endearments of the purest love. Let your senses be regaled by the sweetest melody—your thoughts visited by the*

loftiest contemplations—your souls drawn forth in the most holy and transporting service. Let new accessions be made perpetually to your bliss; new scenes of glory to burst continually upon your view; new anthems of praise to raise higher and higher the pulse of your joy; and then let all the sufferings of earth at once and for ever give place to such a state of felicity. Conceive of this, and you will then have but a faint idea of the real blessedness of an inheritance with the saints in light. Oh, who that has a glimpse of such an inheritance, will not lose sight of every thing earthly, except a preparation for its speedy enjoyment? Who that can even contemplate an eternal weight of glory opening thus brightly upon him, will not be ready to make every sacrifice, and endure every hardship, in *His* service who purchased it with his blood?

What heart so base as to revel in sublunary pleasure; what desires so sensual as to cling to mere earthly good; what spirit so perverse as to murmur at present trials; while heaven with its glories is thus within our reach! Brethren, “I hope better things of you, and things which accompany salvation.” I hope, in regard to many from whom I am now to be separated, that were their faith put to the test, it would bear them onward at every hazard and every sacrifice to that over-bright inheritance upon which they are entreated to enter “with all them that *are sanctified.*”

II. The text, however, not only presents for your incitement this glorious prospect at the termination of your course, but also allows me, while you are in the pursuit of it, to *commend you to God.*

*The providence of God*, therefore, is the second topic of consolation I am now to present.

It is in our nature, since the lapse of the first human pair, to fly from the presence of our Maker; to cast off his authority; to disown his protection, and to keep ourselves as distant from him as possible. Hence it is to be looked for, that to some of my hearers, the consideration now suggested will administer no comfort. But notwithstanding this, I cannot forbear urging it as matter of encouragement to myself. For I see in the be-

nignity of that providence *which causes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good*, the only hope to such persons of rescue from their perilous state. I see in the continued *existence* of the haters of the HOLY ONE, of the revilers of his name, of the violaters of his laws, of the despisers of his grace, the merciful tokens of a forbearing GOD, whose goodness may yet bring them to repentance and acknowledgment of the truth. Although I have long pleaded in vain, and must now leave them with the melancholy, the mortifying reflection, that my words have appeared to them *like idle tales*; yet my prayers will still ascend for them in hope, *as I commend them to GOD*.

To the good man, however, the continual providence of GOD opens a source of encouragement and support, of the most animating description.

There are days of darkness on earth which all the lights of an expected heaven cannot cheer; seasons of distress which no anticipation allowed to man is able to infuse with tranquil and enlivening hope. But let the doctrine of divine and particular superintendence be introduced, and the pious children of sorrow have an omnipotent arm on which to lean, and the illuminations of infinite wisdom to guide amid the perplexities of their way.

Yes, friends of GOD! with whom I have taken sweet counsel—whose interests I have watched, whose good I have often sought at the footstool of mercy,—to you there is a legacy of holy peace in the continual benedictions of providing heaven. With what heartfelt confidence *I commend you to GOD*,—*All things shall work together for good to them that love him*.—I ask no more. “He is faithful who hath promised!” I may never again be allowed to bear the words of comfort and salvation to your chamber of sickness, or to the couch of your dying friends—never again be allowed to cheer the mourners in your Zion, or to press upon them the lessons of mortality—yet you are not left comfortless; the voice of consolation shall still be heard in your dwellings, the lessons of wisdom still pressed home upon your hearts,—*GOD will provide*. That great and good Being who keeps you in the darkness of the night-watches,

will be your safety in the darkness of sorrow. Thus assured and animated, *I commend you to God*, and with you *I commend myself*.—At thy bidding, and in thy strength, O my God, I go forth to the fearful work, “O let me not be confounded, for in thee is my trust.” How rich, how abundant the consolation flowing from the faithful providence of God! No wonder that apostles could take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, that the martyr could exult in the midst of consuming fires.

But the providence of God, though continually and specially exerted, does not work miracles in our behalf.—“Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,” “Thou shalt not create a necessity for his interposition, by needless exposure, or by idle neglect,” was the lesson of divine wisdom which fell from the lips of Jesus as he exposed the devices of Satan. Such direct interposition is rendered needless by divinely appointed means, in the proper use of which our present and eternal good may be secured. Not only *may I commend you to God*, therefore, but also *to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*”

III. The gracious and effectual influences of the blessed Gospel then, *to which I now commend you*, is the third argument of consolation suggested by the text,—and here is the real foundation of all our encouragements and hopes.

The mansions of heaven may be revealed to us, the good providence of God may be engaged to defend us in our way thither, but the most interesting question of all *remains*;—how is that way to be opened to us, how are we to be persuaded and enabled to walk in it?

That sin once placed an impassable barrier to our entering heaven, no one can doubt who credits the word of God; that our hearts are naturally averse to the ways of holiness, and naturally insufficient to resist the enticements to sin, no one will question who has attended at all to the lessons of his own experience.

But all barriers may be removed, all aversion overcome, all enticements resisted, by resorting to the *Gospel of the grace of God*.—*This word of his grace* first opens the way of reconcilia-

tion,—it declares good tidings, it brings the message of favor to man, it tells of blood which cleanses from all sin, of obedience unto death which magnifies the law, of justification by faith on the Son of GOD who bore our sins in his own body on the tree ; it tells, though our rash rebellion had barred heaven against us, that *a new and living way is open* through the propitiatory righteousness of JESUS ;—in his name it proclaims, “ I am the way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

Thus our entrance on the heavenly course is made clear ; a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, in the death of the only-begotten of the Father, has removed every obstacle to our advance in the way of immortal life.

But the nature of man is averse to this holy way, his natural powers are inadequate to its arduous pursuits, his soul, unchanged in its affections and unwashed from its sins, could never enjoy, yea, could never *endure* the felicities of spiritual existence.

Blessed be GOD, here again I am enabled to *commend you to the word of his grace*, for that word invites to the renewing and sanctifying power of the HOLY GHOST ; *by that it is able to build you up.*—Yes, brethren, *to build you up.*—Naturally your soul is in moral ruins—the destroyer has passed over it, and left in his train nothing but the disordered and mouldering fragments of your primeval greatness.—This temple within you must be restored—a mighty work must pass upon it—the SPIRIT of the *living* GOD must employ his energy in rescuing it from utter decay, and building it up, gradually rearing it anew, and giving it strength, and beauty, and perfection !

“ Except a man be born of water and of the *Spirit* he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD.” “ If any man be in CHRIST he is a new creature.” “ Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the LORD JESUS and by the Spirit of our GOD ;” for “ ye are built up an habitation of GOD through the Spirit ;”—hence “ ye become the temple of the HOLY GHOST, and the Spirit of GOD dwelleth in you.”

Beloved Brethren, let me leave among you my parting testi-

mony, to the infinite importance of this doctrine—The doctrine of conversion to GOD by the power of the HOLY GHOST, “shed on us abundantly through JESUS CHRIST our Saviour!” There are errors abroad, I know, in regard to this doctrine, errors in theory, and far greater ones in practice; but depend upon it, they are not wholly confined to the abettors and victims of fanaticism. Would to GOD they were! The fanatic, with all his bewildering extravagances, “all his hay, wood, and stubble, may yet be saved so *as by fire.*” But what hope is there for him, who, in his panic to escape fanaticism, retreats to the cold regions of dead formality; who, lest a spark of enthusiasm should light up his affections, excludes from his religion all sentiments of holy love, and does despite unto the Spirit of Grace!

Beloved Brethren, let me entreat you to beware of deception in a matter of such vital moment! You desire salvation; you would not fail of an inheritance with the just; but to enjoy it, your natures must be renewed, your affections aroused and purified; and this can be accomplished only by the ever-blessed SPIRIT. You may without him seek to attain eternal life; you may cleanse yourselves from many outward sins, and seem to make some progress in holiness; you may stumble on for a time in the blindness of your own minds and in the feebleness of your own strength; but if you would gain an inheritance among all them which are sanctified, be finally admitted to the presence of God and the Lamb, you must *be built up by the word of his grace.*

Here is no need of mistake. The religion of JESUS is spiritual, and hence must have its foundation in the heart; it is a living principle, and consequently must infuse life and energy through the soul; it is animated by the most spirit-stirring motives, and therefore cannot become ours without kindling in the affections the fire of love!—“If any man have not the Spirit of CHRIST he is none of his.” I repeat it, in this matter there is no need of mistake. Ample provision is made for our being on the one hand savingly affected by our religion, and on the other, properly guarded from the influence of fanatical error; we have

only to follow the dictates of *that word of God's grace to which we are now commended.*

This is the only source of divine illumination, the only fountain of spiritual cleansing, to which we can safely resort.—Other lights we may follow, other means adopt; but rest assured all will end in delusion, except it spring from this fountain of light and strength opened in the Gospel. Let this, however, be your dependence, and it will not fail to build you up and secure to you an inheritance with the just made perfect.

In that Church, which it makes the ground and pillar of the truth, and to which it calls every one of you,—you may receive the adoption of sons, and become inheritors of the kingdom of your Father. In union with the ministry, in the cordial reception of the doctrines, and in the faithful and spiritual participation of the sacraments of that Church, you will not fail to be edified and advanced in the life of faith; your soul will be enlarged, your affections more and more enlivened with grateful love, and your hearts made pure and spiritual and heavenly in their desires and aims.—Thus the temple of God within you will be restored, the word of his grace will build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

You see then, Brethren, the conclusion of the whole matter. You see the plain and express design of the Gospel; that it is simply and solely to fit you for heaven, in a manner calculated to honor the *holiness of God*.—To fit you for heaven, by filling your souls with heavenly dispositions and desires; by uniting your heart through faith to JESUS the Mediator, who has ascended on high, by establishing through the agency of the blessed Comforter, a holy intercourse between the soul and a reconciled God; and by a daily elevation, through a faithful employment of the appointed means of grace, of the thoughts and affections above transitory things, towards the objects of a purer, and spiritual, and eternal existence!

Thus commended to the *word of God's grace*, which is able to build us up, what new attraction is given to our heavenly inheritance! what new light is thrown along the path of the divine dispensations!—In this view of our relation, as believers, to

GOD and heaven, we are bound to that *better country* by the firmest and most interesting ties ; our welfare becomes entirely identified with the honor and advancement of the kingdom of CHRIST, while nothing can occur in the progress of GOD's dispensations that is not calculated, under the sanctifying power of his grace, "to work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

My soul, hush thy complainings, cease thy troubled thoughts ; why tremble at the trying fortunes of an earthly state ; thou art already the citizen of a better world ; a stranger and pilgrim here, thy home is above, thy treasures at GOD's right hand. "Rejoice then *in the LORD*, and again I say, *rejoice !*"

Fear not, friends of JESUS ! *ye are led by the Spirit of GOD*, ye are defended *by the word of his grace*. *Fear not*, let your hands be strong, and your hearts be filled with praise ; for although I feel from the bottom of my soul that the pang of separation from you is severe indeed, yet with a firm trust and joyful hope, "I commend you to GOD and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance *among all them which are sanctified*."

But before I leave you, suffer the word of exhortation ; let me, *according to mine office*, bid you be faithful to yourselves, your Church, and your GOD.

My heart has been set upon your salvation ; GOD is my witness, that my efforts and prayers have been continually, *that I might build you up* in the life of faith, and present you at last, justified, sanctified, and saved through the blood of JESUS.—GOD be praised, I have enjoyed some tokens of his blessing upon my poor and unprofitable labors. My soul is humbled within me, that I have not honored him more, but my lips would praise him that he has given me a single proof of his approbation ; that he has acknowledged me as the instrument of conversion to any sinner, of edification to any of his people.

In the little progress, however, that we have made, I can distinctly perceive, beloved Brethren, the connexion between the means and the blessing. To preserve this connexion is what I would now press upon your regard.

As to the doctrines of CHRIST crucified, to be believed, you have my views and admonitions already.—Now I am particularly to enjoin the things to be *done*.

In the first place, be faithful in your duties to GOD, those duties *divinely set forth*; cultivate in your souls the spirit of filial and grateful obedience; never seek to palliate spiritual sloth or neglect, to shun your sacred obligations; never permit the world, nor the things of the world, to interpose between your souls and your religious duty; never allow yourselves to regard any thing as needless which bears the high sanction of heaven. Be faithful unto GOD, be assiduous *to walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless!*

In the second place, *continue to be at peace among yourselves*. At peace we *have been*. In this respect GOD has greatly blessed us; our hearts have been as the heart of one man; our voice of prayer and song of praise have ascended without discord to the GOD of peace; and he has smiled upon us from his holy habitation! Go on, beloved Brethren, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and you will continue to dwell amid the smiles of the *Holy One*; but should you fall into dissension, you *will fall into the wide spread snare of the devil*, for *with envy and strife you will have every evil work*.—*Be at peace, then, Brethren, among yourselves!*

And, thirdly, let me exhort you to give increased attention to those methods of spiritual instruction and improvement I have introduced among you, and which will continue to be acted upon by my successor.

*The Bible* is the only fountain of truth. In the hand of CHRIST's minister, it is indeed *the sword of the Spirit*—by far the most powerful and effectual instrument in turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. *The Bible Class*, therefore, I regard as a most invaluable blessing to the members of a congregation.

In regard to this, suffer me to record my *testimony*. Past experience has shown me that no other method of preaching is equally successful. It is the way to reach most effectually the heart, to awaken the attention, to impress the memory, to engage the powers of the soul, and to infuse into them a sanctifying and

invigorating influence. Brethren, I speak with facts before me. In this assembly, more could be named whose concern for the soul has been awakened, and whose hearts have been renewed, under the instructions of the *Bible Class*, than through the application of any other means. Those who have neglected it, know not the blessing they have lost. Let me persuade you then, in future, to give it your best attention, your most fervent prayers. And with it remember the classes of instruction for your children. Encourage their attendance, and in all things co-operate with their pastor. And do not neglect the Sunday School of your parish—sustain the hands of your youth, who with pious zeal have devoted themselves to this holy work. Leave them not to labor *alone*; but by every means in your power give them your countenance and support. The blessings of the needy shall be upon you; yea, ye shall be blessed of your God.

And while you are thus diligent in promoting the spiritual interests of your parish, keep in mind, fourthly, the value of a Missionary spirit. Cherish it as the *spirit of CHRIST*! You can hardly conceive its importance to your religious prosperity. Experience might teach you something of this importance; for you have not been backward in the Missionary enterprise. The wretchedness of the destitute has already aroused your sensibilities, and engaged your efforts. In what you have done for the interesting Mission at *Green Bay*—in the self-denying and praiseworthy exertions of the ladies of the congregation in favor of Diocesan Missions and Theological Education, you have furnished the best evidences of a *Missionary spirit*;—and depend upon it, beloved Brethren, in these things you have lost nothing. On the contrary, you have gained much. All you have bestowed in the spirit of Christian love, has been so much added to your treasures in heaven. I have now to entreat you to complete what is so well begun:—not to suffer any diminution of your zeal in these noble and well-deserving enterprises upon which you have entered. They are needful to your personal advance towards the inheritance of the just.

In proportion as you do good in the spirit of goodness, will be your growth in grace, and your meetness for that kingdom which

is established in the love of GOD. *Cherish then among you the Missionary spirit.* It is the spirit of Him who said, "Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

As the final means of your prosperity, beloved Brethren, let me persuade you to regard with kindness and affection those who minister with you in holy things; "to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." I urge this upon you the more cheerfully, in consideration of the exemplary forbearance and regard I have uniformly experienced at your hands. Nothing more could have been asked—nothing more received from a devoted and affectionate flock. Memory, while life remains, will recur with unalloyed pleasure to my connexion with this congregation. Oft will it prove to me a most grateful solace amid the toils and anxieties of that distant scene of labor which now calls me away. Brethren, you will extend your affection to him who, in the providence of GOD, is to succeed me.\* Confident am I that he will be found worthy of it. Although he comes among you comparatively a stranger, you will soon experience in him the devoted friend, the assiduous pastor. Receive him, then, in the spirit of love. Cherish him as his talents, his piety, his fidelity will deserve;—and most of all, be obedient to the message with which he is intrusted by the LORD of Hosts. Be true to that Church (here I need not urge you) which JESUS purchased with his blood, and in which you have the happiness to be nurtured for eternal life. It is for the preservation of this Church in its doctrines, its constitution, and its holiness, that your minister will exert his influence and his powers. Cooperate with him, I entreat you, in his noble work—and may GOD Almighty bless you under his ministrations.

Thus have I briefly presented what is to be *believed and done*, in order to secure that blessing here and for ever. But remember, that you are *to do all in the name of CHRIST*; and when you have done all, that you are to say, and say from the heart, "We are unprofitable servants, for we have done nothing more than was our duty to do!"

\* The Rev. William R. Whittingham, whose praise, although a young man, is already in all the Churches.

“ And now, Brethren, I commend you to GOD, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” But oh, you may fail of that inheritance. Unnumbered snares beset you ; unnumbered evils endanger your everlasting peace ! One only, however, can shut you from the kingdom of GOD—*it is a hard and impenitent heart.*

Finally, Brethren, farewell. I go to do the will of GOD ; perhaps to suffer much in his service—but let his will be done. This was the language of submission, uttered by one whom we still remember with tears—by one sinking under the weight of his cares and labors, far from his home. And oh, may my heart never forget to respond, “ GOD’s will be done.” They say I am called to endure hardship—be it so. Let privation and suffering—let hunger and thirst, sickness and death, be my lot ; but oh ! my GOD, spare me the misery of hearing at last the curse of eternal banishment from thy presence pronounced upon any individual of this congregation !





