

**THE PASTOR'S JUBILEE: A
DISCOURSE DELIVERED IN
THE SOUTH CHURCH, SALEM,
MASS., APRIL 24, 1855**

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The Pastor's Jubilee: A Discourse Delivered in the South Church, Salem, Mass., April 24, 1855
by Brown Emerson

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DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN

THE SOUTH CHURCH, SALEM, MASS.,

APRIL 24, 1855,

BY BROWN EMERSON, D. D.

ON THE

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

OF HIS

ORDINATION.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

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DISCOURSE.

MY BRETHREN AND FRIENDS:

I come before you on an occasion of special interest both to you and myself. Half a century is this day completed since the unbroken ties were formed, which unite the pastor and flock together in holy brotherhood. It is fitting that an occasion so rare, in this age of progress and change, should be observed by a public acknowledgment of that kind providence, which has so distinctly marked our connexion from its commencement to the present hour. And while I recount the dealings of that providence, I am sure, that the emotions excited in my own breast, will be met with a lively sympathy in yours.

In accordance with these remarks, I have selected as my text the suggestive passage in the ACTS xxvi. 22:

"HAVING THEREFORE OBTAINED HELP OF GOD, I CONTINUE TO THIS DAY."

We are too apt to place in the chapter of accidents those things, in which we ought to see and acknowledge

the hand of divine providence, disposing of events according to the counsel of unerring wisdom. If we would leave off the atheistical practice of not looking beyond second causes, in the affairs of every day;—if we would cherish such a sense of the presence and agency of the Supreme Being, as to undertake nothing upon which we could not consistently implore his blessing;—if we would look to Him with filial confidence and submission for the help we daily need, how greatly would it add both to our temporal and spiritual prosperity. It would inspire us with fortitude and courage in our Master's service. It would sustain our spirits under the trials of life, with a peace and self-possession, which the world can never give. It was this faith in God;—this sense of his presence,—this trust in his wisdom, faithfulness and power, which carried the apostle through a course of unparalleled conflicts, and made him more than a conqueror. Constrained by the love of Christ, he had pursued this self-denying and perilous course about thirty years, when he stood before king Agrippa, and made the plea for christianity recorded in the chapter of my text,—a plea so eloquent and powerful, that it drew from the king the declaration, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian.” The Lord had preserved the apostle's life in a remarkable manner, and sometimes by miraculous interpositions. Though præminent in the powers of his mind, and in his attainments in moral excellence, he consecrated all to his Lord and Master.

Without comparing myself with that great apostle, except in reference to the preserving care of the Almighty through a course of years in the work of the ministry, the present occasion will justify me in giving a retrospective view of my relations to this church and society.

The connexion between a minister of the gospel and the people of his charge is most sacred in its nature, and of transcendent importance in its results. Your connexion with men of other professions is transient, accidental, rare. With a minister it is habitual, peculiar. No other professional man can fill his place. You want him not to transact your business, but to be your friend, an inmate in your families;—to enter your houses of affliction;—to give you light, admonition, and consolation in suffering, sickness, and the last hours of life;—to meet you in the sanctuary and preach to you of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Though unwilling to say much of myself, I shall not be considered, I trust, as overleaping the bounds of propriety, if, on this occasion, I state a few facts not immediately connected with the ministry I have exercised here during the past fifty years.

The early part of my life was spent in the State of New Hampshire; but much the greater part was spent in Massachusetts, my native State, and in the goodly city of Salem. My studies preparatory for the university were pursued under the tuition of the late Rev. Dr. Wood of Boscawen, New Hampshire, and I was graduated at Dartmouth College in 1802. It was early my

desire to become a preacher of the gospel, and this was my constant aim through the whole of my collegiate course. In pursuance of that object, I received, in February 1804, from the Essex North Association, a license to preach, and delivered my first discourse in the pulpit of the late Dr. Samuel Hopkins of Newport, R. I. In the summer of that year, I received from this society an invitation to preach as a candidate for settlement, and, at the same time, a similar invitation from South Danvers. On weighing the existing circumstances, the scale turned in favor of accepting the invitation from Salem. After preaching three months as a candidate, in the summer and autumn of 1804, I received an invitation from the church and society to settle with them as a colleague pastor with Dr. Daniel Hopkins. The house, in which we are now assembled, was in a course of erection during that year, and our public religious services were held in the former house of worship, which stood upon the ground now occupied by our chapel. That house was built in 1766, for purposes similar to those for which Hamilton Hall in Chestnut Street is now used. It was purchased by this society and occupied thirty-one years, from 1774 to 1805. Of the proprietors of that house only four survive, and but one of them, Mr. Benjamin Cox, remains a member of the society. The building, though unadorned with architectural beauty, is remembered as a sanctuary, where the fathers worshiped, around which are gathered many hallowed associations. Not fewer than a hundred of

you remember the old edifice, with its uncarpeted aisles and unshaded windows, its high pulpit and higher sounding board, the pews, with backs, on which the weary might recline their heads, and hear the word with comfort; the choir, aided by no instrument but a bass viol, pouring forth its fugues, and animating the lovers of sacred song. An organ would then have been deemed, by many of our devout fathers, as derogatory to the sacredness and purity of divine worship. And neither furnaces nor stoves for heating the house of God were admitted in those days, except small foot stoves, which were handed, in time of service, from one pew to another, to save the more tender feet from freezing. It seems to have been thought, that the people ought to have faith and love enough to keep them warm, amid the severities of the coldest winter. Yet, with fewer conveniences than are now enjoyed, the divine word found a response in many hearts, and fervent prayers were answered by the salvation of many souls. I may be supposed to feel an interest in the place, where, by the space of three months, I met, on the sabbath and at the table of the Lord, those sainted fathers and mothers, who are now honored guests, as we believe, at the marriage supper of the Lamb. But I may be supposed to feel a deeper interest in the place, where, from my watch-tower, I have seen more than a whole generation of my own flock pass away;—to whom and their children, I have broken the bread of life during the space of fifty years. This house was dedicated on the