

Whatever subordinate ends, therefore, the Christian pulpit may secure in this or the coming world, its legitimate, paramount aim is the glory of God in the salvation of men. Its great end is one, and only one. If 'the chief end of man is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever', the chief end of those who minister his word is to glorify him in that great work with which his manifested glory is most intimately allied. 'Unto me', says the Apostle, 'who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, *to the end* that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.' It is God first, God midst, God last, God everywhere, God exalted in the Gospel of his Son. It is to bring forward, and sustain, and magnify the full claims of the adorable Godhead; so that men who do not know may know him; men who despise may have honourable thoughts of him; men who suspect and slander him may look upon him with a trusting confidence. It is not to make them hypocrites, and induce them to put on the show of friendship, and thus prepare themselves for a greater damnation; it is to prevail upon them truly and honestly to give up their controversy with God, and make peace with him through the blood of his Son.

It is not the favour of the people; 'we seek not *yours*,' says the Apostle, 'but *you*.' Nor is it their wealth, nor their honours; it is themselves, and their salvation. It is the *soul* that a faithful minister is thinking of – the deathless *soul*; it is this that he is praying for, and preaching to, that he may present it to his great Lord as 'his joy and his crown'. Such is the high, the grand aim of the Christian ministry, and such it will appear to have been, when such a man as Paul goes up with those who were given to him as the seals of his ministry, to bow themselves before God and the Lamb. It is this which gives such grandeur and power to the pulpit. Such it will appear to have been when the joys of heaven and the torments of hell are felt in their everlasting weight and reality, and when the magnitude of God's redemption, and the wondrous results that have flowed from it, shall be unfolded.

All men do not comprehend this commanding motive and object of ministerial devotedness: would that it were comprehended by all of us who are Christ's ministers! 'Never forget', says the youthful McCheyne, writing to one of his brethren in the ministry, 'that the end of a sermon is the salvation of the people.' We would

have our minds imbued with this truth, and are greatly desirous that the minds of others should be as deeply imbued as our own. This is what our pulpits so imperatively demand. In this great object, the mind and heart of the preacher must be concentrated; this great end he must pursue with great singleness of purpose, and great strength and ardour of affection. His efforts will rise as high as his own impressions of the importance of his object, and no higher. He may expect to accomplish very little, unless his own mind is absorbed in his high calling. He need not be afraid of being too much excited in the pursuit of such an end; for it is impossible that the affections of an enlightened and well-balanced mind should be too strong and ardent, where those affections can be gratified only by the salvation of men, and through the instrumentality of God's truth. It is but for the salvation of men to become his great object; his thoughts are but to dwell here, and his desires centre so habitually, so tenderly, so solemnly, on this great object, as to make it the paramount passion; and his pulpit would read different lessons from those it often reads. Let this be wanting, and the preacher's heart freezes, his lips freeze, and his pulpit is but an icy tablet.

There is a fixed and steady aim towards this great object discernible in some ministers, which in others is a very slight and cursory one. It needs not much discernment to discover which are the more powerful preachers. No two men in this land appeared to have the great object of preaching more directly or more steadily before their minds, than those departed and beloved servants of God, the late Dr. Payson, of Portland, and the late Dr. Nettleton of Killingworth; nor do I know of any who were more successful in winning souls. There was a period in the life of Andrew Fuller, when he said, 'I think I never yet entered into the *true idea* of the work of the ministry.' Happy, timely thought! and the subsequent usefulness of this man of God shows how much the power of the pulpit depends upon the aim and end of the preacher.

Many a minister could tell a similar experience; they were new days to him, and, in some sort, a new conversion, when he first 'entered into the true idea of the work of the ministry'. What impulse is like this? What is the pulpit, without this impulse? How can it gain the object of its appointment, if it does not aim at attaining it? Is it any marvel that it should be powerless, when it *seeks* not to be powerful? We ask for the pulpit that engrossing