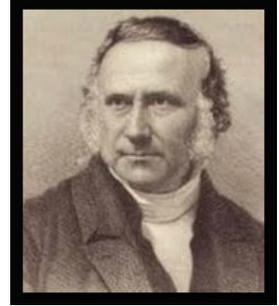


Reliance on Man



As I was leaving the place of a morning prayer meeting, which was attended, in a time of revival, very early in the morning; a young man about sixteen years of age came to me, and asked permission to accompany me home; for “he wanted to talk with me.”

“What do you wish to say to me?” said I.

“Why—I want you to tell me what to do.”

“I have told you, again and again. I can tell you nothing different—nothing new. You must repent, if you would be saved. You must give up your self-righteousness and flee to Christ. The Law condemns you. The sovereign grace of God only can save you. You must give up your miserable and long-continued attempts to save yourself. You must give God your heart, as he requires, and as I have explained to you already, many times.”

“Yes, I know that; but I am so distressed! I cannot live so! I want you to tell me something else.”

“I cannot relieve your distress. Christ alone can give you rest. I have nothing else to tell you. I have told you all the truth—all you need to know.”

“I thought,” said he, “perhaps you could say something, that would help me; if I went to your house.”

“So you have said to me more than once, and I have told you better. God only can help you. You must rely on him.”

“But I should like to talk with you again about my feelings, in your study.”

“It would do you no good. You have nothing to say, that you have not said before; and I have nothing new to say to you.”

“Well—may I go home with you?”

“No. Go home. Man cannot help you. The whole matter lies betwixt yourself and God.”

He turned away, the most downcast creature I ever saw. It seemed as if his last prop was gone. He walked as if his limbs could scarcely carry him.

I had not been at home an hour, before he came to tell me, that his burden was gone. He said, that after I “had cast him off,” all hope forsook him, and he “had nowhere else to go but to God.” Before he reached his home, (about a mile,) he had given all into the hands of God; and he felt so much relieved of his burden of sin and fear, that he thought he “would turn right about, and come right back and tell me.”—“But,” said he, “I do not believe I should have gone to God, if you had not cast me off.”

Anxious sinners are often kept from Christ, by their reliance on men. A great amount of religious conversation often diminishes their impressions. It tends to blunt the edge of truth. It keeps the heart in a kind of reliance on men. Conversation with judicious Christians and

judicious ministers is vastly important for inquiring sinners; but there is a point where it should cease. All that men can do is contained in two things—to make sinners understand God's truth, and make its impression upon their hearts and consciences, as deep as possible. If they aim at anything more, they are just trying to do the work of the Holy Spirit.—

Visiting among inquirers one morning, I called on five different individuals, one after another, in the course of a single hour, and in each case was sorry I had called at all: for in each case, after a very few minutes of conversation, I was fully persuaded that God's truth was deeply felt, and that anything which I could say would tend to diminish the impressions, which the Holy Spirit was making on their heart. I aimed to say just enough not to have them think I did not care for them; and got away as soon as I could, for fear of doing an injury. Every one of these individuals afterwards dated her religious hope from the same day.—No man can preach so powerfully as the Holy Spirit. It is vastly important to know when to stop. The divine writers understood this. They are perfect examples. Their silence is to be imitated, as well as their utterance.