

“How to Have a Good Minister”

Every church, it is presumed, is desiring a good minister, yet every one may not in their own opinion be favored with such a blessing. Many churches often feel that their minister is not quite what they desire him to be—not quite the man for the place which he is in. Their eyes are therefore turned away from the minister who labors among them, to some other man, or to their *beau ideal* of a minister, and they desire a change. For the benefit of such we would relate the following circumstances. Dear Reader, consider your own attitudes and relationship to the pastor that God has set over you.

Many years ago young man was settled in a large and popular congregation in New England, under very promising circumstances. The church and people had settled him with the belief that he was a young man of more than ordinary talents, and with the expectation of his becoming a distinguished man. After a year or two, when the novelty of the thing had worn off, the current seemed to change, and the feeling prevailed that Mr. B was not, nor likely to be, quite what they expected. He did not grow as they thought he would ; he did not perform that amount or kind of labor which was needed to build up the church and interest the congregation. Things dragged heavily. The young man felt the influence of the chill atmosphere which thus surrounded him. His spirits sunk in deep discouragement, his health ran down, and it was whispered around in the society, and in the neighboring towns, that Mr. B. would probably have to leave, he was not the man for the place, he was not the man of talents which they had anticipated.

While things were in this state, at a meeting of the church when the pastor was absent, (perhaps called to see what should be done,) Mr. O , an intelligent member of the church arose and said, " Brethren, I think we have been in fault respecting our minister. I think he is a young man of superior talents, and will one day be a distinguished man. But we have not sustained and encouraged him as we should. We have not spoken of him to others with esteem and confidence as we should. We have been standing and looking on, expecting him to raise both himself and us to eminence. Now let us adopt a different course. Let us encourage our minister with our prayers, our sympathies, and efforts. Let us speak of him with esteem and confidence to others, and say that we think of him as a man of ability, and who bids fair as a servant of God.

The thing was agreed upon. The leading men set the example. Very soon every one was speaking in favor of Mr. B——. His people visited him, sympathized with him, encouraged him and people out of the society began to think *how* Mr. B was rising in the estimation of his people. The young man felt the change. The cold damp chill by which he had been surrounded, and which had benumbed the energies of his soul, was exchanged for a warm genial atmosphere. His spirits rose, his health returned, his energies awoke, and he soon showed to all that he had

within him the elements of an earnest servant of the Lord. In time several revivals have attended his labors. In the affections of the church and people he has long since firmly established himself. They delight in him as a man of God, as well as a good man. His name has become honorably enrolled among American authors, and he is one whom his own church, and the churches of New England delight to honor. Reader, Christian, would you have a good minister? Go thou and do likewise. – Cheever, *Anecdotes*.

"A VICTORY, a glorious victory!" shouted Horace Fleming. "Did not I tell you, uncle, that Old England never would be beaten? Though Frank is at the front he will be all right, you may be sure."

Frank Conyers was an only son of Mr. and Mrs. Conyers, heir to a considerable property. He had been educated carefully, and his parents had hoped he would eventually take his place as owner of a large inheritance. But Frank was filled with thoughts of military glory, and gave his parents no peace until they consented to his entering the army. His military career had been a short one; but now, amid the stirring scenes of the war, he was seeing the realities of a soldier's life, also its hardships. He had been wounded, and his parents fondly hoped that he would be satisfied now, and they had been anxiously looking for a letter announcing his speedy return home "invalid," when Horace Fleming rushed in, with the news of a glorious victory.

Mr. and Mrs. Conyers were so well acquainted with the courageous and daring spirit of their son, that they knew he would be an actor in the scene again, if able to mount his horse. But his wound had been so recent, they hoped he was still too unwell to make any such attempt.

Slowly passed the hours of suspense until the full information anxiously looked for, yet dreaded, was received. Then the shock was none the less when a letter from the War Office was received. In which these words were read: "I am truly sorry to inform you, that on the 6th instant, in the desperate charge of the Calvary your gallant son, Lieutenant Conyers, fell while bravely cheering on his men."

They seemed to burn like letters of fire before their horror-stricken gaze. Thus the worst of their fears came upon them in all its sudden horror, and the bereaved parents were utterly prostrated beneath the blow. In vain well-meaning friends spoke comfort, but they sorrowed as those who have lost their all.

The first transport of sorrow was succeeded by a sullen despair, when their affection was re-awakened by the arrival of the baggage and effects of an only son cruelly torn from them. In the agonies of her grief, the mother clasped the garments of their son, which spoke to her so plainly of him. At last, as poor Frank's desk was lifted out of the packing case, Mr. Conyers seized it with a sudden hope that some last word from their son might be found within it.

As his trembling fingers sought for the key, and fitted it to the lock, how well he remembered the day on which he had given the desk to Frank for a birthday present, made after his own directions, with a secret drawer. After a moment's delay, caused by his shaking hands the private drawer revealed to view a thick letter, addressed: "To my beloved Father and Mother." With a cry Mr. Conyers summoned his wife, and with straining eyes they read together.

Dearest Father and Mother, I am once more out of the doctor's hands and pronounced 'fit for duty;' and as I may now be called into action at a moment's warning, I write you a letter which will should I fall, tell you my whole heart. I have often thought since I was wounded that if I had been killed instead of only wounded, you would not have had a last word from me to speak comfort to you. But, could I have written then, how different would it have been. I should have told you that I died for the honor of my country, and tried to soothe your sorrow for my loss, by the thought that I had fallen gloriously on the battlefield. But now! Oh, my loved ones, should I fall in the impending engagement, I shall die a victor through the Blood of the Lamb, even Christ my Lord. Not an earthly victor but victorious over death and the grave, my soul going with joy to meet the great Captain of my salvation. (Revelation 12:11). I think I see your astonishment, dear parents, as these words meet your eyes; and I hasten to tell you how I came to have such views and feelings. Those hopes, nay, certainties, which fill me with a joy that is not of earth, even in expectation of a violent death.

While I lay in the hospital, wounded, a brother officer, quite a young fellow, whom we used laughingly to call 'Praying Fred,' was brought in badly wounded, and placed in the next bed to mine. He had to undergo a painful operation, which he bore like a hero, not a murmur then, or after, escaping from his lips, although he suffered torturing pain. This showed me that he practiced what he preached, and that there must be reality in the religion he professed. Some such thoughts were going through my mind, when I met his eyes suddenly raised to mine as I looked at him the day after the operation had been performed. Though, thinking he was asleep I could not forbear expressing them aloud, as he gazed at me in wonder at my earnest look.

"Oh, yes," he said, "my religion is a reality. A support and comfort under every trial. I know that nothing can occur to me without the eye of my heavenly Father taking notice of it. Whatever He orders is right, and just what I would choose, if I could order things for myself, for I know that all things work together for good to those who love Him."

"Why, what good can it do you to be laid there in torture deprived of a limb?" I asked in surprise.

My companion was silent for a moment, and then he replied; "One good result is, that it has given me an opportunity to speak to you, friend, of the hope that is in me. And if

you are brought to know the blessedness of that hope, how joyful will it have been for me that I was laid here. How small a price would my lost limb and pain be, for the joy of knowing that I was instrumental in bringing you to a knowledge of my Lord and my Saviour. If, as we are told, one soul is worth more than the whole world, how trifling comparatively my sufferings, to the bliss of carrying the good news of salvation to you."

"You must not value me at so high a price as the 'whole world,' even though I am an only son," I said, laughing.

"Oh, Conyers!" he replied, "You mistake, it was not I who set that value upon you, the Creator of us all showed that He did so value you, when He gave 'His only Son' to die for you, that you might live forever."

Dear parents, when Fred Singleton spoke those words, a veil seemed to fall from before my eyes. I thought of you and of your indulgent love for me. I knew that you would give up your lives, before you would suffer me to fall. And then I thought of God giving His Son to die for me. In a moment I saw, as by a sudden revelation, how dreadful must be my state as a sinner, to require such sacrifice; and how wonderful must be the love of God to me, to give His only Son to die in my stead. All the sermons I had ever heard, 'to come to Jesus and be saved,' seemed to rise up in array before me, as I lay stunned by the suddenness of the revelation that swept through my brain. At length, as though compelled to speak, I said, "Singleton, you have struck me to the heart; if God has so valued my soul, as I now see and feel He has, what a fool I have been not to value it more myself. I never saw it in that light; in fact, to be sincere, I never thought about my soul at all."

"That is it; that is the danger," said Singleton. "We forget that we have within these bodies, spirits that can never die; and yet, how awful to think that at any moment the body may cease to exist, and its immortal tenant go on its eternal journey, unsaved, to everlasting misery. Oh! Why do we go on facing such a doom, when Christ shed His blood for us?"

"God must be very angry with us for neglecting to seek Him," I said, thinking aloud.

"He pities us and entreats us to believe and be saved," said Singleton, tenderly. "You believe that Jesus died for you; do you not?"

"Yes; oh, yes," I replied. "Then, my friend, God asks no more from you."

"How do you mean? Oh, Singleton, explain this to me more fully," I exclaimed.

"I have heard it explained in this way, Conyers; it is simple, but I think perfect," said Singleton. "If a man was drowning and a rope was thrown to him, his seeing the rope and that it was intended he should grasp it and be saved, would not of itself save him. He might

perish in sight of the means of safety; but if he grasped the rope and clung to it for life, then he would be safe; don't you see? You must take the salvation Christ has secured for you, over eighteen hundred years ago; it is for you, only believe it; accept this salvation, and you have done your part. God has given His Son, the Saviour, Christ has given Himself for you, and you have only to believe that He did so, and that God has accepted that sacrifice, in your place."

"Oh! I see it, I see it all now," and I felt compelled to cry out, "It is marvelous, but it is true. I feel it; I know it. I do believe that Christ has died for me, and that I am thus saved, yes, saved forever!"

"Bless the Lord for this great salvation!" cried Singleton, as well as his feeble voice would permit. "Did I not say right, that all things work together for our good if we love Him? How little I thought when I was laid here what a blessing was in store for me!" His voice became exhausted, and I begged him not to weaken himself by speaking any more just then.

The next day he was very faint, only exchanging an occasional word or look with me, but they were truly words and looks from the borders of the Heavenly land to which he was hastening. Not even the painful amputation could save his life; and the doctors at last reluctantly admitted the fact, when he asked them calmly if it was not so. After they had left him, he turned to me and said, "Here is a leaflet, which has been my motto since I knew the Saviour; let it be yours. Never forget it."

The next day it was plain that my dear, yes doubly dear, friend was sinking; but still he met my gaze with a bright smile and an upward look, as he said repeatedly, "I am going Home." Towards evening he said, "All things work together for good to those who love Him. See, the loss of this limb is sending me home to that Home. I might have passed many years of suffering on earth, but my gracious Father wills it otherwise; He is taking me Home to be with Himself." (Philippians 1:23). Those were his last words, as he sank into a sleep, and awoke no more.

Dear parents, since I have left the hospital I have boldly taken my stand as a soldier of the Cross. Should I die upon the field of battle, without a moment's warning, remember that to me sudden death will be sudden glory, for I shall be with my Saviour, and with Singleton once more. When you read these lines, believe that it is I, your son, your loving son, speaking; and even from Heaven let my voice reach you, for it is my voice, not the silent pen. I am not dead; I live! Because my Saviour lives, I live, and I implore of you, beloved ones hear me, that you also may with me enjoy the blessings of His kingdom. Never think of me as if dead, only having gone before you, called away by God in His mercy, that you may be led to see His love, and to believe in Him as I believed when Singleton spoke to me. Remember how much greater a love must God have had for His "only and well beloved

Son" than even you, dear parents, could possibly have felt for me. And then think how much He must have loved us, when He gave His only Son to suffer for our sins. Take Him for your Saviour; and we shall be forever together. Come to Him now, is the prayer of your devoted son, Frank.

Had a voice indeed sounded in their ears from the eternal world, the awe, mingled with rapture, that fell upon Mr. and Mrs. Conyers, as they read these lines, could not have been surpassed. With one consent they sank upon their knees together and accepted the Saviour of their son to be their Saviour. A Glorious Victory! --- Ah, Dear Reader—and what will you leave behind? When you are gone from this world, “being dead” will you yet speak, and will the memory of the just be blessed to those who survive you? When they think of you, will it be that they must also think of your dear Saviour who you loved, or rather, who first love you and died to bring you home to his heaven a child of God.