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SERMON FOR THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1862,

ON THE

# CHASTISEMENT OF WAR,

PREACHED BY

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TEXT.—“ For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.” —HEB. 12, 10.

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I HAVE looked forward to this, our last meeting before the summer vacation, in the hope that, when it came, we might exchange congratulations on the improved condition of our national affairs, and the prospect of a speedy restoration to our former peace and prosperity. It seemed but a reasonable hope. For, although this rebellion is one of stupendous proportions, yet, when matched against a government whose resources in men, money, intelligence and courage are so nearly inexhaustable, we may be pardoned for prophesying for it a short and ignoble career. It is, therefore, not without some sinking of heart, that I give myself to a review of our present condition, in the hope of nerving your souls and my own, for still farther stretches of patience, still higher resolves of sacrifice, still more heroic defence of our country. It is not without disappointment that I separate from you even for a time, with the same burden of expectancy weighing so heavily upon all hearts, and the same element of uncertainty entering into all estimates of the present and future, which has drugged our cup with bitterness for the last fourteen months.

Still, we may as well be frank with each other, and look our condition fairly in the face, and gird ourselves up for the discipline yet to come. We are certainly prepared for any work which the honor and security of our country demand. We are

ready and willing to do and to bear in her behalf as we never yet have done, if her service requires it. Thus far, this war has lain its hand lightly upon us, as a people, at the North. One would never dream as he walked our busy streets, entered our places of amusement, our halls of learning, our homes of comfort and luxury, that we were engaged in a war the alternatives of whose issues are life and death. Our great cities are unusually peaceable and, in the main, prosperous; nature all around us is blooming as a bride adorned for her husband, and perfect security of life and property was never more triumphant. The noise of war does not disturb the hum of industry nor the sounds of pleasure; the proximity of armies does not arrest the daily routine of duty, nor threaten the safety of those we love.

Here and there, it is true, all over our communities, are homes made desolate forever by the casualties of war; and every day we see the men who went out from us a year ago strong and well, now limping homeward, wounded, sick, maimed for life, to seek the consolations of affection, and many to find rest in a peaceful grave. It is also true that every pleasing picture of life has had the same sad reverse of death; and every prominence of enjoyment its background of suffering and woe. We have hardly eaten a meal at home, without thinking of our roughly fed soldiers on the battle field. We have not lain down to sleep in our comfortable beds, without feeling ashamed of our comfort, while so many brothers were sleeping on the ground. We have not watched by a sick bed, to cool the burning brow or soothe the restless body of a loved one, without sighing for the thousands of sick men who have no such solace of home or affection. We have not looked into the eyes of our children, nor listened to the music of their pastimes, nor received the welcome of their caresses, without feeling our happiness embittered by thoughts of the many parents to whom this happiness is denied, it may be for years, and it may be forever! We have not smoothed a dying pillow, nor closed the eyes of the dead, without mingling with tears of personal sorrow, tears of sympathy for those who are daily dying in fearful conflict, on the deserted battle-field, or

in secret coverts to which they have crawled for safety, with no look of love to return the yearning stare of death, no faithful hand to offer its cup of water, nor wipe away the blinding blood and sweat. Thus, everywhere and always, through each interval of leisure, this demon of war has looked in upon our life, and overcast it with gloom and sorrow. And yet we have known nothing of war as a community. We have had no trial such as nations have often passed through, nor such as we may ourselves have to pass through before we are worthy to be guardians of Liberty and Republican Government.

“Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,” is as true of nations as of men. In the Vineyard of God, the branch which beareth not fruit He taketh away; and even the branch which beareth fruit He pruneth, that it may bring forth more fruit. But have we yet been chastened into any purer love of God? Has our branch of the Tree of Liberty been pruned by the discipline of war, so as to give the slightest promise of more or better fruit? Is there any evidence that we are now ready to adopt the maxim that “righteousness exalteth a nation, while sin is a reproach to any people?” There is none. Little of the moral effect—which we all look to as the result and recompense of this war—has yet been accomplished. If it were to close to-morrow, our affairs would speedily fall into the ruts of the old wickedness. Trade would again compromise conscience for cotton; politics would sneer again at any higher law than the self-interests of politicians, and fashion would launch out into its old mockery and extravagance, as if an hundred thousand men had not offered up their lives for Republican America. The moment success favors us in the least degree, we begin to think of some new scheme by which we can give to the devil all that God has given to us. It is only after some great reverse, such as we have just experienced before Richmond, some deep and heart-felt humiliation, that we begin to ask, “Lord, what wouldst Thou have us do?”

There is scarcely a man, North or South, who doubts that slavery is the cause of this war. Alexander H. Stephens said

distinctly, at the beginning of the rebellion, that it was not the success of the Republican party, it was not the loss of fugitive slaves, it was not the passage of Personal Liberty Bills, which drove them into secession, but it was the incompatibility of the interests of free and slave labor, and the impossibility of both coexisting under the same Constitution. A celebrated Presbyterian Minister of New Orleans preached a sermon about the same time, which was published in all the city papers for three days in succession, and then 30,000 copies were struck off for wider distribution, in which he proved from the Word of God that each nation has a special mission, and that the special mission for which God was raising up the Southern Confederacy, was the perpetual preservation of the blessing of human slavery. Such is the sentiment of the South ; and we have no reason to doubt its entire sincerity ; no men are so sincere as madmen. This sentiment is not an accidental effect of slavery, which, under other circumstances, might have been different, but it is a necessary effect, which it will produce under all circumstances. The people of the North would learn to love it as well as the people of the South do, were they subject in like manner to its natural influences.

On the other hand, the conviction of the North has long been steadily increasing that slavery is both impolitic and wicked ; that it impoverishes alike the soil of a country, and the character of its people ; that it inflames the worst passions, and involves the grossest cruelties ; and that in every national interest, it is opposed to the genius of a republican government. Neither is this an accidental conviction, which might have been avoided under some possible circumstances ; but is a necessary effect of slavery upon the minds and hearts of those who see it from a distance.

It is in vain that men sneer at the Northern hatred of slavery, and call it a mere prejudice ; it is still a fact, and a fact which we cannot get rid of so long as its cause exists. Suppose it is a mere prejudice, it is one which exists among the most educated, moral and religious portions of the community ;

it is one which is increasing every year, and one which there is no means of conquering. Every instinct of the Norman and Saxon nature is averse to the very idea of bondage. And how are we to extract this aversion from our life-blood? By the increase of knowledge? With increase of knowledge our prejudice against an institution which is afraid of knowledge is only strengthened. By the increase of morality? As our consciences grow more tender, they are the more pained by an institution which may compel the violation of every moral law. By the increase of religion? The religion of Jesus seems to us in eternal conflict with the buying and selling and owning of our fellow men. By intercourse with the nations of the earth? "The moral sentiment of the whole world is opposed to human slavery." Then, if we, as a people, find that slavery awakens an instinctive hatred which knowledge, and morality, and religion, and the genius of all cotemporary civilization only strengthens and confirms, by what possible means are we ever to be cured of it, so long as slavery exists in our midst?

We are not now discussing the absolute right nor wrong of these two conflicting effects, which are necessarily produced by the presence of this institution. We only claim that both are alike inevitable and both alike incurable, except by the one, obvious remedy, of destroying the cause.

While we lived together peaceably, under the same constitution, this opposition was pledged in good faith to limit its political resistance of slavery to those portions of the country where it was kept in existence by Northern votes; and in no case to interfere with it in the states, where it existed by local law. And we have kept the pledge to the letter of the law; erring in every instance on the side of concession,—as in the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. But while our *political* action was thus limited, we would no more promise to limit our *moral* action within political boundaries, than we would promise not to offer moral resistance to the polygamy of the Mormons, the cannibalism of the Sandwich Islanders, nor the idolatries of the Chinese. For wherever evil is, there is something for the

Kingdom of Heaven to fight against and conquer. It is absurd to say that we may send missionaries to the ends of the world, to resist moral evil with moral good, error with truth, in spite of the prohibition of governments where the error and evil prevail, and yet say that we have nothing to do with so great a sin lying at our own doors. But this was intolerable to the South. They feared, and justly feared the *moral* opposition to slavery, even while, as Stephens said, they had nothing in particular to complain of in our political opposition. So great was their fear of it, that they tore themselves away from the guarantees of the Constitution; rushed to the field; and appealed to the law of the *strongest*.

Now, in view of these obvious facts, can any one doubt, for a moment, that slavery was the cause of this war?—not the accidental but the *necessary* cause? Is it not essentially a warlike element in a republic? Has it not been the only thing in the way of our perfect peace and prosperity in the past? Has it not, more than all other obstacles, hindered the effect of our national influence among the nations of the earth? To ask these questions is to answer them. But will God allow His beloved vine to *remain* unpruned of this blight, which robs Him and His children of its healing fruit? It cannot be; for whom He loveth He chasteneth; and He is now showing His love for us in this terrible chastisement of war, which is forcing us, by an appeal to our lower instincts, to do what our higher natures have proved unequal to—remove the only hindrance of our national prosperity and peace.

For there are two ways in which the wickedness of men and nations gets providentially destroyed, and is thus kept from becoming universal: first: by anti-pathic means; and second: by homeopathic means. Evil is destroyed by *anti-pathic* means, when it is overcome by its opposite good. When the morality and intelligence of a people are constantly removing the necessary imperfections and wrongs of a former age, by the better laws and purer policies of the present, then the evil is sloughed off by the necessities of perpetual growth. This insures a steady

and peaceful development. But when an evil cannot be destroyed in this way ; when the moral nature has proved itself too weak to overcome the sin which lies in the way of its growth and usefulness, then the homeopathic means is applied, and evil is destroyed by evil ; passion is burned up by the intensity of its own fires ; and selfishness, which resisted the assaults of a feeble virtue, in the fanaticism of its excess, throws itself from the giddy height to which it climbed, and is dashed in pieces by its own momentum.

Slavery was first committed to us for removal by anti-pathic means. The Colonies were obliged to unite for purposes of self-protection ; and slavery, excluded in *name* from the Constitution, and in *reality* from the territories, and looked upon by all as a necessary but temporary evil, was regarded as a doomed relic of barbarism which must soon pass away before the growing virtue and intelligence of freemen. But the profits of slave labor grew unexpectedly to be so great, that the institution itself was ultimately found to be Divine. The anti-pathic remedy failed. The conscience of the country has proved itself unequal to the mission assigned it by our fathers. Cotton has led men into an exceeding high mountain, and shown them all the kingdoms of the earth, and promised to give them all if they would fall down and worship it ; and they have fallen down and worshipped. And now slavery is on its trial by homeopathic means. Being essentially warlike, it is now met on its own level of war. Having no sanction in nature but the law of the strongest, it is now on trial by that law. It is at last doomed in consequence of the arrogance and extravagance of its claim. It demanded territory ; Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, with all their attendant cost in blood and treasure were given it for the sake of peace. It demanded a most *aggravating* fugitive slave law ; we gave it for peace. It required the Dred Scott decision ; we gave that for peace. It required the removal of the bounds which the fathers had set to its progress ; and, in spite of our fears and sorrows, we tore away the Missouri Compromise, and gave that for the purpose of getting their trade



and their votes, and enticing them to preserve the Union. Until at last intoxicated by its triumphs, it has stung the bosom which nourished it ; and when the Union has nothing more to give, raised a parricidal hand against it, and accepted the hazards of war.

When it became certain that the South *would* not compromise, and *would* not trade, and *would* not vote with the North, and would at all costs destroy our government, then, to their great amazement, they found the North a unit on the subject of coercion. They were astonished to see the men, who for so many years, had encouraged them to cry secession whenever they wished to carry a party measure, now take the gun and sword to resist secession to the death. They could not see that, in appealing to war, they lost all the natural guarantees of peace. Now, every motive, from the lowest to the highest, which can produce activity, is concentrated in defence of the Union against the slave power. And thus, what the nation would not do on the ground of simple justice, God has willed it *shall* do on the ground of absolute necessity. And why are we so unwilling to accept the chastening of the Lord, as it is obviously meant? Can we hope for permanent peace while this element of discord remains? When the war is over, will the North love slavery more, or the South love it less on account of the blood and treasure it has cost? Or is there anything in our efforts to avoid this issue thus far, which encourages us in persisting to do so?

We have waited patiently for more than a year to see what would develop itself from the strange events which were transpiring. We have listened reverently to the logic of events as it was argued in the thunder and groan of the battle field, and echoed from half a million homes. We have furnished our bravest and manliest youths whenever they were called for, and surrendered them cheerfully to the cause of our country. We have, it is true, looked in amazement at the motionless condition of our army ; but we have tried, nevertheless, to possess our souls in patience and trust in God and our leaders. The nations

of Europe have seen all their interests languish, and heard their laborers, by millions, crying for bread, but have left us to settle our troubles alone, until their patience is well nigh exhausted. And now how does the matter stand? Why, notwithstanding all our great victories, at the close of this year we are kept in five days awful suspense, relieved at last by the *joyful news* that our splendid army is not all cut to pieces; is only *twenty-five* miles farther from Richmond than it was a month ago, has not lost more than twelve or fourteen thousand men, and that this is strategy. Now 300,000 more men are called for, who must be recruited, drilled and transported to the scene of action, before we can regain our former confidence and hope. Europe is flooded with exaggerated accounts of our defeat, and urged by every specious motive to entangle herself in our affairs. Yet with all this discouragement in the field, and danger from abroad; with all the necessities which press upon us continually, for weakening our enemy in every possible way, and husbanding the lives and energies of our men to the last degree, and with this perfect *certainty* before our eyes, that slavery was the cause of this war, and may be the cause of other wars as well, it would seem as if the one thing most sacred in the policy of the country is its desire to restore the Union with this chronic disease intact in the system.

It seems to me, sometimes, as if a fatal infatuation was upon us, which forbids us to see the plain teaching of Providence in this hour. For what other reason is God chastening us? Is it for the purpose of showing the North that it can whip the South? Is it merely to flatter the Yankee pride of supremacy? The thought is childish; we are deserving of no such flattery. Is it to consolidate the nation? The effect is to concentrate one half against the other, and to embitter the antagonism in the greatest possible degree. Is it to show Europe how powerful we are? The effect is to show the whole world how weak and helpless we are with this element of discord in our midst. Is it to cure the North of its hatred of slavery? Every blow of chastisement makes ten thousand non anti-slavery men. What

can it be, then, but to prune away this excrescence, and leave us a people of common interests, in fulfillment of the fond hope of our fathers? Time is our best teacher of this truth, and reverses bring us nearer and nearer to its recognition. And I sometimes feel that God will never allow our largest armies to succeed, until they are wheeled into a line with his eternal purposes of justice and mercy.

I find fault with no one. You who have heard me during the past year will bear witness that I have uniformly urged cordial co-operation in the work of suppressing the rebellion, and unwavering trust in our rulers and leaders, so long as labor and trust were possible. And I ask nothing more now than that the North should recognise the most obvious moral purpose of the war, and show, at least, as much anxiety to get rid of slavery as it has hitherto shown to preserve it. If it will show the same persistent determination to foster every man and plan which promises its overthrow, as it has hitherto to encourage and foster the men and plans which seek its preservation, it could not long survive our present necessities. Only show us some promise that the near or remote effect of this heart-sickening war will be to remove the *permanent cause* of the war, and we will pour out men and treasure for its consummation until both are exhausted. We would rather continue the struggle for years, not only against the South, but against France and England, could we thus give to our children a country united forever in the common bonds of freedom, than close the war tomorrow, if thereby our children are to inherit a government torn and enfeebled by a perpetual conflict of interests.

God has brought this question before us now for final adjustment, and we must not patch it up with delusive conditions which promise only temporary peace and quiet. Even if it should complicate and embitter the war, the disease is so desperate that its treatment must be heroic. To cut this tumor of slavery from the vitals of the Union by the rough strokes of the sword is, indeed, a severe operation; but the chances of

saving the body thus are an hundred to one greater, than the chances of its recovery with the tumor left growing about its heart. Public sentiment must be raised up to the level of the real issue. The administration cannot out-run the conscience and intelligence of the people. It therefore becomes every one—man, woman and child—who would co-operate with Divine Providence in the noble work of establishing our Union upon a permanent basis, to do all he or she can to uphold the hands of the President, and even try to hold them up a little higher. If we see and accept this issue, God will work with us for its triumph; but if we do not do so, the continued chastisement of His love will *force* it upon us.

But, friends, I write in no spirit of discouragement or despondency. There can be no doubt of the final issue. There never has been but one final result of the old historic war of the Northmen against the Southmen.

It looks, indeed, as if there had been bad management in the late conduct of the campaign. It is impossible, for example, for us to see why an advance upon Richmond was not made by the direct route of Fredericksburg, thus guarding our Capitol at the same time we were attacking that of the enemy, and enabling us to concentrate our forces. It is impossible also, for us to see why our generals took up a position of thirty miles front before Richmond, in a swamp which killed or disabled men at the rate of a regiment a week, and then suddenly found that it was not the best position, and were obliged to change it at the expense of seven day's battle, the loss of large quantities of provision, and the lives and service of twelve thousand men. It is even harder to see why we have not been permitted to know the truth, and the whole truth as it transpired, concerning the fate of our army; why the news of our disaster must be broken to us by half-lies, as if we were a nation of hysterical women, and could not bear the truth. We have shown ourselves worthy of more confidence than this. Had it been but *whispered* in the first days of that terrible suspense that our noble army was in danger of annihilation, and that the Militia must rush to the rescue,

we would have covered the banks of the James River with fresh men, in time, perhaps, to save many thousands of our poor, wearied, wounded soldiers. These and many other things we cannot understand ; but our hearts are just as unflinching in their determination to suppress this rebellion. We are *unconditional* Union men, for we believe religiously, that the Union is to be the means in the hands of God of bestowing the blessings of universal liberty to uncounted millions of his children. Reverses do not abate one jot of our heart nor hope ; discouragements only strengthen our purpose to make more swift and earnest work of the war. We have had more to fear thus far from successes than from reverses, because we were not chastened into a deep conviction that the cause of liberty is the cause of God.

I share the popular fear of intervention on the part of France and England, in our affairs. And yet, when I think of it calmly, there is not one probable reason why they will do so. England has no army and no navy for a war with us. She had not men for the Crimean war ; the men are not to be had. She knows this, and knows equally well that half a million Irishmen would fly to arms at the tap of a drum to revenge the long history of her oppressions and wrongs. But, if she says to France, " You do the fighting and we will stand aloof ;" France, if she does the work will secure the advantage of the war ; and, in case of success, England, instead of being dependent upon us for cotton, would be dependent upon France,—an exchange which she is not likely to make. If she wants cotton, the shortest road to it lies through the success of the North. She undoubtedly bears neither us nor our institutions any good will. She is restive under the conviction that she is trembling in the balance of nations, and with the loss of her wooden navy, scarcely ranks among first class powers ; but that England will needlessly complicate herself in our affairs does not seem probable. And if we would take from her every shadow of any excuse for interference, except the desire for cotton, let us declare emancipation, and then she must be silent or self-condemned.

Nor can we imagine why France should forcibly interfere. She is doubtless suffering sadly for the want of cotton ; but she will suffer doubly when, to the loss of cotton she adds the loss of a market. Intervention will bring no speedy supplies of any kind from the South ; how can it ? We will take good care in such an event that she has no leisure to cultivate cotton. Besides, Napoleon knows better than we what falcon eyes are fixed on his game of empire, ready to observe and take advantage of his first false play. He was undoubtedly nettled by the presence of Bourbon Princes on McClellan's staff. It was a shrewd card on their part, but was little else than a silly affectation on ours. It was an appeal to the noblest and proudest memories of the French nation, associated with the Emperor's bitterest enemies.

The Catholic church is inimical to Napoleon. She looks with no satisfaction upon his success, and would regard his interference in our affairs with extreme jealousy. Indeed, it is fearful to think what complication of the world's affairs would certainly result from any forcible intervention on the part of a foreign power. It would drench the earth in blood. For come from whom it may, and in what form it may, *we will never submit to it while a freeman lives.* Our gospel on this subject is the Monroe Doctrine, without note or comment. And we may as well accustom ourselves to pronounce the words and think the thought of eternal resistance to foreign interference in the government which Washington gave us ; for it will make us more calm and steady when the blow is struck, if it is struck at all. If France or England can see anything in the history of their former campaigns in this country to induce them to try the experiment over again, they will find us the natural children of our fathers. But, let us hope that this is only the last rod of chastisement which God, in His love, has raised over us, that we may be brought through fear of its fall, to throw aside every selfish and unholy aim, and consecrate ourselves to the truth and justice and freedom for which our fathers fought. We have nothing to fear but sin ; as we become pure we become invincible.

We shall live, my friends, to see a glorious result from this discipline of the Almighty. This land shall again rejoice in the sunshine of peace and prosperity. It is a garden land, set apart for a chosen people whose God is the Lord. It is not the natural home of war. Every blooming flower, and rolling stream, and teeming harvest-field, and sheltering bay is a new prophesy of its future peace. The undertone of all this discordant surf-beat is a Gloria in Excelsis. The blackness of this war-cloud tells, at once, of the vile vapors which caused it, and the sweet air which shall follow it. Across the briny deeps of present distress, I see the shining peaks of Liberty : and

Down the dark future, through long generations,  
 The echoing sounds grow fainter and then cease :  
 And like a bell, with solemn, sweet vibrations,  
 I hear once more the voice of Christ say—"Peace!"

*Longfellow's Poems.*