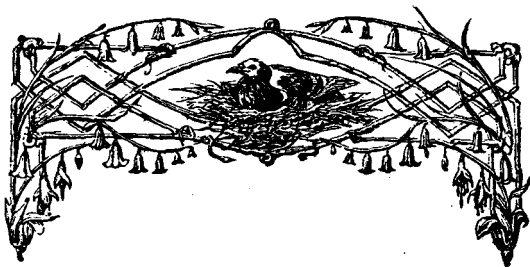


a community called ...

The Copyright law of the United States (title 17, United States code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specific conditions is that the photocopy of reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

By using this material, you are consenting to abide by this copyright policy. Any duplication, reproduction, or modification of this material without express written consent from Asbury Theological Seminary and/or the original publisher is prohibited.

© Asbury Theological Seminary 2011



GOOD COUNSELS FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

BY REV. W. S. PLUMER, D.D.

READER, I am a plain person. I have seen hard times. I have been cast upon the Lord from my birth. All my life I have been a child of Providence. I am familiar with poverty and hardship. My feelings have often been hurt by the gay and the proud. I have been sick among strangers. I have often wept when all around were merry. I have acquired a small share of knowledge. Some

2 GOOD COUNSELS FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

of it I know by experience to be valuable. Allow one who wishes you well to give you a few counsels.

1. Make it your chief concern to know and serve God. It is the very highest duty and glory of man upon earth to please the God that made him. Nothing is so important for this world or the next. "To know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, is life eternal." Tell me how a man lives, and I will tell you where his heart is; and tell me where his heart is, and I will tell you where his treasure is. This world and all it contains will soon be burned up. Woe to him that has no God, no Saviour, no hope beyond this life, and no care for his poor dying soul! If any man live for this world alone, it would be better for him if he had never been born.

2. Make yourself well acquainted with the whole word of God. Take up no prejudices against any part of Scripture. The part you slight may contain the very truth you most need to know. Try to learn all the promises and threatenings, all the doctrines and pre-

cepts, all the warnings and encouragements of Scripture. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." If you would know your own wants, study the law. "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation." You must know it if you would be saved. "All Scripture . . . is profitable." Learn as much of it as you can. "Let the word of God dwell in you richly."

3. Begin every day aright. Let God have your *first* thoughts. Beware of worldly-mindedness when you first awake. An old experienced Christian can commonly tell how he is to spend the day by the state of his heart the first hour he is awake. One hour given to prayer, reading, self-examination, and meditation, when you first awake, is worth two hours later in the day.

4. Not only aim generally to do right, but always have before you some special object to gain, either for yourself or others. Beware of spending a day without a purpose. Have some plan clearly before you. Strive for the mastery over some sin. Get some clearer view of duty or privilege. A life spent with-

4 GOOD COUNSELS FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

out a purpose is always spent to no good purpose. Be sure your purposes do not fail, merely because you encounter difficulties in executing them. He who serves God with only that which costs him nothing, will meet with neither success nor reward.

5. Keep a strict watch over your motives. In God's sight a man is as his motives are. Wicked motives in good actions are like dead flies in sweet perfumes—they spoil every thing. If you are called to do much for the Church, there is great danger that Satan will tempt you to substitute toil for holiness. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Holiness is as much required under the Gospel as under the law.

6. Find out what is your proper place, and keep it. Let not the hand desire to do the offices of the head, for they are beyond its capacity. Let not the hand attempt to do the offices of the feet, for that would be degradation. Let every member know and keep his own place. "As a bird that wandereth from

his nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." As a general rule, God intends that we should glorify him in that sphere or trade to which we were accustomed before our conversion. "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." He who is given to change is full of disquiet, and seldom useful.

7. Watch carefully against ambition. It is a deadly foe to grace. "Seekest thou great things? Seek them not." If, like Diatrophes, you love to have the pre-eminence, it will not be long till some faithful servant of God, like Paul, will feel bound to reprove you and warn good men to shun you.

8. Be industrious in some regular and lawful business. John Wesley, and before him Philip Melancthon, said, "Idleness is the devil's workshop." Another has said, "The devil tempts all men; but the idle man tempts the devil." There is hardly a greater hinderance to the growth of grace than habits of sloth. No amount of wealth can justify laziness. "The way of the slothful man is as a

8 GOOD COUNSELS FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

hedge of thorns." "The desire of the slothful killeth him."

9. Avoid bad company. Many a man, who neither steals, nor swears, nor lies, is unfit to be a companion. "Tell me with whom thou goest," says a Spanish proverb, "and I will tell thee who thou art." Let your delight be in the excellent of the earth. Be a companion of them that fear God. "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed." You will and must have intercourse with men of bad characters; but make them not companions. A man may warm himself by a fire without putting the coals in his bosom.

10. Watch against sins of the tongue: they are very heinous, and very common. Discourage all tattling, and slander, and flattery, and consoriousness; and be careful you are not guilty of them yourself. Tale-hearing is often as bad as tale bearing. "As the north wind driveth away rain, so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." "Let your own habits, and the habits of your fam-

ily, (if you have one,) be far removed from evil-speaking. This will be no easy task: for "the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. . . . it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

11. Let no man rob you of holy time. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." He cannot be your friend who wishes you to offend God, and starve your own soul by mispending the Lord's day.

12. While nothing is more displeasing to God than ostentation and vain glory, yet we must be bold in the Lord. Cowards in the Christian warfare will fare even worse than cowards in carnal wars. True courage is essential to success, whenever we have enemies to oppose us. And who has so many or so bitter enemies as the child of God? All hell, most of earth, and the remains of the old man

8 GOOD COUNSELS FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

within, oppose him. But let him not be dismayed. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" No man can trust too little to himself; but no man can trust too much in God. "Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong," are watchwords to the hosts of God. Nothing ever yet lost a battle to a child of God, or, to the Church, but dastardly cowardice. "Have faith in God." Perhaps the very best prayer ever offered by the disciples was, "Lord, increase our faith."

13. Strive not to be *called*, but to *be*, a benefactor. Do good unto all men as you have opportunity.

"That man may last, but never lives,
Who all receives, but nothing gives;
Creation's blot, creation's blank,
Whom none can love, whom none can thank."

Hold not back your hand from good, because you cannot do some great thing. He that does all the good he can shall have his reward, and find his means of doing good increase. He who would dwell with Christ

forever, must, like Christ, "go about doing good." Confine not your works of kindness to your own denomination. Love all good men. Pity all bad men.

14. Think nothing beneath God's notice. He takes care of the young ravens. He gives the young lions their meat. He feeds the sparrows. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Be not afraid to ask for the guidance and the blessing of God in your smallest affairs. Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you. Watch the leadings of his hand. "He, that will observe the wonderful providences of God, shall have wonderful providences of God to observe." "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."

15. Beware of pride, that insidious, universal sin. It is the greatest of our enemies. Many a man can do and suffer much in a religious profession; but it requires true piety to enable a man to say, when he has done all that was commanded him, "I am an unprofit-

10 GOOD COUNSELS FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

able servant." "By the grace of God I am what I am." Nothing is more hateful to God than pride; and nothing is more pleasing to him than humility. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Several times in the Gospel is it said, "Whoso exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted." The way to rise high is to sink low. "He that is down need fear no fall."

16. Guard against levity, both of mind and manners. Cheerfulness is not unfriendly to piety; but levity is no less so than moroseness. The things of God, and the duties of life, are serious matters, and require serious care. To treat them, or act in them, with levity, is as contrary to good taste and sound reason, as to Scripture itself. A habit of foolish talking and jesting formed before conversion, is often very difficult to break. But the stronger the habit, the more need of strenuous effort.

17. Never do any thing of doubtful propriety. If you do not know what to do, do

nothing. Wait upon the Lord, and he will show you the right way. As to natural things, we often have to act in doubt. Not so in moral things; there the rule is, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned (condemned) if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin."

18. Think often of death. Some painful things connected with that subject are seldom removed without much reflection on it. Such thoughts will chasten your eagerness after many things that the world calls good. Any good man, who thinks much of death, must find himself quickened in his desire to be ready for the great and solemn change that awaits him. In this view it is of great use to read the dying experience of eminent servants of God. What Christian ever read the words of dying Stephen, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge;" or of Mr. Wesley, "The best of all is, God is with us," without having his

12 GOOD COUNSELS FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

purpose more fully set to live and die a servant of Christ?

19. Be careful to close every day with proper thoughts. If you belong to a family where you can control or influence its regulations, let its worship be over before every one is drowsy. Let your thoughts run over the business of the day, and eagerly inquire what has been sinful, and do what you can to amend it. Let every day be finished with prayer, and with a solemn reckoning with yourself. Let your accounts be settled with conscience. Leave nothing in such a state as to fill you with alarm, if at midnight the cry should be heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Blessed is he who shall always be ready to say, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

20. Let Jesus Christ be your Alpha and Omega, the first and last. The burden of Scripture is the person, character, work, sufferings, and kingdom of Christ. This is true, even of the Old Testament: "To him give all the prophets witness." The New Testament

is full of Christ. The first words of it are, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ." The last words in it are, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen." The contents are such as we should expect from such a beginning and such a close. The Gospel is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is the true God, and eternal life, the only-begotten of the Father, God's dear Son; the Saviour, Redeemer, Advocate, Brother, Friend, Prophet, Priest, King, Shepherd, Mediator, and Physician, of all who trust in him. He is the "Way, the truth, and the life." "No man cometh unto the Father, but by him." To all his people he is made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He is our life, in him we have all things, because he is heir of all things. He shall be the Judge of the world. Study his character. You may easily think too much of some things. You cannot think too much of him. Make him all your hope and all your salvation. Walk as he walked. Be-

14 GOOD COUNSELS FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

lieve his promises. Accept his offers. Trust his grace. Rely on his precious blood and righteousness for pardon and acceptance. Be sure that you believe on him as an all-sufficient Saviour, as the only Saviour. Let him be precious to you: he ought to be. His name is as ointment poured forth. I wonder that all men do not love him. I wonder more that pardoned sinners are not more carried away with his love. I wonder, most of all, that I am so cold in my affections toward him. O make much of Christ!

And now, dear reader, "give all diligence to add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . If ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the

everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Grace, mercy, and peace, be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

"My first great business on earth is the sanctification of my own soul."—*H. Martyn.*

"Hypocrisy delights in the most sublime speculation, for, never intending to go beyond speculation, it costs nothing to have it magnificent."—*Burke.*

"If you have lost a child or a friend, take heed that you do not lose your affliction also."—*Jay.*

"He who refuses to obey the truth, loses his power of discerning truth."—*Augustine.*

"There is nothing gained by stealing, and there is nothing lost by praying."—*Dutch Proverb.*

"God is sometimes found of them that seek him not; but he is always found of them that seek him."—*M. Henry.*

16 GOOD COUNSELS FOR PLAIN PEOPLE.

“The wisdom of man lies not in satirizing the vices of others, but in correcting his own.”

—*Milner.*

“Gospel holiness includes a heart broken for sin, a heart broken off from sin, and a perpetual conflict with sin.—*Medley.*”

HUNT & EATON,
150 Fifth Ave., New York.

CRANSTON & STOWE,
190 W. Fourth St., Cincinnati, O.