

Wars and Rumors of Wars.

21.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE UNION CHURCH IN GROTON, MASS.,

On Sunday, April 21st., 1861.

BY THE PASTOR,

REV. EDWIN A. BULKLEY.

CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED BY MILES AND DILLINGHAM.

1861.

4486.c.c.18  
21.

Wars and Rumors of Wars.

---

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE UNION CHURCH IN GROTON, MASS.,

On Sunday, April 21st., 1861,

BY THE PASTOR,

REV. EDWIN A. BULKLEY. *K*

---

CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED BY MILES AND DILLINGHAM.

1861.



REV. EDWIN A. BULKLEY,

PASTOR OF THE UNION CHURCH IN GROTON : —

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR, — We take this opportunity to thank you for the sermon preached by you to your congregation on the morning of the 21st day of April last, and since repeated at South Groton. The sentiments you expressed we heartily approve, as befitting that Christian patriotism and manliness which are in no respect inconsistent with godliness. It is desirable, we think, to preserve the discourse, not only for its merit, but as an historical memorial of the action of this community and of the sentiments uttered in your pulpit on this grave occasion ; when the anniversary of the opening of the war for our national independence at Concord and Lexington has been commemorated and hallowed anew by the blood of Massachusetts men, shed in Baltimore at the opening of the war for free, constitutional government.

If it is convenient for you, we desire you to furnish for publication a copy of this discourse, with such notes as you may think fit to add in explanation.

Groton, May, 1861.

JOSHUA GREEN,	ELIEL SHUMWAY,
ANDREW ROBBINS,	GEORGE FARNSWORTH,
JONATHAN S. ADAMS,	DANIEL BUTLEE,
W. H. PRICHARD,	MILES SPAULDING,
RUFUS MOORS,	WILLARD TORREY,
JOHN ROCKWOOD,	JOSEPH F. HALL,
JOSIAH K. BENNETT.	

GENTLEMEN : — In consenting to the publication of the discourse to which you allude, I must be controlled by your judgment of its value, rather than by my own conviction of its unworthiness to live beyond the occasion which produced it. But if you choose to give it more permanence, as a memento of stirring days in our history, and as a testimony of patriotic and Christian sympathy with those who have gone from us for the country's sake, I do not feel that I can refuse your request.

With much respect, yours,

EDWIN A. BULKLEY.

To DR. JOSHUA GREEN and others.

# S E R M O N .

---

MARK XIII. 7.—“AND WHEN YE SHALL HEAR OF WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS, BE YE NOT TROUBLED.”

WAR must always spread alarm and terror. When remote and dimly imagined, it may be calmly contemplated, — lightly spoken of, — vauntingly invited. But let it draw near, rearing its “grim visage” and “horrid front” directly before us, — we must shudder and be dismayed at the sight. All attempts to characterize its fearful features fail from feebleness. Who can picture, so that it shall fully correspond to the reality, the sorrow that falls upon happy homes, when the note of strife calls from them husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, to the weary march, the sickly camp, the bloody and death-dealing battle; or the checking and paralyzing of peaceful industry; or the waste of treasure in the costly support of the conflict; or the havoc and destruction that follow in the track of advancing armies; or the demoralizing of men by inflaming their baser passions; or the sacrifice of human lives; or the hurrying of immortal spirits from earth? Many a one is fascinated by the gay trappings of the soldiers and the exhilarating sound of martial music, and proudly bears himself in the imposing parade, under flaunting flags, with glittering weapons and thundering salutes, and mock contests. But it is a matter different from this summer soldiering, when he puts on his equipments and takes his arms for real service, parts from the dear ones who will attend him with their agonizing fears, goes forth to en-

counter the dread risks, the imminent perils of sanguinary warfare, which is sure to call relentlessly for its many victims.

The present generation has not had that acquaintance with war, which is sufficient for the realization of it. A few of the elders can recall the last contest with Great Britain, and tell its incidents movingly. Most are familiar with the history of our invasion of a neighboring nation, and the series of battles, with which it was rapidly made to yield to the demands upon it. And we have been accustomed to trace with interest the conflicts of European powers, to maintain themselves, or advance their political designs. These occurrences, however, belong so much to the past, or have transpired at such a distance from us, that the character and effects of war are all unexperienced by us.

And now we are called to get the bitter, disastrous knowledge, at a time, and in a form, from which we would fain have been spared. The government which we had hoped was securely established, is shaken to its very foundation by treason and rebellion. The evils which have most endangered it, and which we desired to have removed by more peaceful measures, rush upon us either to overwhelm us, or to be beaten back by the most costly resistance. The high prosperity which was our happiness and boast is suspended, and may soon be exchanged for the heaviest calamity. The most deplorable of all conflicts, — not with foreign foes, but with countrymen, — has begun, and seems likely, unless something most unexpected intervene, and all prophecy be at fault, to grow into a protracted and bloody war, such as the land has never known, and the world shall look upon with excitement and astonishment. The distressing reality has come home to us, for it has summoned from the midst of us, our neighbors and friends, hastening them afar off to points of peril, with scarcely time for a farewell. And again, with little doubt, shall we be called to send forth from our people, others to uphold, and perchance to be sacrificed for their country.

It is vain to say that we are not sorely troubled by these things. Our roused spirits sustain us, and we press on with animation and vigor, in the duties which the moment demands. Patriotism is all afire, and declares itself prompt to meet any

expenditure cheerfully. The very heart of the nation is quivering and beating, and sending a hot and swift life-current to every individual, with only the rarest and meanest exception of one, who has no sympathy with the nation's trial, and delights in reproaching the political opponents, by whom he thinks the catastrophe has been brought on. But in every hour of sober reflection, our hearts are disquieted within us at the solemnity of the issues before us,— the tremendous consequences that may soon be developed, — the responsibilities and sacrifices that may come upon us personally and socially. There is an unwonted disturbance of feeling ; — with the high excitement that buoys us up, — heavy solicitude, dark forebodings ; — the trouble, not of alarmed and shrinking spirits, but of those, who have much at stake, and are seriously alive to all the circumstances of their situation, all the uncertainties of the future. We are in a condition which makes us need and crave to hear such a voice as the Saviour's saying, " Be ye not troubled."

At such a time, I think one source of trouble to him who desires to be governed by the principles of Christian charity, is in the rising of vindictive passions. We may righteously be indignant at crime ; and so high a crime as conspiring against an equitable government like ours deserves positive opposition, even hatred. We have great provocation to anger, when the patient endurance of rebellion has only encouraged its aggressions. Those with whom we are contending have undeniably shown themselves enemies, bent upon executing their perverse designs, with a spirit of hostility which will scruple at no means to its end. Yet one feels, in moments when the force of excitement is spent, and we pass out of the tumult raised by the news of the most recent wrongs, that he must quell the vengeful wrath that is inflamed within him, and not go beyond the just vindication of the right and punishment of the wrong. We are of a truth assaulted by foes, and that most dangerously ; but we must not contend with them in spiteful retaliation, but in that dignity and self-control which supports us in accusing and vanquishing evil doers ; nor in fiery haste, but with a painful necessity urging us, reluctantly yet surely, to visit iniquity with its fit penalties. Our present opponents are enemies indeed,



but let us not contend with them in the rush of heated blood, forgetting that once we called them brethren and compatriots. Let us try and regard their blindness and madness, with a full determination to stop the ruin they would bring upon us, — all revenge, and all desire to gratify mere animosity, being purged away from it. So shall we have the peace of calmer minds, and the support of clearer consciences.

Not unlikely, some may also be discouraged by the doubtful prospect of the right's prevailing. One indeed trembles with consternation, when wrong is so daring and seems to add success to success. It is fearfully asked, whether it is not about to strike down and extinguish all for which we have toiled and striven, in the advancement of righteousness and humanity. When it is so powerful and malignant, we apprehend that weary periods must elapse, before victory can be with the right; even if that ultimately come to the predominance. If these views trouble us, we are in need of those quieting and sustaining considerations, which will teach us to bear reverses, — sometimes as disciplinary and punitive; — or as incidental to the slow unfolding of providential designs; — or as prelude to a speedy triumph. Any such forebodings as visit us, are gloomy enough to call for immediate dispelling.

Very naturally too, we may have some trepidation and alarm in view of the gathering horrors of the strife. These may not be cowardly fears, but an uncontrollable shrinking from the appalling realities. Such is not a craven spirit; for the highest courage is that which clearly scans and adequately measures all that is dangerous and terrible, and with the distinct apprehension, dares to go on and meet it. It is no strange or reproachful thing, to be troubled by dark visions of woe and calamity which we see moving towards us. Who would not pray to be withdrawn from the scenes of blood and death, — of wide-spread ruin and distressing disaster, which we anticipate are about to involve our land and people!

Perhaps no thought of personal peril may disturb us. We do not expect to be assailed in our quiet homes, or interrupted in our peaceful pursuits. The ravages of war may not reach our houses and fields, and put us in any direct exposure. Yet

the surmise rises in our minds, that perchance some now sitting in this sanctuary, amid the hushed repose of the sacred Sabbath, besides those by whom the call has been obeyed, will by and by be in the midst of the raging tumult, surrounded by dangers, — brought face to face with death.

But with little thought of ourselves, we are busy with thoughts of others. We have sent them forth with a God-speed on our quivering lips, — patriotism rising above affection, — so that we did not bid them disregard duty's call, or refuse the service their country claimed. We are following them in the restless, painful imagination of every hour, at each step of the way they are pursuing. We are cheered by the greeting and honor, which are given to their promptness and fidelity. We are harrowed by tidings of disaster quickly succeeding, which leave us with fearful uncertainties agitating our bosoms. And this must abide with us, — a perpetual, constantly reviving solicitude; and one prayer is rising from heart and tongue, "Cover their heads in the day of battle, and grant them safe deliverance and return."

Now, let us try and turn our distracted thoughts to such views of God's government and grace, as will tend to quiet and strengthen us.

For this purpose, we may endeavor to comprehend some of the ultimate designs which he has to accomplish, by our submission to the dread processes of suffering through which we are now called to pass. If we get glimpses of their wisdom and grandeur, we may the more cheerfully consent to the heavy expenditure by which they are secured.

It must be recollected, that the course of Providence, ordinarily operating quietly, is sometimes interrupted by terrific convulsions, which are indispensable to reaching its results. War is among the most fearful of evils, but is often a divinely appointed instrument for executing the highest purposes; and then we must let it do its work, — yes, and heartily forward it, by the severest painstaking. Whatever trials it imposes we should endure with ready acquiescence. We would rather far, that the unbroken reign of the Prince of Peace had been be-

gun, and that the gentle power of his love had redressed every wrong, dissolved all the bonds, and obtained the full regeneration of humanity. But when their benign influences have been set at nought, and the righteousness of Jehovah chooses to vindicate itself by terrible judgments in the land, it is ours to receive with quiet patience, what of them we have deserved for our sin, — and ours to bring to pass, what of them he intends by us to inflict upon others. Who doubts, — though we cannot discern or define it, — that God has some purpose of magnitude to fulfil for this nation, by the alarming events which are shaking it throughout; and in the assurance of this is it not the part of trustful subjects of his rule, to press forward with untroubled hearts, submissive even in their pains, in the way that leads to such an end? If there is rebuke administered to our connivance at, or feeble opposition to the iniquity which is the prime cause of our trials; then, surely it belongs to penitence to bow uncomplainingly, receiving the penalty of having let it grow so strong and defiant, through guilty yielding to its demands and aggressions. If this is retribution upon the injustice of the oppressors, — their immovable determination to persist in it; then, though we may pray that it may be mitigated, we cannot pray that it may be stayed, except upon repentance. If it is the approaching redemption of the enslaved, we must desire that that redemption be hastened, not delayed. Not one shade of darkness from the gathering gloom, not one item from the bill of costly expenditure can we take away; but to go through the pitchy night, and make the heavy outlay, we should readily yield ourselves, whether it be for our own chastisement, the judgment of others, or the endowment of our fellows with their rights.

Amid all the obscurities of the future, one thinks he may discover, that God will, if we are faithful to the responsibilities now upon us, — after having perhaps, humbled us, for our errors and transgressions, — lift us to a higher place in the earth. We perhaps shall have a smaller territory and population\*;

---

\* At the time of writing, this seemed a well-founded apprehension; but the unexampled unanimity with which the loyal States have risen for the support of the government, and declared for an undivided Union, permits the revived hope that the national domain will not be diminished.

but we shall come forth from the trial with a purer and firmer government; with constitutional obligations more clearly defined, and greater security from the success of treasonable plottings; and with some substantial gain for freedom, — perhaps the unlimited proclamation of it through all our boundaries. Shall we not then meet the appalling exigency of the hour, and resignedly bear its burdens and losses, to arrive at a higher prosperity? We shall reach a more honorable station; and the sufferings we endure, will be the steps of progress to it.

We are learning a lesson at great price, too great for our present estimation, — which yet will be worth the price, — the lesson of the danger of false security and carelessness with reference to trusts committed to us. Our vaunted prosperity has deluded us, and we have gone on, against the appeals and warnings of those who studiously watched the process of corruption, countenancing and defending evil, till it has introduced rottenness into politics and government, and justice and liberty have been frequently betrayed. No moral considerations addressed to the people have availed to check the ruinous progress. But now when wickedness, upon strong opposition to it, rises in its wrath, the land is appalled by its fearful daring, and is waking from its slumberous negligence, and shows that true patriotism is not dead beyond revival, nor sullied beyond purification. Perhaps nothing but such a crisis could have arrested the descent. And it is most profitable, though most severe, that we should engage in the fearful struggle that is upon us, to receive the renewing and training that we need.

But besides the calmness and strength supplied by views of the divine purposes, we may have such as result from appropriating his grace. We can commit ourselves and others to God's keeping, and no harm shall overtake us or them. Or if it be his will, against our will, that calamity should fall near us and upon us, he will alleviate our painful anticipations, fortify us against its coming, and uphold us from being crushed by its descent. No pledge is indeed given, that those who trust in the Lord, shall be wholly untouched of danger and shall escape all fatalities. He may appoint those, whom he loves best and

guards best, to be prostrated by calamity, — to sudden and violent misfortune and death. But there is a protection, beyond his ordinary providential oversight of men, which he grants to such as make him their defence. The promise has meaning and truth, that “He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways :— He shall cover thee with his feathers, — and under his wings shalt thou trust :— a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand ; but it shall not come nigh thee.” Nor is it fittest, in his view, — to spare us woful tidings of disaster, which raise agonizing fears, and perhaps are followed by the pain of confirmed reality. But ere they are heard, he will make provision against our being overwhelmed by them ; and when they fall on our ears, there will attend upon them such a measure of his soothing comfort and such a proffering of his supporting arm, that we cannot be wholly disquieted and utterly sink. With our present constitution, and surrounded by the liabilities of a sinful world, I do not know that we can apprehend or encounter all disaster with unruffled calmness, — with serene equanimity, — never having a painful imagination, or a pang of suffering at the reality of sorrow. The promise to keep in perfect peace cannot mean such a reversal of our natures. But can we not attain to such a recognition of the complete wisdom of God’s appointments, such an ever ready submission to his disposal of all things, such a possession of his sustaining and consoling grace, that we may live near to the greatest troubles, and have them actually befall us, and though we fear and grieve, yet be neither dismayed nor cast down, but stand quietly awaiting all forth-coming events. This is the refuge within the compass of Christian faith. To this covert from the tempest can it betake itself, when the wildest tumult rages without. Shall we not allay the heaving storm within us, by a fuller trust in him, whose eye is upon us and ours, whose presence is around us and ours ? Let us so draw from the resources of Christian confidence, that we shall not feel for ourselves, or for others, even with the tenderest solicitude of affection, any wild alarms or corroding anxieties, but shall rest in calm preparation for all the future.

Since the last quiet Sabbath day, my hearers, when we sat here anxiously awaiting, but not fully apprehending, what the next day would declare, our community, with every other in the land, has been vibrating with constantly intensified excitement. No rehearsal of its course and growth is necessary. It has been like the hurrying to and fro of the very same week eighty-six years ago, when the rallying cry of freedom followed the volleys of musketry on Lexington meeting-house hill. The renewal of that cry has been like a tocsin alarm, responded to with an alacrity, of which I am as proud, as I am ashamed that I had my birth and early boyhood within sight of Sumter's humiliated walls. There is no need of appeals to patriotism, in a town, which sent forth its men at the next dawn after the news, and in three days had them at the point of need, the first uniformed and armed body of State soldiers at the Capitol, fighting their way through a murderous mob, which carried wounds and deaths into their ranks.\*

There is no lack of patriotic hearts, when one commander,† prevented by years and uncontrollable circumstances from casting in his lot with his men, sends the three sons of his household to represent his name.

---

\* Fort Sumter was evacuated by its brave little garrison of less than one hundred men, on Sunday afternoon, April 14th, after sustaining an almost unintermitted bombardment of thirty-four hours, from seven thousand men, and powerful batteries. The President of the United States issued his proclamation on the 16th, calling for seventy-five thousand soldiers from the several States to suppress the rebellion. Late in the evening, — nearly midnight, — Captain Eusebius S. Clark received orders for his command, — Company B. of Groton, attached to the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment, — to proceed by railroad to Lowell in the morning. The men who were to be notified were scattered over this town, in its territorial extent one of the largest in the State, and some were found in adjoining towns. Early the next morning, in the midst of a storm, the Groton company joined its regiment, having a number of men, who together with some staff-officers of the regiment, had been connected with the congregation to which this discourse was addressed. They made rapid and triumphal progress towards Washington, until in Baltimore they were attacked by a ruffian crowd of enemies of government, and though they bravely pressed through, three of the regiment were killed, and several severely wounded. This was on the 19th of April, the anniversary of the battle of Lexington. A second time was Massachusetts blood the first to be spilled for freedom!

† Lieut. Colonel Walter Shattuck, of Groton.

My present duty is best discharged, by opening to you the sources of strength and comfort accessible to the believing heart, and from which we need to draw in this troublous hour of peril. The rapid unfolding of events has wildly agitated, and painfully distressed us; it has shocked and astounded us. And when the tide of excitement ebbs a little, we shall more deeply and sharply feel the force of the crisis that has come upon us, as we more clearly and seriously comprehend it. Then we shall understand that we need minds determined, but not vindictive; — saddened, but not discouraged by the prospects; — estimating fully the dangers of the case, yet unterrified; — trustfully reposing in the guardianship and support of heaven. It is but little likely in this connection, that the exercise of Christian confidence will be but temporarily required. If we do not misinterpret the omens, there are darker days and sorer trials of soul and spirit yet to come. Therefore we must summon up that courage, which proceeds not from the excitement or passion of the hour, but which is a divine fortitude, to dare and do, — endure and suffer all things needful for righteousness and freedom's sake. Let us prepare for cares and anxieties, losses and sacrifices, pains and agonies, that we now think not of, and which perhaps cannot be averted. As with those whom Christ would make ready for the tribulation that was coming upon them, these are probably only "the beginnings of sorrows," and the "end is not yet."

Far be it from me, to increase disturbance of mind by gloomy forebodings. But I would not, that disasters which impend and which will fall, except there be extraordinary interposition, should overtake us without our having fully at command what divine grace will give for our maintenance in peace. If any are destitute of Christian faith, let them get it, as a preparation for the day of trial. If any are weak in it, let them strengthen it, till it shall be equal to any emergency. Let us seek that calm, unfaltering trust in God, which beholds him presiding over confusion, and working out his own ends with majestic order, making all things, even the furious wrath of man, tributary to the progress and glory of his kingdom. Let us draw nigh to him, pressed closer by our troubles; — to lean upon his out-

stretched arm of defence and support, — to make his words of encouragement and comforting veritable to us, — to commit ourselves and all whom we are concerned, to the perfect security of his keeping.\*

And now, sir, I ask permission to address a few words directly to you, and to those whom you are about to lead forth in answer to the country's call. My friends! I feel assured that not merely the rush of public excitement, nor the impulse of the moment, and much less a blood-thirsty vindictiveness and relish for war, urges you to the conflict, to which you have cheerfully given yourselves. You know, that it is serious and solemn business that lies before you. You would much rather be spared the sorrowful necessity of wielding arms against those whom you have counted brethren, and have desired always to hold in the bonds of brotherhood. You look forward to labors, pains and perils, from which, though you be brave men, you naturally shrink. Yet you press on to the bitter duty, the unhappy strife with countrymen, and the fearful fortunes of war, because love of the noblest land of the earth and the most favored nation of history animates you. The government, established by our fathers in willing sacrifices and toils for liberty's sake, has bestowed too many and too costly blessings upon you, for you ungratefully to forsake it, in the hour of trial. You will stand by it, even with your lives, till anarchy be rebuked, rebellion put down, and treason punished. Therefore go forth, with God's benediction upon you, and our warmest sympathies attending you. Courage cannot fail you, when such motives prompt you. Success must follow you, with such purposes before you. Be of good heart; do battle valiantly with strong arms; let not the hate of man, but a consecration to freedom stimulate you; and of a surety, victory will crown you with its rewards.

---

\* The foregoing was repeated, with such verbal and extempore adaptations as made it suitable to the circumstances, before an audience in Union Hall, at South Groton, on Sunday afternoon, April 28th. A newly enlisted company under Captain L. G. King was present, and to them the following was addressed.



But I speak to men, who are not ignorant or unthoughtful of the risks that thron the pathway upon which they have entered. I will not raise alarms, by darkly picturing them. I will not doubt the steadfastness with which you will face them, though clearly perceiving them. Yet in anticipation of them, I must join with the words of saddening farewell, an earnest exhortation to make ready for them, by the Christian faith. Oh ! seek to know as your best preparation against the hour of danger, the security of those whose sins are pardoned through redeeming love, whose hopes of heaven are fixed on the Saviour's righteousness. You have enlisted under a chosen captain, as soldiers of the flag and government you love. Enlist also under the Captain of Salvation, as soldiers of the cross and the kingdom of the Redeemer of sinners. You will put on equipments by which you will be distinguished. Clothe yourselves likewise with the beautiful uniform of holy characters and lives. You will hold arms, and use them manfully in the day of battle. Take unto you also the whole armor of God, and fight against all the hosts of sin, which stand across the way to heaven and be faithful to the end, that God may give you the recompense of victors. Our loving thoughts and fervent prayers shall go with you. We bid you remember the divine promise and be stayed by it: "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and I will bring thee again into this land ; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." The Lord return you to us in peace, and at last, through the washing of redeeming blood, to that heavenly country, where there are no wars, nor rumors of wars.

9 JU 64