

## Pastor and People.

### BE OF GOOD CHEER

Though the world's hand be against thee  
One has overcome it all,  
And to thee down through the ages  
Comes the mighty Saviour's call:  
"Be of good cheer,  
Trusting me thou shalt not fall."

In the world ye shall have sorrow,  
In the world have grief and pain,  
Troubles many, trials often,  
But through all shall run the strain—  
"Be of good cheer,  
I have overcome again."

Though alone, forlorn and weary,  
Thou dost travel many a day,  
When in death, thou'lt hear the message,  
Thou hast followed all the way—  
"Be of good cheer,  
Naught can harm thee now for aye."

—The Presbyterian Journal.

### HOW THEY TALKED AFTER CHURCH.

"How do you like him?" The speaker was a tall, slight man with a sharply-cut face, at once sensitive and powerful. His companion was of a coarser type, short and stout, with a good-natured but thoroughly wide-awake look, evidently a shrewd, driving man of business.

They were part of a stream of people which was pouring out of the doors of an uptown church, and they had been listening to a well-known preacher.

"How do you like him?" "Don't like him at all," was the curt reply. The questioner turned upon him a half-amused look, as he quietly asked: "Why not?" "Cold as an icicle! All intellect! Too much work to follow him! Doesn't touch your feelings at all. Now, I like Dr. —. That man will make you cry even when he gives out a notice. He doesn't know a quarter as much as this one, but he gets hold of you somehow. When he gets through—well, you don't know exactly what he has been preaching about, but you feel warmed all through."

The two men were evidently close friends, and the first speaker replied with a plainness which assumed a perfect mutual understanding, and with a touch of warmth in his tone: "Look here! Do you know what you are talking about? Didn't follow him! Do you know what you have thrown away this morning? You may hear a sermon like that once in a year or two, not oftener, unless you go to hear that man often. I shall live on that sermon for the next six months. If I can live the sermon for the rest of my life, so much the better for me."

The stout man looked up at his companion with wide-opened eyes, and the other went on: "Cold as an icicle! My good fellow, you have a keen enough eye for men in general. Is it possible that you do not know the difference between earnestness and gush? Do you mean to tell me that you didn't see that that man was in dead earnest, and was working at his highest power to drive his conviction into you and me? Come! You know the difference between a bed of anthracite on fire from the bottom all the way up and burning without sputter, and a quick blaze of shavings. Feeling! That sermon was full of it, as the man is full of it. Cold as an icicle! You haven't seen him as I have at the bedsides of the sick poor and by the dying in the hospital wards. Very quiet, certainly, but he is there, and they hold on to his hand as long as their fingers can close. I saw him pick up a poor little beggar that fell in the street yesterday, and wipe away the tears from his dirty face with a very nice-looking pocket-handkerchief. No, he isn't popular; but I happen to know how many careworn, sorrowful, doubting men and women go to his study and tell him what they will tell nobody else, and go away comforted. Do you know that one of the most brilliant preachers in America told me, not a week ago, that he had just been travelling away up in New England, and had found this man's books lying on the farmhouse tables beside the Bible? Do you know that one little book of his has brought hundreds if not thousands to believe in Christ?"

The stout man smiled feebly and in a forced kind of way, and said nothing, having nothing just then to say; and coming at this moment opposite his own front door, he invited his friend to come in, which he did without hesitation. Evidently he had not said his say out. They were hardly seated when he opened again.

"You're off the track, and the trouble lies a good deal deeper than your dissatisfaction with this particular preacher. There are hundreds just like you, and you all have a radically wrong idea of the Church service and of the pulpit in particular. You don't go to Church for the right thing. To come down to the hard-pan of the matter, you go to church to be entertained; and if you are not entertained you think yourselves defrauded, and lay the blame on the preacher, and berate him as uninteresting. You reason that it is his business to interest you, and consequently that if he fails he does not understand his business. It does not seem to occur to you that there are two parties to that matter, and that you as well as the preacher have something to do with your being interested. Why, I watched you the other night when D— was discussing the McKinley Bill. D—, as you know, is not a first-class speaker, and is likely to be a little tedious when he has mounted his hobby. His sentences come out with rough

edges; but he had something to say, and you never took your eyes off him until he sat down. The reason was that you were in some doubt as to how that bill bore upon your own business, and you were very much in earnest to know the truth about it, and so you brought your interest along with you."

"Now you don't go to church in that way. You are not hungry for the truth; your mind has not been occupying itself with the bearing of this or that part of the Bible on your life. You bring no interest with you, and you look to the minister and the sermon to create it. You sit there as so much dead weight, expecting the minister to take you up bodily and lift you into a sphere where you will be interested and entertained and moved for an hour. Why, my friend, you can't kindle a fire when your wood is wet. The wood has something to do as well as the fire. The fire must have something to feed on. The minister has a solemn responsibility for preaching the Word, but you seem to forget that you have a no less solemn responsibility for hearing it. Did you ever observe how much emphasis Christ laid upon the hearer? The reason why the good seed was picked up by the birds, withered, choked, was that there was something wrong about the soil. 'Take heed how ye hear; whosoever hath to him shall be given.'"

"But," interposed the listener, "you must admit that there is a difference in preachers, and that some preachers are excessively tedious and stupid."

"Certainly," replied the other; "and the pulpit should study to make itself attractive in every legitimate way. I do not deny the heavy responsibility of the pulpit; and we cannot ignore the differences between preachers. Some good men are excessively stupid. But then the evil I complain of is not limited to these. It attaches to the ministry of a good many preachers who are neither ignorant nor stupid; men who have scholarship, literary ability, knowledge. Men who have something to say and something to teach, and who say it well. You, yourself, as I have just said, would listen for an hour and a half to an inferior speaker who nevertheless knew what you wanted to know, and you refused to listen to one of the best thinkers in the Church, and not a poor speaker either. Why? You had not enough interest in the subject to follow him out of the regions of commonplace along higher lines of thought. You are no fool. There was nothing in the sermon which you could not have followed with a little effort. He was eminently lucid."

"You say you like Mr. A. Mr. A. tells a little story with a tremble in his voice and the water comes to your eyes. He throws in some fireworks, declaims vigorously, fires a point-blank shot at some social abuse, and you are waked up. You go out rubbing your hands, and saying, 'capital sermon!' and for your life you couldn't tell what the sermon as a whole was about. Your attention simply hung on the one point which caught it. You have not learned anything. You do not know any more about God's Word than when you went in. You will not carry a thought from that sermon down into your office. You will not be any the better man for it—but then you felt good!"

"Well, you will have what you like. There are enough like you who want that kind of thing and are willing to pay for it, and there are enough men of shallow brains and superficial training, but with the natural endowment of mountebanks, who will readily answer the demand. Bacon, you know, says that 'the master of superstition is the people.' Laymen are not without responsibility for shaping ministers. Aaron made a calf because the people demanded it, and so long as the people want veal in the pulpit because it tastes better and is easier to chew, there will be plenty of veal in market."

"Yes, the man kept you on the stretch. It was too much trouble to follow him. Well, I have heard that before. I heard a man commended the other day as being a restful preacher—but I confess it seems to me a doubtful compliment. I heard the offset to the compliment in the remark of one of his regular and most intelligent hearers, that she never could get anything from his sermons to carry away. For myself, there is a sense in which I do not want to be restful in church. I do not care to listen to a man who gives my mind nothing to do. I want it set at work. Give me the truth as simply as you please, the more simply the better; but give me something to eat. Give my mind a truth to work upon. Give me something which will make demands on my brain as well as on my pocket-handkerchief. I do not believe in elaborate arguments in the pulpit. The average hearer's mind will not follow a severe logical process very long; but argument is not the only stimulant of thought; and this preaching which is all gush and feeling goes to nourish a class of hearers which is described in the parable of the sower as 'stony ground.' Sentimentality is often underlaid by hard worldliness and selfishness. The seed falls, the thin soil is responsive. Tears fall. How touching! How beautiful! Then down come the roots against that hard rock-platform, and it withers away because it has no depth of earth."

"I'll tell you what I heard once from an old Methodist minister, when I was a boy, and I have never forgotten it. I wish every theological student could hear it, for it contains a whole treatise on homiletics. Said he: 'The best preaching is that which makes people think most, and feel in proportion as they think.' Feeling is a sacred thing and has its own place, and no unimportant one, among the legitimate results of preaching; but feeling must have a solid basis in thought. A hot fire requires wood and coals. Your beautiful flesh must have bones underneath. It is not necessary to display the bones, but the bones must be there."

"But bless me! It is past one o'clock. Forgive me, old fellow, for going on at such a rate and piling a second sermon upon the first. However, on your own showing, you have had only one, as you did not hear the first one."

"Better stay to lunch," replied the other. "Your wife will have given you up by this time, and you will go hungry between two tables. I have listened to your sermon anyway. I never saw it that way before. Why, what a lift a minister must have every Sunday if there are many people like me in the congregation. I wonder he doesn't break down."

"They do break," said his friend. "This New York pace will shorten the life of any minister, and the worst features of the case are reproduced on a smaller scale in other places. One of the most popular preachers of this city said to me not long ago: 'I don't know how long I can stand this.' The accepted policy of throwing the entire burden of the Church on one man's shoulders, of making a Church a financial investment on which the minister is to pay the dividends, is encouraging and intensifying the demand for the talent which fills pews, and making it the unpardonable sin of the minister not to draw. To more than one faithful pastor his Church is a cross on which he is crucified, while the people sit down and watch him there."—*Marvin R. Vincent, in Illustrated Christian Weekly.*

### THE CHRISTIAN WALK.

The preacher says: "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely." What is implied in walking uprightly? Upright is erect, correct, and to walk uprightly is to walk correctly—correctly, not only in the sight of men, and in regard to men, but in the sight of God and in regard to Him. "We are always in God's sight, and we must beware of crooked ways in His presence. Now, as all are sinners, to walk uprightly before God and in relation to Him implies reconciliation with God—walking as one justified in His sight, and whose obedience proves it. It also implies taking the Word of God for our rule and following it; it also implies the right use of all our faculties and powers, and of whatever God gives us, in all things seeking His glory, and so not living to ourselves but to God. This is making a right use of our minds as well as of our bodies—upright in mind—in the soul—as well as in body."

Then what is walking surely? It is walking in the right way, walking safely, with a right end and aim. It is to walk with peace and honour on earth, and with the assurance of eternal rest in heaven. They who walk uprightly walk safely and surely in the way that leads to heaven and ends in it.

This is blessed and glorious. And there is a strong motive thus to walk, for he that does not do so, but perverteth his way shall be known as one who does not walk correctly—known as an enemy of God and one injurious to men. Let us walk uprightly that our pathway be that of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

### THE SPIRIT'S WORK.

The work of the Spirit is not performed while we sleep. It is not wrought independently of us. Holiness is not thrust upon the heart, as a foreign body, dissimilar and unassimilated. But the heart itself is transformed; the will and the affections are converted from sin and co-operate with the Spirit in the work. The Holy Spirit works in and with us.

We are by nature without God in the world. We neither recognize Him in His works of nature and providence, nor do we seek His counsel and benediction. We ignore His laws and refuse a knowledge of His ways. The thunder roars and the lightning flashes—that's nature. Death enters our door and carries off a darling child—that is chance. Our harvests fail—that's ill luck. But God is nothing. The Framer and Father of all is not seen in all His universe.

I know no word which so fully declares our depravity as this, "without God." It discloses corruption at the very core. It reveals a life wholly out of truth. It is something like speaking of a plane without the sun—poor, crazy orb cut loose from its source of light, and heat, and orderly going, plunging aimlessly and cold through the gloom, disorder in its movements, destruction in its path.

"Ungodly," living without God, or, if God appear, against God.

Godliness is living with God and for God. To live with God is to see His hand in all the facts and events of life, to seek His protection and guidance in all, and to lift the heart continually to Him in thankfulness and praise.

To live for God is to have His glory as our highest aim—and we can do this only by so accepting His grace as to become identified with His cause. If we are united as branches to a vine, then the vine's glory is our glory; and so, if we are united to God in Christ, we seek His glory as our highest happiness.

Just when the world sees nothing but a coffin and a grave—just then glory bursts upon us. Jesus will then appear as the great God to overwhelm our enemies, driving forever from us our sins and sorrows, overcoming death in our behalf; and He will appear as our Saviour, to take us in His own blessed guidance and lead us to His own abode, ever thereafter to be our abode. That Jesus will then recognize the consummation of His work of mercy in us, as we shall appear all pure in Christ's righteousness; He will remember that His great humiliation, suffering and death were endured to redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good work.

We become a peculiar people in the world's eye only by becoming a peculiar people in God's eye.

Our purification is unto Christ. He purifies us unto Himself, and the more pure we become, the nearer we are to Christ, and the more clearly we shall see and rejoice in His loveliness.—*Howard Crosby, D.D.*