

THE JOYS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE CLOSING DISCOURSE OF THE REV. THEO.

L. CUYLER, D. D., IN THE LAFAYETTE AVENUE CHURCH, BROOKLYN,

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"For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy."—1 Thes. 2, 19-20.

These words were written by the most remarkable man in the annals of the Christian Church. Great interest is attached to them from the fact that they are part of the first inspired epistle that Paul ever wrote. Nay, more. The letter to the Church of Thessalonica is probably the earliest *et cetera* to date of all the books of the New Testament. Paul was then at Corinth, about 52 years old, in the full vigor of his splendid prime. His spiritual son Timothy brings him tidings from the infant church in Thessalonica that awakens his solicitude. He yearns to go and see them, but he cannot; so he determines to write to them, and one day he lays aside his tent needle, seizes his pen, and when that pen touches the papyrus sheet the New Testament begins. The Apostle's great, warm heart kindles and blazes as he goes on, and at length bursts out in this impassioned utterance: "Ye are my glory and joy."

Paul, I thank thee for a thousand things, but for nothing do I thank thee more than for that golden sentence. In these thrilling words, the greatest of Christian pastors, rising above the poverty, homelessness, and scorn that surrounded him, reaches forth his hands and grasps his royal diadem. No man shall rob the aged hero of his crown. No chaplet worn by a Roman conqueror in the hour of his brightest triumph rivals the coronal that pastor Paul see flashing before his eyes. It is a crown blazing with stars; every star an immortal soul plucked from the darkness of sin into the light and liberty of a child of God. Poor is he? He is making many rich. Despised is he? He wouldn't change places with Cæsar. Homeless is he? His citizenship is in heaven, where he will find myriads whom he can meet and say to them, "Ye, ye are my glory and joy." Sixteen centuries after Paul uttered these words, John Bunyan re-echoed them when he said, "I have counted as if I had goodly buildings in the places where my spiritual children were born. My heart has been so wrapt up in this excellent work, that I accounted myself more honored of God than if He had made me emperor of all the world, or the lord of all the glory of the earth without it.

He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, doth save a soul from death; and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament."

Now the great Apostle expressed what every ambassador of Christ constantly experiences when in the thick of the Master's work. His are the joys of acquisition. His purse may be scant, his teaching may be humble, the field of his labor may be so obscure that no bulletins of his achievements are ever proclaimed to an admiring world, difficulties may sadden and discouragement bring him to his knees, but I tell you that obscure, toiling man of God has joys vouchsafed to him that a Frederick or Marlborough never knew on the field of bloody triumph, or that a Rothschild never dreams of in his mansions of splendor, nor an Astor with his stores of gold. Every nugget of fresh truth discovered, makes him happier than one who has found golden spoil; every attentive auditor is a delight; every look of interest on a human countenance, flashes back to illuminate his own. Above all, when the tears of penitence course down a cheek, and a returning soul is led by him to the Saviour, there is great joy in heaven over a repentant wanderer; there is a joy in that minister's heart too exquisite to utter. Then he is repaid in full measure, pressed down, running over into his bosom. Converted souls are jewels in the caskets of faithful parents, teachers, and pastors. They shall flash in the diadem which the righteous Judge shall give them in that great day. Ah, it is when an ambassador of Christ sees an army of young converts, and listens to the first utterances of their new born love, and when he presides at a communion table and sees his spiritual offspring gathered around him, more true joy that faithful pastor feels, than "Cæsar with a Senate at his heels." Rutherford of Scotland only voiced the yearnings of every true pastor's heart, when he exclaimed, "O how rich were I if I could obtain of my Lord the salvation of you all. What a prey had I gotten to have you all caught in Christ's net. My witness is above, that your heaven would be two heavens to me, and the salvation of you all would be two salvations to me."

Yet, my beloved people, when I recall the joy of my forty-four years of public ministry, I often shudder at the fact of how near I came to losing it. For very many months my mind was balancing between the pulpit and the attractions of a legal and political career. A single hour in a village prayer-meeting turned the scale. But perhaps behind it all, a beloved mother's prayers were moving the mysterious hand that touched