

**THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH A PREACHER  
OF THE GOSPEL SHOULD CONDEMN SIN:  
WITH SOME REFERENCE TO  
EXISTING EVILS. A SERMON, PREACHED  
AT THE ORDINATION OF THE REV.  
ROBERT B. HALL, AUGUST 23, 1837**

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The Principles on which a Preacher of the Gospel Should Condemn Sin: With some reference to existing evils. A Sermon, preached at the ordination of the Rev. Robert B. Hall, August 23, 1837 by G. W. Blagden

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**G. W. BLAGDEN**

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A

**SERMON,**

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION

OF THE

**REV. ROBERT B. HALL,**

OVER THE THIRD

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN PLYMOUTH,

AUGUST 23, 1837.

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**BY REV. G. W. BLAGDEN,**

Pastor of Old South Church, Boston.

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(Hall)  
AN

**SERMON.**

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ISAIAH lviii, 1.

*Cry aloud! spare not! Lift up thy voice like a trumpet!  
And show my people their transgression, and the house of  
Jacob their sin.*

I BELIEVE it may be truly said, that means of grace, when perverted, become prejudicial in proportion to their value. In conformity with this sentiment, the priesthood are ever represented, in the Bible, as a great blessing, or a great curse. They are the former, when they faithfully proclaim the truth; and the latter when, through fear or favor, they withhold it; or, when eschewing it, they propagate error. An influential part is ever assigned them, therefore, in promoting alike the temporal and spiritual welfare, or ruin of states. A vigilant eye is kept on their conduct.

The greatest blessings are promised to them, if faithful; the most awful curses are pronounced against them, if false to their trust. Mingled with these blessings and curses, there are also the most encouraging exhortations, to those in any degree faithful, to continue steadfast and unmovable in their momentous work. The text is an exhortation of this kind. The prophet was required by God to declare to the Jews, the hypocrisy of their pretended fasts, because in observing them, they exhibited the form of godliness, without its power. They fasted for strife and debate, and smote with the fist of wickedness, instead of loosening its bands, undoing the heavy burdens, letting the oppressed go free, and breaking every yoke. To animate His servants in urging home on their consciences, this their iniquity, Jehovah exhorted him to cry aloud, and spare not, but lift up his voice like a trumpet, and show His people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin. Thus virtually assuring him, that he need not be afraid firmly to proclaim His message, for God would be with him and support him, as subsequently, God in Christ promised His disciples to be with them always, even unto the end of the world. The text then, may be

considered, as enjoining a faithful boldness on every preacher of truth in reproofing sin. And it is to the means and manner of doing this duty, together with some appropriate motives for its faithful performance, that your attention is asked, in this discourse.

I have selected this subject as peculiarly appropriate to the present occasion, and the present times. It is, probably, well known to all of you, that much is said, at this day, both privately and publicly, concerning the comparative faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the clergy, in this respect. Not only many public prints in our own land, but travellers and journalists from other countries, have spoken, very freely and fully, on this topic. In some instances, even the clergy, themselves, have strongly and publicly blamed their brethren, as time-serving, and recreant to this part of their duty. Nor can it be reasonably doubted or denied, that we are peculiarly exposed to the temptation, either of reproofing iniquity in a wrong spirit, or of failing to condemn it with that firmness and energy demanded of us by God.

Under such circumstances, it becomes a very interesting and important duty,—and one especially appropriate to the ordination of a young Minis-



ter of the Gospel,—to inquire what directions are given in the Bible, to guide the preacher of the cross in exposing and reprovng sin. I may also add, that such a topic is well suited to the place in which we meet, where, amid the graves of those who encountered a weary pilgrimage of sea and land, amid storms and savages, for conscience sake, we may,—

*“Snatch from the ashes of our sires,  
The embers of their former fires,—”*

and feed the flame of our own zeal!

I. It will be my first object, then, to exhibit the instructions given in the Word of God to guide a preacher in exposing and reprovng sin. In endeavoring to do this, I am far from assuming infallibility, or pretending to entire freedom from all undue bias of mind, arising from the deceitfulness of my heart, or the feebleness of my understanding. It will be my single aim to show clearly that which guides my own conscience, in the performance of my own duty, with my present degree of light. Hoping, that if I succeed in doing this, I may afford some assistance to others, in forming their own conclusions.

The duty enjoined in the text clearly suggests the standard to direct in its performance. The ambassador of God is to show his people their sin. But sin is the transgression of the law. It is therefore to the law we are to resort, as the perfect and immutable standard, by which it is to be exposed and condemned. It is to the law of *God*, with its rewards and punishments, addressing itself to the hopes and fears of accountable free-agents, possessed of reason, conscience, and will, rendering them able to obey it, that we are to appeal whenever we would faithfully show men their transgressions. This is to be, to the preacher, what the lantern was to the Grecian philosopher, a light, ever to be borne with him, by which to distinguish the true characters of men. The more we examine it, the more admirably will it be found adapted to this purpose. It is perfect, converting the soul; sure, making wise the simple; right, rejoicing the heart; pure, enlightening the eyes.

But let us, to some extent, analyze this standard, that we may the more distinctly see its adaptation to the end proposed. It is first formally revealed to us in the ten commandments. These we are to maintain and enforce in convicting men

of sin. They are entirely efficacious for this purpose, being very comprehensive ; so that I think, it may be safely said, we cannot contemplate a single crime mentioned in the scriptures, which will not be seen to be an infraction of one or more of their specifications. Nor can we notice a single moral evil existing in human society, which cannot be shown to be such, because it involves the transgression of some one or other of them. These, then, we are to assert and urge, whenever we see them broken. Obeying each of them, while we thus urge them, as a sufficient guarantee against our reproving sin, in a wrong spirit. We are to assert them thus without fear or favor. We need not shrink from doing so, through any dread of consequences. They are the requirements of God, who knows all the relations of things, and has commanded these precepts to be kept, under every variety of circumstance, by every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

All the narratives of scripture are little else than illustrations of the happiness of obeying, and the misery of transgressing these precepts. Search the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; read those of Joseph, Saul, Jonathan, or David ; con the history of Israel, the chosen race, from