

*Mrs Sherman Baldwin*  
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SUPREME DEVOTEDNESS TO CHRIST.

10<sup>th</sup> PMct

**A SERMON,**

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

**DAVID I. BURR,**

FOR MANY YEARS A RULING ELDER OF THE

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH;**

AND ON ITS DIVISION, OF THE

**FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,**

RICHMOND—VA.

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By **REV. WM. J. ARMSTRONG,**  
FORMERLY PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH.

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RICHMOND:  
PRINTED BY WM. MACFARLANE.

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## SERMON.

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*Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

[ROMANS XIV. 8.]

Every rational man has some great commanding object of pursuit. Love to this object, is the master passion of his soul. Its attainment is the ruling purpose of his life. Its supremacy over his affections may be more or less entire, constant, and permanent. Thus his course of life will be uniform and consistent with itself, or irresolute and fickle in a greater or less degree. But whatever may be, at any time, his ruling purpose, it will subdue every thing else to its dominion. It will mark out his line of conduct. It will give complexion to his influence upon others. It will form his character, ripen him for his last interview with his Judge, and fix his sentence at the supreme tribunal, and his eternal portion. Wealth may be that object, and the man bears the character and moves onward to the doom of covetousness. Or it may be power and influence over other men, and he is ambitious. Or human applause, and he is vain. Or earthly pleasure, and he is luxurious and sensual. Such is the law of human nature. The christian forms no exception to it. He too, has his commanding object of pursuit. A great ruling purpose controls and guides and animates him. Christ is that object. To please and honor Christ, and to be like him, is that purpose. To this every thing else is subordinate in his judgment, every thing else is made subservient in his plans. He looks at Christ, and his affections kindle, and his heart glows with esteem, and gratitude, and desire. Conformity to Christ, communion with Christ, this is the luminous point where his hopes centre, and his desires and efforts terminate. Thus the apostle teaches of himself, and of all true christians in the text,

He had spoken in the context of things, in themselves indifferent. And he exhorts Christians not to love each other less, because their opinions and practices in such matters were not alike. For, saith he, we are one in spirit and purpose. We do not seek, each to gratify his own caprices, or to promote his private, selfish ends. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth unto himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." It must be so, he adds, for Christ died and rose, and ever liveth, for this very purpose, that he might bind redeemed sinners to himself in bonds of love supreme, and confidence unlimited, and universal, cheerful, perpetual obedience.

Supreme devotion to Christ, entire consecration to his service, prompted by supreme love to him, is the topic of the text and that to which your attention is invited.

Let us examine its principles, and its appropriate manifestations as they exist in the heart of the true Christian, and are embodied and set forth in his life.

The christian lives unto Christ, *because Christ and his cause, are worthy to be the end and object of his life.* Once he dwelt in darkness. Sin blinded his mind, and hardened his heart. Then Christ was to him "a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness, having no beauty, that he should desire him." But, the Holy Spirit enlightens believers in the knowledge of Christ. He takes the things of Christ, and shows them to such as yield to his gracious influences, in their spiritual excellence and beauty. Then they discern in his person, character, and work, and in that kingdom which he begins in time and makes perfect in eternity, a divine beauty, a surpassing loveliness, which command their cordial esteem and approbation. Thus taught of God, the believer sees in Christ, the king of glory. However, he may doubt as to his personal interest in Christ, he has no doubt that Christ is worthy of all esteem and confidence. He knows that Christ is "the chief among ten-thousands—one altogether lovely." The Bible teaches him

that holy beings in heaven, regard Christ as worthy of all honor and praise, and that the blessed God himself pronounces him, his "beloved son in whom he is well pleased," has crowned him with glory and honor, and by him, and for him, has put forth all those manifestations of his power, wisdom, and love, which shine in the plan of salvation, fill the heavenly world with wonder and joy, and will be celebrated in the everlasting anthems of the blest. He lives to Christ, because Christ and his cause is the highest, noblest object for which he can live, most worthy of his heart and life, of his entire and joyful and perpetual self-consecration.

Again, he lives unto Christ, because, *he feels bound to such a course, by the most sacred obligations of duty and gratitude.* He had destroyed himself. And Christ has redeemed him with his own blood. From the penalty of a broken law, from the frown of a righteous God, from the upbraiding of a guilty conscience, from the hopeless thralldom of selfish, wicked passions, appetites, and habits, from the everlasting, intolerable bondage of conscious pollution, shame, remorse, despair, Christ hath rescued him by the efficacy of his atoning blood, and through his prevalent intercession; and by the power of his spirit and his word, hath called him, and justified him freely by his grace; and created him anew unto good works; and made him a child of God and an heir of eternal life; and sealed him for the day of complete redemption; and crowned him with countless blessings temporal and spiritual; and taught him to cherish hopes full of immortality. And every conviction of duty, every feeling of gratitude, every tie that can bind the allegiance of a pardoned sinner to the throne of a forgiving God, constrains him to live unto Christ, to consecrate himself to his service, and to seek his honor, and the promotion of his cause, as the great end of life.

In the last place, the believer beholds in Christ, *the only name under heaven given among men, whereby a sinner can be saved.* The only hope of a world dark, polluted, guilty, perishing in sin, under the wrath of God. All his hopes of the present happiness and the eternal well-being of himself and of all his fellow-men, hang upon Christ. They are inseparable from the honor of Christ in

the prosperity of his kingdom, and the accomplishment of those blessed purposes for which he died. The everlasting interests of his own immortal soul, and of the immortal souls of his fellow-men, are bound up in this object, are absolutely identified with it. Therefore, it is as dear to the believer, as his own eternal happiness, and that of all his fellow-travellers to eternity. Thus every perception of moral excellence and beauty, every feeling of obligation, and every enlightened view of the value of the soul and the preciousness of its redemption, constrain the believer, „whether he lives, to live unto the Lord, or whether he dies, to die unto the Lord, that living, and dying, he may be the Lord's." And he does consecrate himself to the service of Christ, and live to the honor of his name and for the promotion of his cause. Not perfectly indeed, nor at all times with equal fixedness of purpose, and ardor of affection. It is his sin, and burden, and sorrow, that he does not. But sincerely, earnestly, perseveringly, and with an enlightened zeal, constancy, and cheerfulness, that increase, and gain a mastery over him more and more entire and undisputed as he grows in grace and ripens for his Redeemer's presence.

Let us now inquire, how this supreme devotion to Christ, will be expressed and manifested in the believer's life.

*It will lead to diligent, persevering effort in the cultivation of personal holiness.* He will take Christ as his pattern, and labor to be conformed in spirit, conversation, and conduct to his example. He knows that Christ died for this end, that "he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." That Christ is honored when those who have named his name, depart from all iniquity. That without exemplary holiness, he can neither enjoy communion with Christ, nor commend him to his fellow-sinners; nor rejoice in a well-founded hope that when Christ shall appear, he shall appear with him in glory. And he watches, and prays, and strives against sin. "The grace of God which bringeth salvation, teaches him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to live a righteous, sober, and godly life. Love to Christ is in him the living spring of a virtuous self-control and self-discip-

line, reaching all his secret thoughts and desires and purposes, and sending its pure streams along those retired and silent paths, apart from the notice of men, when he is alone with God. Meekness, humility, gentleness, patience, tenderness of conscience, disinterested kindness, uncompromising integrity, prayerful trust in God, are some of its appropriate fruits in the personal character of him who lives unto the Lord.

In his social relations, and interests, and duties, the same principle will lead the servant of Christ, *to seek first for others and specially for those who are most dear to him, the same blessings in which he finds his own happiness.* His daily, personal influence upon others will be consecrated to the honor of Christ, and to their spiritual, everlasting welfare. As a parent, a brother, a friend, a neighbor, a church member, he will live unto Christ. He will aim to lead those around him to Christ, and to promote in them communion with the Saviour and conformity to his will. It is a mistake to think of supreme devotedness to Christ, as having scope only on great occasions, and in signal services, and public arduous exertions, and sacrifices. Look at that affectionate mother persevering day by day in her kind, patient, prayerful efforts to train up her dear little ones for Christ; instructing, reproofing, exhorting, cheering, with a love that never tires; sparing no pains, shrinking from no self-denial, by which she may train them up, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.—There is devotedness to Christ.

Observe, that faithful teacher in the Sabbath School, toiling month after month and from year to year, for the salvation of his class; following them through the week with his affectionate solicitude for their welfare; bearing them upon his heart to the mercy seat; gathering them around him on the Sabbath and pointing them to the Lamb of God, with an earnest untiring love, which all their thoughtlessness, and selfwill, and perverseness cannot disconcert or dishearten.—There is devotedness to Christ.

Follow that disciple of the Saviour, as he explores the cheerless, loathsome haunts of sordid poverty, or crime, ministering to



the wants of the wretched, and with accents of kindness warning them and inviting them to Christ. Go with him to the chamber of sickness, kneel with him at the bedside of the dying, little regarding time, or labor, or personal exposure, if he may alleviate their sufferings, and promote the honor of Christ in their salvation. There is devotedness to Christ.

In these and a thousand other scenes of familiar occurrence and in common life, supreme devotedness to Christ, finds room and occasion for expressions as genuine and acceptable to him, as in the life of the missionary, or the death of the martyr.

Yet, *this is the principle for great occasions.* It prompts to large and comprehensive plans for the glory of Christ, in the execution of the purposes of everlasting love toward a world lying in wickedness. No enterprise sanctioned by the word of God, is too vast and arduous for it. No sacrifice or self-denial, called for by Christ's authority, too severe. It animated the early disciples of Christ, in labors, self-denial, and sufferings for the propagation of his gospel, which to this day fill the devout mind with gratitude, and the profane, with amazement. It is still the same, in all its practical tendencies, and appropriate expressions. He who is supremely devoted to Christ, will esteem it his privilege and honor, no less than his duty, to give his influence and efforts in the sphere where God has placed him and according to the means he has bestowed upon him, to the instruction of the ignorant, the relief of the degraded, the reformation of the erring, and the salvation of the perishing, all over the world. In this he will persevere, not counting even his life dear unto himself in comparison with the great object for which he lives, until he finishes his course with joy; or till the blessed work of heavenly mercy is complete, "and the kingdoms of this world, are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." This is the principle, which in our own day, has carried forth many from the bosom of our churches, from the intelligence, refinement, freedom, and security of their native land, from kindred and friends, affectionate and beloved, to dwell in lands of darkness, pollution, and blood, exposed to the lawless caprices of

despotic power or to the ferocity of untutored savages, in obedience to Christ's command, and for the honor of his name, in the publication of his gospel. By this principle are they sustained through years of protracted toil, in sickly climes, with feeble health, amid surrounding indifference, or contempt. This is the principle which must prompt others to take their places, and bear onward the work of mercy, and by whose operation in the churches they must have secured to them that affectionate sympathy, and fervent prayer, and generous support, which are due to them as active laborers, and patient sufferers in the common cause; and without which they must, to a great extent, labor in vain and spend their strength for nought. It was by supreme devotion to Christ, in the hearts of his people, that the world was once subdued to the obedience of faith. And it is the same principle, by which, with the promised blessing of God, every form of superstition and error, that now reigns in the dark places of the earth, defying God, and destroying man, is to be subverted and destroyed; and a renovated world, radiant with truth and love, be made to rejoice in the smile of him who saith, "Behold I make all things new."

Such is Christian character in its essential elements, and its great leading features as it is created and developed in the true disciples of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, accompanying the word of God, and the dispensations of his providence; forming "Christ in them the hope of glory," and teaching them so to walk as Christ hath left them an example. It has many counterfeits. When it is genuine, it is ever in this world more or less immature, and imperfect. It is marred by many imperfections and often obscured and misunderstood. Yet it is "the light of the world" and "the salt of the earth." Far more to be relied on, and confided in, for all that is pure and lovely and of good report, all that is generous, manly, and public spirited, than the fairest specimens of character ever formed by the lessons of philosophy, or the maxims of worldly honor and prudence, or the impulses of native kindness of feeling and gentleness of temper.

"Talk they of morals, O thou bleeding love,"  
 "The best morality is love of thee!"

Supreme devotedness to Christ, is the noblest and the most benign principle that ever swayed the heart, and governed the life, and formed the character of man. It has done more for the present improvement and happiness of mankind, and for their future eternal welfare, than all other principles put together. It is now doing more, by intelligent, voluntary effort and self-denial for these objects. A day is coming, whose clear and searching light shall reveal the deformity of pride, ambition, the love of fame, and all the selfish principles which an ungodly world admires. But when all their most splendid exhibitions are put to shame, supreme devotion to Christ will shine out, in cloudless everlasting beauty, admired of all holy beings, and smiled upon with infinite complacency by the holy, blessed God.

The power of this principle was manifest in no ordinary degree in the character of that respected and beloved brother, long the senior member of the session of the First Presbyterian church in this city, whose recent removal to a better world, it is our special business this morning to meditate upon, to the honor of the grace of God in him, and for our instruction and encouragement in the services of Christ.

DAVID I. BURR, was a native of Connecticut. He was early bereft of his pious parents and cast upon his own resources and the blessing of God, for his success in life. When quite a youth, he came to this city, more than thirty years ago, and with the exception of a brief interval, this was his home, until he finished his work and obeyed his master's call to go hence. In 1811 he made a public profession of faith in Christ, and united with the Presbyterian church of Polegreen, in Hanover co., then under the pastoral care of the Rev. John D. Blair. He took an active part in the several steps which led to the formation of the First Presbyterian church in this city. When it was organized in 1812, under the pastoral care of the Rev. John H. Rice, D. D., he was one of the little



band who associated together, and set up their banners in the name of the Lord. He was soon after chosen a ruling elder in that church. That office he filled, except during the brief interval of his absence from the city already alluded to, with growing usefulness, until the late unhappy division in that church.

His physical constitution was delicate and frail. For many years his health was very feeble and precarious. To those who knew his bodily infirmities, it was surprising how he could perform so much labor of various kinds, for so many years. It was only by the strictest temperance and regularity in his mode of life, and great diligence and order in the employment of his time and strength that he was able to accomplish what he did. His early education was interrupted by the death of his parents. But he had a mind of uncommon force, activity, and clearness, and it was highly cultivated by reading, reflection, observation, and intercourse with refined and intelligent society. To a great extent he was self-educated, and he was remarkable for independence of thought, decision of purpose, firmness of principle, systematic arrangement, and open, straightforward, manly integrity. He had a fine taste, and enjoyed what was great and beautiful in nature and art with an exquisite relish.

He was naturally diffident, and his feelings, very acute and lively. Hence, having been early thrown among strangers, he formed a habit of reserve and silence, as to his own feelings and interests. To those who did not know him, this often seemed like coldness or pride. But his heart was large, generous, and warm. He was slow in forming his opinions, on subjects with which he was not perfectly familiar, and cautious in expressing them. But in all matters which he had studied, his judgment was excellent. Like most men, who think for themselves, he was tenacious of opinions and attachments once formed. His firmness and decision, and his prompt and strong recoil from every thing unfair and unmanly, sometimes seemed abrupt, positive, or self-willed, but never obtrusive, or overbearing.

These traits of character were softened, refined, ennobled, and consecrated to the service of God, by the love of Christ, and the power of his gospel. His first profession of religion was the result mainly of a diligent study of the Bible, and through life he was unwearied in searching the Holy Scriptures. As a christian he was remarkable for the distinctness and steadiness of his religious principles, and for their pervading, controlling power over him. Revealed truth formed the basis of his whole character.— It was embodied in his daily walk and conversation, in his family, his business, his social intercourse, and his relations to the church and to the world. It governed his temper, his speech, his plans, his conduct. No man felt injuries, or insults more keenly than he, yet he bore them with meekness, silence, and a readiness to forgive. To the poor, the suffering, the sorrowful, he kindly gave, not merely money, when that was needed, but sympathy, counsel, and labor for their good. His religious affections were calm, steady, and cheerful, rather than fluctuating, or violent. To plans for doing good, he gave patient attention and a candid examination, and if his judgment approved them, generous and steady support. He loved the society of christian friends, and the circle of social prayer and praise. For ten years that I enjoyed the happiness of an intimate acquaintance with him as his pastor and personal friend, his growth in grace was steady; and I do not know that I ever saw in any one, the blessed fruits of afflictions, giving maturity to christian character, and devout tenderness to christian feeling, more manifest than they were in him. What he was as a brother, a parent, a husband, I will not attempt to say. The silent tears which will long flow at the mention of his name, and the almost religious veneration for his memory, which pervades the hallowed circle of domestic love, tell in touching accents how much he was beloved, confided in, and honored there.

As an officer in the church, he was punctual to every appointment, kind and courteous to his brethren, patient of labor, tender of the feelings and reputation of others, acute and discriminating

in investigation, judicious, and safe in counsel, cautious, yet firm in decision, prompt and diligent in action, and ever ready to bear his full share of responsibility of whatever kind.

Allow me, in passing, to say a word of that church session, of which he was long the senior member. During ten years, I had the honor, to sit as its moderator, and I have never known a body of men, more harmonious and united in plans and action, more tenderly solicitous for the welfare of the church which had chosen them to watch over it, more ready to bear each others burdens, and to provoke one another to love and to good works; *more kind and respectful to their pastor*, or more worthy the entire confidence of all their brethren for doctrinal soundness, enlightened attachment to presbyterian order, and practical piety and wisdom. I esteem it one of the chief mercies of my life, to have been so long and so intimately associated with them, and the union of hearts formed, will, I trust, be perfect and perpetual in a better world.

Our departed friend felt a decided preference for that church of which, upon intelligent conviction, he was a member. That preference he was ready on proper occasions to avow. But he had room in his heart for all who bore his Saviour's image. He loved to co-operate with christian brethren of other denominations in efforts to do good to men, and to build up the kingdom of our common Lord. He was the early, steadfast, and liberal friend, of the great enterprises of benevolence which adorn the age. To their interests he devoted much time and labor, for many years. No where had they a patron whose pecuniary contributions, in proportion to his means, were more generous. He was long a manager of the Va. Bible Society; the Va. Colonization Society; and the Va. Temperance Society. To this last institution he gave largely both labor and money. He was an active, liberal friend of education, especially education for the gospel ministry. For many years he was Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Domestic Missionary Society of East Hanover Presbytery. He held the same place in the Executive Committee of the Central Board of Foreign Missions, from its first organization, until his death.

To this last cause, his attachments were early and very strong. The late J. Evarts, Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was his relative, and his intimate and very dear friend. It may have been owing partly to this circumstance that Mr. Burr was for many years, perhaps the largest contributor to that Board in the state. His patronage of all these philanthropic institutions was the result of intelligent principle, and it was judicious, steady, and permanent. In these things too, as in his kindness and hospitality to strangers, especially to the sick and suffering, he was wholly free from ostentation. He seemed to feel that he was but performing his duty, and in so doing, giving scope to the feelings of a heart warm with christian love and that he was rather receiving than conferring a favor. He did an act of kindness with peculiar delicacy. Of many such acts performed at no small expense of self-denial, there is no other record than in the grateful hearts of those who felt his kindness and in the book that shall be opened at a coming day. Many men seem, to casual observers, better than they are. Of him the reverse was true. It was perhaps a fault, certainly a defect in his character, that while he was intent on being good and doing good, he did not sometimes take more pains to appear so.

But it is time to draw this hasty sketch to a close. It will perhaps be expected that I should say something of the part he took in the distressing controversies which agitate the Presbyterian church. On such a topic, I would not dare in this place and on this occasion, to say a word, to serve the interests of any party. Yet it is due to his memory, to express my full conviction, that he formed no opinion, and took no step, which was not the result of patient, candid examination, and of a clear conscientious persuasion of truth and duty—and to declare, that to my certain knowledge, the course he pursued, had his own, full, decided, unhesitating approbation, on his sick and dying bed, and to the very last expression concerning it, that ever fell from his lips. The painful disease which terminated his useful life, produced a morbid depression of spirits and cast its sombre shadows over his sick couch and around his departing spirit. But amid that gloom the strength and

genuineness of his christian character, the inwrought, spontaneous emotions of a holy heart, were scarcely less impressive, than amid the bright hope and blessed foretastes of everlasting life, which cheered him some years since, when for many days together, he lay, to his own apprehension and to that of those around him, at the threshold of eternity. Through his severe, protracted sufferings, there was a meekness, a patience, a gentleness, an humble, thankful submission for the most part, a tranquil, peaceful frame of mind, which was a fit close to his useful, devoted life.

“He rests from his labors and his works do follow him.” His memory is blessed; his example should be a treasure to all who knew him. Let us, dear brethren, be admonished—we are passing rapidly away. Goddard is gone, and Burr is gone, and many, who once sat with them at the table of the Lord, and received at their hands, the emblems of his love. Soon we shall follow them. This, I say brethren, the time is short. The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer.

Let us be comforted. Those who loved Christ and whom we loved, are not lost. They die unto the Lord, as they lived unto the Lord. Living and dying they are his; and shall he not take them to himself, to a fellowship with him and with his ransomed ones, more intimate, uninterrupted, and blissful, than earth can know, or flesh and blood support? O what a society is that, into which God gathers all that is pure and lovely out of this world, and where the Saviour’s image shines with perfect, everlasting beauty in all his redeemed ones!—No sin is there; no weakness, nor pain, nor sorrow!

“There everlasting spring abides,  
And never withering flowers.”

Shall any of us be shut out at last from those abodes? Excluded from that society? Swept away in our sins, with all that is polluted and hateful, all the dross and refuse of creation, to be fuel for everlasting burnings!

Let us all live unto the Lord, that we may die unto the Lord, and dwell with him in the mansions he prepares for them that love him.





