

MESSENGER AND VISITOR.

April 27.

Encouragements.

A SERMON BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that deviating ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2: 11-14.

In this great battle for right and truth and holiness, what could we do, my brethren, and my sisters, if we were left alone? But our first encouragement is that grace has come to our rescue; for in the day when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared among men, he brought us for the grace of God to help us to overcome all iniquity. He that struggeth now against inbred sin has the Holy Spirit in him to help him. He that goeth forth to fight against evil in other men by preaching the gospel has the same Holy Ghost going with the truth to make it like a fire and like a hammer. I would ground my weapons, and retreat from the fight so hopeless were it that the Lord of Hosts is with us. The grace of God Jacob is our strength. The grace of God that brings salvation from sin has flashed forth conspicuously like the lightning which is seen from one part of the heaven to the other, and our victory over darkness is insured. However hard the conflict with evil, it is not desperate. We may hope on and hope ever. A certain warrior was found in prayer, and when his kindest snored, he answered that he was pleading his master's anguished cry. I question whether God is the ally of anybody when he goes forth with gun and sword; but in using those weapons which are "not carnal, but mighty through God" to the pulling down of strongholds," we may truly reckon upon our august ally. Speak the truth, man, for God speaks with you! Work for God, woman, for God works in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure. The appearance of the grace of God in the world Christ is encouraging enough to those who are under the most difficult circumstances, as is the gospel. It breathes, throughout, mercy, benevolence, and peace.—James Beattie.

A second encouragement is that another appearing is coming. He who bowed his head in weakness, and died in the moment of victory, is coming in all the glory of his endless life. Do not question it, the world is not going to darken unto an eternal night; the morning cometh as well as the night, and though sin and corruption abound, and the love of many waxeth cold, these are but the tokens of his next advent who said that it would be so before his appearing. The right with the might shall be; as surely as God lives it shall be. We are not fighting a losing battle.

The Lord must triumph. O, if his suffering life and cruel death had been the only appearing, we might have feared; but it is not; it's but the first, and the preparation part of his manifestation. He comes! He comes! None can hinder his coming!

Every moment brings him nearer: Nothing can delay his glory. When the hour shall strike he shall appear in the majesty of God to put an end to the dominion of sin, and Satan shall be bruised under our feet shortly! wherefore comfort one another with these words, and then prepare for further battle. Grind your swords, and then be ready for close fighting! Trust in God, and keep your powder dry. Ever this our war-cry, "He must reign." We are looking for the appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Another encouragement is that we are serving a glorious Master. The Christ whom we follow is not a dead prophet like Mahomet. Truly we preach Christ crucified; but we also believe in Christ rising from the dead, in Christ gone up on high, in Christ to come a second time. He is here, and he is here to stay, the great God and our Saviour. If indeed ye are soldiers of such a captain throw fear to the winds. Can you be cowards when the Lord of Hosts leads you? Dare you tremble when at your head is this Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of peace? The trumpet is already at the lip of the archangel; who will not play the man? The great drum which makes the universe to throb, summons you to action.

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Ye soldiers of the cross; Lift high his royal banner, It must not suffer loss."

His cross is the old cross still and none can overthrow it. Hallelujah, hallelujah to the name Jesus!

Then come the tender thoughts with which I finish, the memories of what the Lord has done for us, to make us holy. "We gave himself for us." Special redemption, redemption with a tremendous price, paid for us by a "Priceless Price"; that trumpet and that drum; that does that harp and gently touch its sweet strings. Tell how the Lord Jesus loved and gave himself for us. O sirs, if nothing else can touch our hearts this instant: "Ye are not our own, ye are bought with a price."

And he gave himself for us with these two objects: first, redemption, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; that he might break the bonds of sin asunder; and cast the cords of depravity far from us. Died—not forget—that died that your sins might die, died that every last might be dragged into captivity at his chariot wheels. He gave himself for you that you might give yourself for him.

Agree, he died that he might purify us—purify us unto himself. How clean we must be if we are to be clean unto him. The holy Jesus will only continue with that which he has purified after the manner of his own nature; purified unto himself. He has purified us to be wholly his: no human being can hold the cup, no human interest can bind the consecrated censor. We are purified unto himself, as the Hebrew world put it to be his sepulchre, his peculiar possession. The translation "peculiar people" is unfortunate, because "peculiar" has come to mean odd, strange, singular. The passage really means that believers are Christ's own people, his chosen and select portion. Saints are Christ's crown jewels, his box of diamonds; his very, very own. He carries his people as lambs in his bosom; he engraves their names on his heart. They are the inheritance to which he is the her, and he valued them more than all the universe beside. He would lose everything else sooner than lose one of them. He desires that you, who are disciplined by his grace, should know that you are altogether his. You are Christ's men. You are each one to

feel, "I do not belong to myself; I belong only to Christ. I am set aside by him for himself only, and his I will be." The silver and the gold are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills are his; but he makes small account of them, "the Lord's portion is his people."

The apostle finishes up by saying that we are to be a people "zealous of good works." Would to God that all Christians and women were disciplined by divine grace till they became zealous of good works! Is holiness zeal or sobriety. We are not only to approve of good works, but we are to be ready to do them. We are to be ready for everything that is right and good. We may not be able to be quiet and innocent; but we are to be zealous of good works. That is the Lord's grace which sets us on fire in this way! There is plenty of fuel in the church, what is wanted is fire. A great many respectable people are in their sleep way doing as little as they can for any good cause. This will never do. We must wake up. O the quantity of ambulance work that Christ's soldiers have to do! One half of Christ's army brought the other half. O that our brethren could get off the sick list! O, that all of us were ardent, fervent, vigorous, zealous! Come, Holy Spirit, and quicken us! We may not be able to get this by our own efforts and energies, but God will work by his grace. Grace given us in Christ the fountain head of all holy impulse. O heavenly grace come like a flood at this instant of right.

That those of you who have never felt the grace of God may be enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as his first appearing! Then, training in his death upon the cross, you will learn to look for his second coming upon the throne, and you will rejoice therein. Upto his great name be glory forever and ever! Amen.

The Bible.

FROM "GEMS OF THOUGHT."

There is not a book on earth so favorable to all the kind and sublime affections, or so unfriendly to hatred and persecution, to tyranny, injustice, and every sort of malice, as is the gospel. In the church Christ is everywhere strong enough to those who are under the most difficult circumstances, as is the gospel. It breathes, throughout, mercy, benevolence, and peace.

"Sickness and pain are not the only ill that flesh is heir to, my Helen. There are troubles that go deeper than that, that touch the well-springs of happiness, and embitter the waters."

"And does the faith cure reach such cases as that?"

"Speaking from my own experience, dear, it does."

"Tell me about it, Aunt Grace; it must be a sweet story if you are in it, and I think as I am to leave you tomorrow, it is your duty to lay aside your writing and amuse me."

"The story may not prove very amusing."

"My dear, I do, and more than that, I am prepared to recommend it to you, and to every one who is of a doubtful mind."

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