

**A SERMON PREACHED ON THE
TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY
OF, HIS ORDINATION AS PASTOR
OF THE SECOND CHURCH IN
BOSTON, MASS; DEC. 5, 1858**

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A Sermon Preached on the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of, his ordination as Pastor of the Second church in Boston, Mass; Dec. 5, 1858 by Chandler Robbins

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CHANDLER ROBBINS

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A

S E R M O N

PREACHED ON

THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

OF

HIS ORDINATION AS PASTOR OF THE SECOND CHURCH IN
BOSTON, MASS.

SUNDAY, DEC. 5, 1858.

BY CHANDLER ROBBINS, D.D.

With an Appendix.

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S E R M O N .

ACTS XXVI. 22: "HAVING THEREFORE OBTAINED HELP OF GOD, I CONTINUE TO THIS DAY."

ONE emotion is paramount in my heart, which ought to have, which must have, utterance before any other, — before any thought which the occasion suggests has clothed itself in language: it is that of gratitude to Him by whose most gracious help I have continued to this day. I stand here amazed at his goodness. The consciousness that it has been unmerited heightens my adoration. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" Should I not be unfeeling and perfidious, if I did not offer to him this sacrifice of thanksgiving, if I did not "pay my vows unto him, now, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the presence of all his people"?

It is difficult for me to realize that a quarter of a century has elapsed since my ordination as Pastor of

the Second Church, so fresh in my memory are all the circumstances and feelings of that occasion.

I see the old church in Hanover Street just as it appeared on the 4th of December, 1833, — a square-built, high-roofed, timeworn edifice, with no architectural beauty to please the eye; and yet impressive, and even stately, for its air of antiquity, its massiveness and puritanic plainness, — more impressive and interesting, at that hour, to me, than the most magnificent temple of the earth. I hear the measured stroke of its sharp-toned but not unmusical bell, sounding above the noise of the streets, as it tolls the approaching hour for the solemn rite. I look down upon the goodly congregation of future friends, gathered within its peaceful gates, — instinctively trusted, though all unknown, — spreading before my untried path like a glowing cloud. I see the venerable fathers sitting in the pulpit by my side. I give ear to the words of truth and wisdom which flow in mellow and fervent tones from the faithful Preacher's golden mouth. I listen to a Prayer that opens heaven, while the hand of the aged man of God, who is uttering it, is laid in benediction upon my head. I hearken to the faithful and tender Charge of one whose years and virtues alike give impressiveness to his admonitions. I clasp the hand of my elder brother, as he offers me, with generous words, the welcome pledge of a pure and cordial Fellowship.

The softer music of the hymns melts my heart to tenderness, while the louder strains of the anthem lift it up with courage and hope.*

I see, I hear, I feel it all, as if that day were yesterday.

Yet, ah! what changes have passed upon the hallowed spot, and the reverent company, associated with those early vows! The time-honored walls which encircled and overshadowed those sacred ceremonies have long since disappeared from the face of the earth. Another temple—which it seems like a dream that we built and occupied and left—is already beginning to grow old upon their site. Of that large congregation, the youngest children have become men and women; those who were in their prime have grown old; the elders, with one or two exceptions, have passed away; while the greater number, of whatever age, have fallen asleep. That “golden mouth” has long been silent. That righteous man, whose prayers were availing, and whose touch was a consecration, has been at rest these many years. Upon the grave of that friend who gave me, trembling, the beautiful token of the church’s fellowship, and the dear promise of his personal sympathy, six times has autumn spread its fallen leaves, since, standing over it, I testified, with a sad heart, how

* See Appendix.

perfectly our professional intercourse of nineteen years had corresponded with that token, how faithfully he had redeemed that pledge.*

Of all the principal actors in that interesting scene, only one remains on earth, — one who is associated, not only with that day, but with persons and events of a former century; and who binds me by a single living link to his venerated predecessor in the First Church in Plymouth, — the pious ancestor whose name I bear. Thank God that he who charged me to “be faithful unto death,” and exhorted me also to “be of good courage,” still lingers amongst us, to renew the same sacred counsel, and repeat the same high encouragement, with silent eloquence, by that unflinching serenity of faith, and that unabated fervor of piety, which illustrate his own protracted ministry.*

When, on looking back, my mind fastens, thus, upon that day of consecration, the intervening time dwindles to a point; but, when I attempt to retrace the interval step by step, it stretches out to an extent which seems almost immeasurable.

It is not my intention to offer you a history of the affairs of this church during the quarter of a century of my connection with it. That duty has been already partially performed; an account of all but the last seven years having been included in

* See Appendix.

the volume prepared in commemoration of the two hundred and first anniversary of the Second Church, which was celebrated, with becoming solemnities, in 1851. Such an undertaking, therefore, is rendered unnecessary now, even if it might otherwise have been appropriate; but the demands of this occasion are, I think, strictly interpreted, of a more limited and personal nature. It has no general importance or interest: it merely marks a term of my professional service; it is an epoch simply with reference to my own ministerial life.

I propose, therefore, after a brief review of the most important events which have affected the welfare of the church, to gather up some of the general impressions of my ministerial experience; trusting that, although such a course will involve the violation of an established rule of this pulpit, — to exclude every thing of a personal nature, — it may be allowed for once, if I carefully respect the limits of your forbearance and the delicate bounds of modesty.

It has pleased God that the ancient church to which we are attached should accomplish, in our day, an eventful career; pass through various changes and trials; experience remarkable alternations of prosperity and adversity, repose and migration. Had we chosen for ourselves our own lot, it would have been a quiet and regular course, — one that would have attracted no observation; that would have been