The Unchanging Gospel.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

Last evening closed the twenty-eighth year of my happy pastorate among the people whom I serve. For three things I may sincerely thank the Giver of all mercies: first, unbroken health; secondly, an unbroken congregation; and thirdly, an unbroken faith in the glorious gospel of the blessed God. During these fast-speeding twenty-eight years, many changes have wintered. Beloved faces have vanished at the touch of death. Little children have grown up into manhood and womanhood. This city has doubled in dimensions; the nation has had its baptism of blood, and its birth of imperial freedom. But no change has come over my love for my devoted flock, or in the precious gospel which I love to preach.

Amid all the mutations which eighteen centuries have witnessed, the divine system of saving truth revealed in the New Testament has proved to be entirely immutable. Not a line has been added, not a syllable taken away. The waves of time which have swept away empires and systems of philosophy, dash in vain against the adamant of the gospel. God who is its author, is unchangeable; he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His holiness, which abhorreth sin, is a part of himself; so is his justice, which punishes sin; and so is his love which pardons and saves every sinner who repents and believes on his Son Jesus Christ. To all these attributes this gospel is essential; while they live it must live. Light is composed of the seven different colors blended together, and in like manner the different attributes of God, when blended harmoniously, produce the light which beams from Calvary. There has been no change in the rays of the sun since it shone upon Adam in the morning of Eden; there has been no change in the plan of salvation since that time when Paul declared that the curse of God would rest on even "an angel from heaven," if he should attempt to alter it.

(1) Human nature also is the same that it always has been. Amidst all the advances of science and art and civilization, the human heart is the same depraved and deceitful thing desperately wicked. An American can see himself just as distinctly in the mirror of the "Epistle to the Romans," as any man could who dwelt in the old city on the Tiber. Man has no more outgrown the need of the gospel, than he has outgrown the need of bread, or water, or sunshine. If Saul of Tarsus needed the atonement, so do I as much as he; it meets my case just as well as his.

A common scoff of sceptics is that in the rapid advance of thought this antiquated gospel has become obsolete. These scoffers seem to forget that no possible advance in human knowledge can ever disturb an established truth. Euclid's famous forty-seventh proposition, is just as true now as it was twenty-one centuries ago; and for the very good reason that there has been no change, and can be none, in the nature of triangles. Wonderful progress has been made in our days in investigating the laws by which God governs the natural world; also in the application of these laws to brilliant inventions; but the laws have not altered by one iota. The lightnings which played around Paul's corn-ship, were the same which Benny Franklin caught on his kitesstring. The only difference is that Franklin knew things about the nature of the electric fluid that Paul did not know. If the laws of nature ceased to be immutable, then people would not risk building any more steam-engines, or putting up any more telegraphs. Now just as the advance of human knowledge does not affect the nature of laws and principles in the material world, neither can any advance in knowledge disturb the immutable laws and principles by which God governs the spiritual world. When there is a reaction against the circulation of blood, or against the theory that water will freeze at thirty-one degrees Fahrenheit, then there will be a reaction against the gospel of Jesus Christ, and not one instant sooner. The Creator never changes first principles—in physics, or in ethics, or in his moral government.

(2) The gospel also is exactly adapted to human needs in every age and in every clime. Wherever man suffers from the bite of sin, it cures him; wherever he suffers from sorrow, it comforts him; wherever it hungers for truth and holiness, it feeds him. Some plants seem to suit only the Tropics, and others the higher zones; but bread suits the dwellers in all climates. Water meets the universal thirst. "I am the Bread of Life"; "I am the Water of Life." An universal experience has proved the truth of Christ's declarations. Then too, the virtues which the gospel inculcates, and the graces which it produces, satisfy the universal standard of Right. Paper money, which is good in America, is not current in Canton or Calcutta. Gold is current the broad world over. So is the gold of the gospel: love, peace, purity, honesty, benevolence, truthfulness, patience, joy, and unselfishness, are current in every clime. Those who have lived out the Gospel most carefully, have always attained to the noblest and purest characters.

(3) The gospel is God's master-piece, and it cannot be improved. If our day we hear much about "new light breaking out," and about "new departures." This enlightened age will not stand the old doctrines—so some advanced theologians tell us. Yet the new theologians have not got rid of the old necessity human guilt, nor of the old attributes of the Almighty. Their telescopes have not discovered anything that Paul did not know—better than they do eighteen centuries ago. Spurgeon, the most successful preacher of this century, has said in his racy and pungent way, "Some modern divines whittle away the gospel to the small end of nothing. They make certainties into probabilities, and treat eternal verities as mere opinions. When you see a preacher making the gospel go all by degrees and miserably less, until there is not enough of it left to make soup for a sick grasshopper, get you gone! As for me, I believe in the coloseal—a hell to drop into hell, and a grace as high as heaven. I believe in a pit that is bottomless, and a heaven that is topless. I believe in an infinite God and an infinite atonement—in an infinite love and mercy—and in an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, of which the substance and the reality is an infinite Christ."

There are plenty of false lights in these days, which serve only to bewilder, and allure immortal souls on the lee-shores of perdition. How different from these floating delusions is that unchanging gospel of Calvary, which rises like the towering lighthouse of Edystone, with its beacon-blaze streaming far out over the midnight sea! The winds of heaven have warred fiercely around its pinnacle; the storms have dashed against its gleaming lantern. But there it stands. It feels no jar for it is founded on the Rock of Ages. It is the first object on which the awakened penitent fixes his eye; it is the last on which the gaze of the veteran is turned, as he departs into the noonday of heaven's glory.

To preach such a gospel is the highest of earthly occupations. It is a joy to bring such "glad tidings," and a joy to receive them. For one, I can thank God from the core of my heart, for having been permitted to proclaim this blessed Gospel for nearly three and forty years. If He permits me to round up a full half century of service, my only prayer is that I may share in the joys of those who turn some wandering souls to the Saviour, and may escape the curse pronounced on those who subvert or pervert the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Way of Life.

You have been earnest and sincere for a great many years, and you have kept on hearing and reading, and, after a fashion, you have even kept on praying; but all the while you have been on the wrong road. Suppose yonder young man should start with his bicycle to go to Brighton, and he should travel due north; he will never get there. The faster he travels the farther he will go from the place. If you follow after righteousness by the works of the law, the more you do the farther off you will be from the righteousness of God. It must be so. Hear a parable. Yonder is a river, deep and broad. You imagine that the proper way to cross it is to wade or swim through it. You will not hear of any other way. The king has built a bridge; it is open, free, and without toll; the passage is as safe as it is plain. You refuse to be beholden to his majesty. You mean to get across by your own exertions. Already you are wet and cold, but you mean to persevere. You are nearly up to your neck in the stream, and the current is too strong for you. Come back, O foolish man, and cross by the bridge. The way of faith is so safe, so simple, so blessed; do try it! Have you not had enough of self saving? After years of struggling you are no forwarder, and have no more comfort; quit the struggle and rest in the Lord Jesus. Give up your self-confiding folly, and confide in the Son of God, the bleeding substitute for guilty men.

Do you not see, my friend, that in all you selfish trustings you are really fighting against your God? Jesus says: "Trust me; I will save you," and you reply: "I prefer my own doings." Is not that a great insult to Jesus? Have you not attacked the great Father upon a tender point? May he not appoint his own way of saving you? He has chosen the way of grace through faith. What arrogance to refuse that way! God gives without money and without price; why do you provoke him with your fancied merits? You are flying in the face of the great God, and therefore your very religion is a sin. The cross is a superfluity if human merit can suffice. There was no need for the Father to put his Son to grief if, after all, men can work out a righteousness of their own. If works can save you why did Jesus die? Do you see what you are driving at? Do you mean to trample under foot the blood of Jesus? I beseech you, abhor all notion of self justification. Dash down the idol which would rival your Lord. "Well," saith one, "you seem to know the ins and outs of a soul aiming at self-salvation." I did, for I long labored to climb up to heaven upon the treadmill of my own works. At length I grew weary, and gave myself up to Jesus, that he might bear me there in his own arms. Will you not do the same?

Now, my reader, it will be an awful thing for you to understand this way of grace, and yet to neglect it. How long am I to preach to some of you? How long am I to wear my heart out in crying, "Come to Jesus; believe in Jesus?" If anybody had said twenty years ago that yonder seat holder would still remain an unconverted man, he would have replied, "Impossible! I am near to the kingdom; I am almost persuaded, and before long I shall decide." Yes, you are persuaded on Sundays, but you forget it all on Mondays, and all because faith is not exercised. You believe in faith; but you do not believe in Jesus. You know that Jesus could save you if you trusted him; but you do not trust him. O that this moment you would end this delay! I see God's only-begotten Son, who has deigned to become man for our sakes, and to die in our room, and place, and from the cross I entreated him to speak to you. Speak, O my Master! He does speak, and these are his words: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Look, I pray you! Look and live.—*Rev C. H. Spurgeon.*

Sanctification.

The popular errors that prevail on this subject are simply amazing. I met a neighbor the other day who had been attending the holiness meetings. He said, as he grasped my hand with unusual warmth, "Well, Oldschool, I have got it at last."

"Got what?" I asked.

"O, they call it assurance of faith, and perfect love, and holiness, and sanctification. I don't know just what it is, but it makes me feel good all over. The preachers tell me that I am now free from sin—that I am holy, and of course I ought to be happy."

"How did you get it? Tell me all about it."

"Well, you see, I went to the big meeting, and the preachers said that unless we had the assurance of faith and knew that we were sanctified we could not be saved, for nothing unholy could enter heaven. That troubled me, and I asked one of them what I should do. He told me to go to the altar and pray for the blessing of sanctification. Scores of people were there crying, 'O God, make me holy.' I fell down among them and prayed with all my might for an hour or more, and then I felt better. I told the preacher, and asked him what it meant and he said that God had heard my prayer and that I was sanctified. And I was glad, for now I am sure of going to heaven."

"And you believe that you became sanctified by praying at that altar for an hour or two?"

"Certainly, for the preacher told me so, and I felt ever so much better."

"And you prayed for sanctification in the name of Christ, did you?"

"Of course I did."

"Now, John, if Christ should come to you and tell you that that was not the way to be sanctified, would you believe him, or would you believe that preacher?"

"I would believe Christ."

"Well, then, listen. John heard Jesus praying to the Father for us, that he might be sanctified. He did not say, O Holy Father sanctify my disciples when they ask you to. He said 'Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.' And again, 'For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth.' Have you been sanctified through the truth? Have you been studying the Bible with new interest? Have you found in it new revelations of the hatefulness of sin, and of the love of God in Christ? Have you felt in reading it the pressure of new motives to try to know Christ and to be like Christ?"

"No, the truth is I haven't read the Bible as much lately as I used to. I have been so busy attending meetings and talking about this new doctrine of sanctification that I haven't had time."

"Then it is evident, John, that if you had been sanctified it is not in the Bible way. Your preachers at the big meeting were not inspired, but Peter was. And he tells us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby. He regarded spiritual growth as a work of time and as dependent on knowledge. This is the law of all growth, and the idea that a man can kneel down and pray for sanctification, and get it without using the means of growth, without taking truth into his soul to nourish it, is as absurd as to believe that he can get bodily strength by praying while he neglects to take food. Remember that by using this word "grow" God teaches us that we are to attain to spiritual perfection as a child attains to manhood, or a scion becomes a full-grown and fruit-bearing tree.

"Now, there is a peach tree just transplanted from the nursery. It is trying to put out a few leaves. You don't want to wait three years for your peaches, and have to cultivate the soil and prune the scion. Well, God is good. He hears prayer. He has promised that he will give us what we ask is faith. So you need not wait. Kneel down and cry to him for an hour, 'O Lord perfect my peach tree. O Lord make it full-grown at once and cover it with fruit.' Would God not answer that prayer?"

"Yes, and it takes time for a Christian to grow. When Paul had been preaching the gospel for many years, and had received many wonderful revelations from God, he wrote to the Philippians, Not as though I had already attained or were already perfect, but I follow after that I may apprehend that for which I am also apprehended of Christ Jesus." If Paul had not attained to perfection up to that time, after all that he had done and suffered, how could you expect to by praying an hour?

"It is true that we are all called to be perfect, even as God is perfect. But when and where? We read in Hebrews of 'the spirits of just men made perfect.' But my impression is, from a careful study of that passage, that those spirits are not in mortal bodies. They are with God and Christ in the heavenly Jerusalem. I have met in my time a good many earnest, prayerful students of the Bible. I know those who for years have spent several hours every day reading the Scriptures on their knees. But not one of these men professed sanctification. The more they held the divine mirror before their hearts, the more they saw of their own sinfulness, the more humble and penitent they were. I have met, on the other hand, quite a number of honest, well-meaning people who believed that they were sanctified. But none of them were 'mighty in the Scriptures.' They had a few favorite texts, that they kept repeating like parrots, but 'sanctify them through the truth' was not one of them. Neither was that passage in Paul's epistle to the Philippians which I quoted just now. I tell you, John, you had better study what the Bible says about perfection than to believe in these preachers who though no doubt sincere, are often wofully ignorant. It is a great thing to be sanctified, 'body, soul and spirit,' to have holiness of the Lord written on every thought and feeling, to live a spotless life in this evil world. And we cannot attain to it in an hour or in a day. It is the growth of long years, and very few reach the fullness of the stature of Christ on this side of the grave.—*Obadiah Oldschool, in the Interior.*

The Unopened Letter.

BY THE REV P. P. POWER, M. A.

If letters could only write books, what wonderful stories they would tell us—the letters which were read, and what they did, and the letters which were unread, or if read, unheeded, what they did, too; and the letters which were lost, and what might have happened, or been prevented happening, if only they had arrived safely—the stories which all these could tell, would make a library of themselves. This little paper is concerning a letter which in one sense of the word was not lost, inasmuch as it reached the hands of the person for whom it was intended, but which in another sense of the word was lost, inasmuch as it reached the hands of the person intended, but was never opened—at least, not until it could not do any good.

There was a young man, belonging to a very good family, who took up with very bad ways, and rushed into sin of every kind. At last he was driven from sheer shame from home, and enlisting, was sent to India. For a long time his poor parents did not know what had become of him; but at last they heard through a friend. As soon as his father knew where a letter would find him he wrote to him as follows:

"My dear Son: You are breaking your mother's heart. Come home at once, and we freely forgive you for all the wrong you have done us. I send out money to a friend in Calcutta to buy you out of the ranks, and also sufficient to bring you home. Come at once. We will give you a hearty welcome home. Your loving father."

This kind letter the young man got safely enough, but he never opened it. No doubt he knew his father's handwriting well; no doubt his conscience told him what he deserved from that father, and perhaps under the influence of such a thought, he never opened the letter at all. It seems wonderful, that day after day should pass, and that letter remain in that young man's possession, and that he should never look at it. Further and further into sin dig this poor fellow go; but at last he came to the end of his tether—it is a long lane that has no turning, and the longest lane of sin has it, and sooner or later; and this young man found his lane's end on a bed of sickness and death. Finding himself dying, the poor fellow asked the hospital nurse to give him the unopened letter out of his knapsack. There he found all that had been so long ready for his acceptance, waiting for him—forgiveness, provision, liberty, reconciliation, welcome, love—everything that a man under his circumstances, and in his condition, could want. But alas! the time for laying hold of these blessings had passed from him, he was dying; and soon he died.

You say 'Why, the man must have been a fool. How did he know what was in that letter? He might have looked into it at any rate.'

Yes; and I add something more: even though he knew that he deserved nothing good from his father—though his conscience told him that—he might have known that there is such a thing as fatherhood. Conscience cannot and will not tell us that, though it will tell us we have sinned shamefully against it; but we know it, nevertheless; but he never let the thoughts of "fatherhood" come into his mind—"fatherhood" with its tenderness and long suffering and love—and so he neglected opening his letter, and by that neglect missed all.

Now God's letter to you, good reader, is the Bible, and perhaps you—certainly a great many—are treating God's letter to them in just such as foolish a way as this young man treated his father's letter to him. He did not look into it, and read it, and think about it, and act upon it. But many will not look into their Bibles at all. They know well enough that they ought to find their condemnation there, and they think that they will find only that. They think they will find some check on the way in which they want to go. It is the Book of the One they have offended against, and they cannot imagine that He should be the very one to write kindly to them, to provide everything for them, to think out everything lovingly for them. . . .

You have a Bible at home, young man; do not leave it unopened any longer. Just make the experiment to see what it really contains, and if you cannot find in it all that there was in this young man's letter, then I will not ask you to read it any more; but if you can, then "come home," "come home." God has written to you; do not any longer keep by you The Unopened Letter.—*The Quiver.*

"I Can't Afford It."

"Indeed, I can't afford it," was the frequent reply of a merchant, when asked for a contribution to religious or missionary objects. He was doing an extensive and apparently lucrative business, and professed to be warm in his devotion to Christ. Yet his givings were very meager, when he gave at all; and generally his ready excuse was at hand, "I can't afford it," as his apology for refusing even a trifle.

A well-known gentleman, who lived in the same city, and sometimes acted as an unpaid collector for a very important missionary society, called one day at the merchant's dwelling-house to solicit a contribution. Often had he been denied at the office with the words, "I can't afford it;" and in the grand residence, as his eyes rested on the magnificence which several open doors unveiled, he began to discern that there was some truth in the apology after all.

The owner of the house shortly appeared. His visitor explained the reason of his call, but immediately added; "I see, sir, that you really cannot afford it, and I cannot think of presenting any claim upon you. Such a scale of expenditure, as I see indicated by everything around me, can indeed leave you little, if anything, for the cause of Christ. I must look elsewhere for support to our operations. Good morning, sir."

The well-meant reproof did its intended work. The merchant, ere long, sought an interview with his faithful monitor, and thanked him warmly for his straightforward but brotherly remarks. Handing him a check for £200 as a donation to the missionary society for which he was collecting, he said that henceforth he meant to act as a steward for God, and that never again would his style of living prove a hindrance to the exercise of ardent piety and practical love.

There are too many Christians, among both the richer and the poorer classes of society, who, like the merchant, cannot afford to give for the advancement of the gospel, simply because they spend so much upon themselves and their families. We were not created, we are not upholden and prospered from day to day, merely that we may eat, and drink, and dress, and glorify ourselves by dazzling the eyes of our neighbors. The proper object and the true enjoyment of existence are to be found, not in self-display, but in self sacrifice, under the constraining love of Jesus living for the glory of God, and the temporal and eternal welfare of our fellow-creatures. It is a hopeful symptom when professing Christians begin to enquire, as this merchant did, "Why am I spending so much on myself, and giving so little to my Father in heaven?"—*Presbyterian Messenger.*

RECOGNIZING HIS OWN.—In a volume of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons, recently published under the title, The Best Bread, there occurs this striking illustration on the purpose of suffering:

Affliction is the seal of the Lord's election. I remember a story of Mr. Mack, who was a Baptist minister in Northamptonshire. In his youth he was a soldier, and, calling on Robert Hall when his regiment marched through Leicester, that great man became interested in him, and procured his release from the ranks. When he went to preach in Glasgow, he sought out his aged mother, whom he had not seen for many years. He knew his mother the moment he saw her, but the old lady did not recognize her son. It so happened that when he was a child, his mother had accidentally wounded his wrist with a knife. To comfort him she cried, "Never mind, my bonnie bairn, your mither will ken you by that when ye are a man." When Mack's mother would not believe that a grave, fine-looking minister could be her own child, he turned up his sleeve and cried, "Mither, mither, dinna ye ken that?" In a moment they were in each other's arms. Ah, brethren, the Lord knows the spot of his children! He acknowledges them by the mark of correction. What God is doing to us in the way of trouble and trial is but his acknowledging mark of us as true heirs, and the marks of his rod shall be our proof that we are not bastards, but true sons. He knows the wounds he made when he was exercising his sacred surgery upon us. By this, also, shall you yourself be made to know that verily you are a piece of gold, or else you would not have been put into the furnace. This will be one "expected end" of the Lord towards us; let us rejoice in it.

Life's Purpose.

In life's battle a true purpose—a correct aim—is the great matter. The conflict is essentially a moral one. Men are men because they have wills, consciences, faculties of faith. Reason is not the distinguished characteristic of manhood. The lowest forms of rational and the highest forms of brute life overlap. To choose a correct purpose for one's life is the prerogative of free, self-conscious, moral manhood. This purpose plays on the springs of action in the soul. It guides the activities and shapes the character of the man. It is like the backbone to his physical frame—it sustains the movements of his life, or, like the mountains, the backbones of the continents, which determine the slopes of the valleys, the courses of the rivers, the fertilities of the soil, and the history of the nations, so these cherished and controlling purposes of men's lives determine their histories and their destinies.

In our day many make wealth the end of life. They propose to enjoy to the full the sense of possession, and so they heap up riches, not knowing who shall gather them. Fame may be the purpose of a man's life. He will so live and act as that his name may be known to his contemporaries, and pronounced or mispronounced by the on-coming generations. Pleasure is made the pleasure of some existences. Men who are more in touch with the times than with the eternities, make strength their ideal. The victory, they say, is ever to the strongest. Nature loves big, shrewd, hearty, eupeptic fellows, and has little regard for weak, guileless saints, even if they do hate lying and theft and murder, and love chastity and charity. Some again make "culture" their ideal, and ever go delicately marching after it, wooing it in artificial if not in nasal tones. He who looked out over two eternities, and was at one with the Father of worlds, declared righteousness to be the true purpose of life. He told men created in God's image to strive to enter more and more into God's experiences, and become like him in character. At the very threshold of his young manly life, Christ placed this purpose before Him, and never once let it sink below the horizon of his endeavor.—*G. C. Feeley, in the Philadelphian.*

Divine Strength.

When one thinks of the amazing truth of God's dwelling in the soul and strengthening it, when one repeats such passages as these—"The Lord is my strength and my salvation. Though an host should encamp against me I will not be afraid. More is He that is for us than all that can be against us. If God be for us who can be against us? When I am weak then I am strong. I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." When one but gets a glimpse of what it means to have God on our side, to have God's strength in us equal to all demands and all emergencies, do not the words that speak these grand and tender truths come as lofty, soothing, stirring music? We feel invincible because of God's promise, and the weaker we are in ourselves the stronger we are in Him. We repeat with enthusiasm the Apostle's words—"I glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Divine strength is particularly shown in us in the overcoming of our spiritual foes. Who are the Ammonites and Hittites, the Amorites and the gigantic Anakims, that we have to encounter? Who are the confederate kings with their hosts? Who is Goliath and the Philistines? They are our evil thoughts and ways, our perverse habits, our heathenish, worldly, carnal, devilish thoughts and ways. If we are only faithful and resolute in fighting every such enemy of God and man, the Lord will rain down stones from heaven upon them, the brooks will sweep them away, and the stars from heaven will fight against them. All things are in league with him who is fighting the battles of truth and righteousness and love of God, if only he will be strong and of good courage. Every man who has been intent on fighting against the sins in his heart and life has found the light last as long as he needed it, the sun did not haste to go down all the day of his struggle. O soldier of God, be resolved, earnest, unsparing in extirpating sin, wrestle with it, give it mortal blows, make no covenant with hell, no argument with death, let there be no truce in the war and all the lights of heaven will serve you.—*J. Leckie, D D.*

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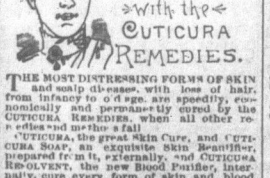

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