

GOOD PAULINE IDEA

APOSTLE SAID: "LET YOUR MODERATION BE KNOWN UNTO ALL MEN."

TALMAGE READS ITS MEANING

Plan For Tolerance and Forbearance Between Man and Man—Becoming a Well-Rounded Man—Do Not Condemn in Others Faults and Weaknesses That May Be Paralleled in Ourselves—Wisdom in Moderation.

Shared according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1902, by William Baily, of Toronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Chicago, Oct. 4.—In this sermon the preacher teaches a timely lesson on the wisdom of exercising tolerance and forbearance between man and man and reminds us that the faults and weaknesses which we condemn in others may find a parallel in ourselves. The text is Philippians iv, 5, "Let your moderation be known unto all men."

What does the Pauline word "moderation" mean? "I know," says one. "It means: Do not be an extremist. Do not ride a hobby to death. Do not focus your eyes upon one truth so long that you become blinded to the relative importance of other truths, nor upon one error until you lose sight of the evil effects of all other errors. 'Virtue is a round which has a hedge and a ditch on both sides,' once wrote a famous writer. A man may be moderate in one thing and not in another."

"Let your moderation be known unto all men" means: Do not be a fanatic, a one-sided monstrosity, like a dove with one wing cropped, flapping about in the barnyard and yet unable to rise ten feet into God's great heaven of blue. Do not expend all your energies preaching against the evils of intoxication and at the same time be a glutton. Do not preach against gambling with cards when you gamble with railroad stocks. Do not berate the thief who steals a loaf of bread and honor the thief who cheats his neighbor in a real estate deal. Be a well rounded man. Be like a plant with leaves and petals and stamens and sepals and petals growing upon a supple stem, able to bend every whither yet with roots anchored in the solid earth, and not like a balloon filled with a noxious gas, tossed about in the air, the plaything of every stray wind.

That the Pauline idea? No, my friend, you are wrong. When Paul said, "Let your moderation be known unto all men," he was not, as Bishop Villiers once expressed it, "alluding to the gratification of our desires generally, but especially temperance or self restraint in our relation to others, in our abstinence from anger and harshness and vengeance." He is saying, as the revised version translates the sentence: "Let your forbearance or gentleness be known unto all men." To-day instead of preaching upon what you should eat and drink and wherewith you should be clothed and how much exercise you should take I shall preach upon how you should smile and talk and shake hands and forgive and love. This sermon theme is not how we should live, but how we should be willing to let others live.

Be patient in the first place, even with the irritating idiosyncrasies and the offensive mannerisms that are found in almost every one with whom we come in contact. Be patient with their peculiarities, especially if they are nonessential in reference to the honesty and noble characteristics of a man. Be patient especially because wrong types of marked individuality, if harnessed in the right way, will often mean great success for us and for those whom it is our privilege to influence.

A strange law decrees that insanity is sometimes the handmaid of genius. The inspired eye, which afar-off can discover a star, is often so nearsighted that it cannot see a diamond glittering close at hand. Joseph Cook was the intellectual and the mental and spiritual Hercules who stood year after year in old Boston forging Scriptural thunderbolts and damming back the pernicious and dangerous teachings of the leaders of anti-Christian doctrines. Yet Joseph Cook, great as he was, would have been utterly unfitted for an ordinary pastorate. His last days were passed in a sanitarium, in a place consecrated to the work of caring for mental incompetents. Joseph Cook's brain was a magnificent piece of mental machinery, that, like other delicate machinery, was easily thrown out of gear. Thus we find that the greatest poets and musicians and art-

ists and sculptors, statesmen, dramatists, lawyers, physicians and ministers have sometimes been men of startling strength.

The startling characteristics, good or bad, which can be found in the ten talent men on a big scale can also be found in the one talent men on a small scale. In the ordinary walks of life everywhere are people cursed or marred with various imperfections. They are good people in one sense, but bad in another. We define them as "peculiar" people. We call them "peculiar" because through each runs a mental or physical weakness, as a mineral vein runs through the rocks of a mighty mountain. We say: "I like So-and-so, but he has one fearfully irritating characteristic. He will muss up a room every time he enters it." Or you say: "I like Mrs. So-and-so, but every time she calls she makes some nettlesome remark that stings like a briar bush. When she comes to visit me I am always glad to welcome her. When she leaves I am always glad to see her go. She is never with me ten minutes without making me unhappy. She says something disagreeable about my dress, my house, my children or my husband. Yes, I feel and know that Mrs. So-and-so is a good woman and that she loves me, but she has the tantalizing faculty of always unintentionally saying something mean."

Ah, yes. All of us have had such bitter experiences as these from the irritating peculiarities of our friends. So Paul comes to us to-day in the words of my text. He says: "My brother, you must be patient and gentle in your dealings with the faults and failings of others. You must be yielding, as the wave of an incoming tide is yielding. It first breaks itself into pieces and then crawls up and fits itself into all the nooks and crannies of the seashore. You must be yielding in the nonessentials, so that you can cause your life to be successfully fitted into the peculiarities of others, as one factory wheel will fit into the cogs of another wheel."

Would that we might always practice Benjamin Franklin's gospel of moderation! His toleration of the nonessentials of life was never more grandly demonstrated than in the last great public service which he rendered to his country. When over eighty years of age he made the personal sacrifice of his life in pleading for the adoption of the constitution of the United States in the great constitutional convention which met in Philadelphia in 1787. He admitted, during his address, that the constitution under discussion did not satisfy him in toto. He wanted one legislative assembly, not two. He wanted an executive council, with the president at the head, instead of all executive power being invested in one man. He wanted the president of the United States to serve without salary. "But," said the grand old sage of Philadelphia, "the older I grow the more I doubt my own infallibility and the more I believe that others may occasionally be right. I am not like the French lady who one day said to her sister, 'I do not know how it happens, sister, but I meet with nobody but myself that is always in the right.' Therefore, though I may not like this constitution in toto, I do feel that it is the best for all parties upon which we could ever agree. And, Mr. President, I cannot help expressing a wish that every member of this convention who may still have objections to it would with me on this occasion doubt a little of his own infallibility, and to make manifest our unanimity put his name to this instrument." That plea of Benjamin Franklin is a good exposition of what Paul's moderation means. It means giving up a little in order to fit your life into the nonessential peculiarities of other people.

Blood should be thicker than water. Blood should be a potent factor in the making or unmaking of a man. I am in no sense a fatalist. I am not one of those indifferent, never may care men who try to excuse their sloth and laziness by advocating the doctrine, "What is to be will be, and what is not to be will not be." I am not foolish enough to think that "a man can be born to be eternally destroyed, no matter how he may try to prevent it or what he may do or say." But I am one of those believing people who are ready to grant that, by reason of the operation of the laws of heredity, it is harder for some people to do right than for others, and to grant also that, because of heredity, it is easier for some to do wrong than for others. Blood thicker than water? Of course it is. All of us should believe what our eyes everywhere behold. Baldwin apples do not grow upon fall pippin trees unless ingrafted. In the spiritual as well as in the vegetable and animal kingdoms, "like always produces like."

The heredity law in all its different aspects being agreed upon, why should you not be patient in your dealings with those whose ancestors were not good and true and pure Christian, as were your fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers? Have you the right to expect the child of an Aztec sun worshiper, with in the first year of his conversation, to have as beautiful a conception of the cross as the child of that Indian missionary who last year gave up his life for Christ within sight of a horrible ghastly burning upon the banks of the Ganges? Have you a right to expect that young boy whom you took from the founding home and adopted to have as easy a time living the Christian life as your own flesh and blood? Perhaps that boy is the son of a thief, while your child is the son of a good mother. Remember, as a spiritualist, you cannot in a day open the visual windows of one born blind. Oh, my brother, do not fret and worry and lose your patience in your dealings with those of bad spiritual ancestry. Be gentle! Be forbearing! Be giving! Be kind! Be merciful! Be moderate in all things. Forgive not only seven times, but seventy times seven.

Be patient, in the next place, with the Peters of the three denials. There are many, many, of them. They are not the sinners who mean to do wrong, but they are the sanguine temperaments who overestimate their own abilities. They at times love the Lord with all their strength, but, then, underestimating the strength of evil, they deliberately run into temptation, to be overthrown not once, but twice and thrice.

The Peters of the three denials! Perhaps that young man whom you discharged only last week was one of them. He was a fine young fellow. Everybody who came in touch with him liked him. Bright? There was no brighter boy in your store. He was not only bright, but he was the son of a good Christian father. He knew better, but he would drink. He came into your office drunk about one year ago. You forgave him once. You forgave him twice. When he did it the third time you said, "Out you go!" And out of the store last week he went. You loved him for his own sake. You liked him on account of his father and mother. Then, my brother, if you like that lad, if you like the son of a good man in him, if he can overcome that one fault, why not take him back again? Why not give him another chance? "No, no," you answer. "I have given him three different chances. Three times are enough." Are they enough, my brother? Remember the lad's parents. Remember that he is an impulsive fellow and not bad at heart. Remember that Christ forgave Peter again and again until at last Peter rose above his weaknesses and gave his life fully and freely back to Christ. Will you do as much for that young man in your employ as Christ did for his impulsive and denying disciple?

From the filthy pieces of clothes gathered by the ragpickers in Genoa many a French I have seen the manufacturers of Watervliet, Mich., make the purest and whitest writing paper. From even the modern Peters of the three denials there have been developed the Peters of the martyred blood. One day General Charles George Gordon, more widely known as "Chinese" Gordon, saw a handsome Chinese youth being led out to execution. The condemned had been guilty of many crimes. Gordon was struck with the looks of the lad and begged for his life. He said that he himself would guarantee that the boy would do right. Gordon's request was granted. The famous soldier of Queen Victoria and of Jesus Christ took the lad to his own quarters. He made the Chinese boy then and there promise never to do wrong again. Did he fulfill his pledge? From that day on the most faithful servant Gordon ever had about him was that boy, rescued by the Christian general from the executioner's axe. He followed Gordon to Egypt. And the Chinese lad's blood mingled with Charles George Gordon's blood when the massacre at Khartoum ended the earthly life of England's most famous Christian soldier. Ah, the Peters of the three denials are worth saving.

But, steady, my brother. Be patient also with those who are harsh in their criticisms of others. Remember that for them a day of reckoning is coming, or perhaps has come. Who among your brothers and sisters to-day are having the hardest times? Is it not the sister who never had in her heart any love for the common people? Is it not the sister who felt she was socially and mentally a little higher than any one else? Who to-day is most mercilessly laid upon the dissecting table of criticism and having his whole life cut to pieces? Is it not the man who himself once most vigorously wielded the censorious scalpel? Do not worry that these sinners who are so harsh in their criticisms against the sins of others will not have their just rewards. Verily, verily, I say unto you, their condemnation will come from God. It is better for us not to try to snatch the divine thunderbolts out of God's hand.

But there is still another class of aggressive critics against which I would plead with you to apply the teachings of my text. They are those who have no sympathy with you in your work. I do not mean those who are maliciously falsifying, but those who are honestly, truthfully and positively do not like your way of doing things. Now, my brother, the best way for you to overcome such criticism is not by going out and trying to destroy your neighbor's influence for good, but simply by being patient; by simply saying nothing against your honest though antagonistic neighbors, but by going ahead and doing your own work in your own way and proving beyond all peradventure that God has blessed you and will continue to bless you in what you are doing in his name.

Nine-tenths of all the criticisms made against us would soon die if we ourselves did not go forth to fight those criticisms and thus make matters worse. Hugh Clifford, the old jungle traveler, once vividly described a startling experience he had when traveling in the Malay peninsula. He and his men were attacked by a huge swarm of angry, revengeful bees. Immediately the party swung their blankets around their heads and tried to fight them off, but it was useless. They were stung everywhere. "Take to the water!" Clifford cried to his men. The Malays ran for their lives. The bees not only drove them into the water, but continued stinging them there. The furious insects threatened to kill them while they were in the river itself. "With hands like boxing gloves and heads like inflated footballs from the awful stinging," wrote Clifford, "my suffering party then limped away to the next village. Half an hour later one of my men came into the village uninjured. He had seen the bees coming and had sat down and waited their assault. They covered him from head to foot, but as he offered no opposition they did not sting him." What is true of the Malay bees is true also of the human bees. With buzz and threatening in great swarms they may light upon you. They may crawl all over you and aggravatingly tickle your face and hands and heart, but if you will not fight them, but simply go on doing the work that God has given you to do, your assailants will become harmless, and after awhile they will leave you in peace and in ease.

Thus, my friends, the whole teaching of this text is this: Drop your battle ax and as a Christian farmer go to gospel seed planting. Drop your war clubs and go to giving an ambulance. Do not boast of how many enemies you have killed, but speak rather of how many friends you have been able to win through gospel love. This text has in it the language of pardon, not the hiss of hate. It is a flower garden whose most fragrant blossoms grow best upon the grave hillocks under which are buried the hideous corpses of bitter strife. It is a lighthouse to warn voyagers off the dangerous rocks and to guide them into the harbor of safety and not the search light of an invader, ready to single out for destruction a hiding foe. Oh, my brother and sister, will you not try to practice Paul's moderation? Will you not let your forbearance and gentleness and Christian forgiveness be known unto all men?

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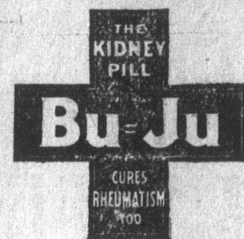
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