

THE PULPIT.

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The Cheerful Christian.

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Our readers will read the following sermon with much of the interest attached to an honored name. The preacher belongs to a remarkable family, each son of which has carved out for himself a high place on the roll of fame. Dr. Cunningham Geikie, as the learned and popular author, Dr. Archibald Geikie, as the master in the science of geology, Dean Geikie of Toronto, as the intrepid and distinguished medical educationist; and the author of the sermon here given, as one of the most prominent and successful ministers of the Church with which he is connected. A family record truly to be proud of and on a par with some of the most remarkable that even Scotland can produce.

"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."—John xvi. 33. An old divine says, "Christ's victory is a Christian's triumph, for, as He overcome evil and all its results, so shall His people by Him, and in Him be enabled to do. Therefore, such may be of good cheer." This phrase, "Be of good cheer," occurs occasionally in our Lord's intercourse with men, as this is recorded for us. Thus, in Matt. ix. 2, He said to the palsied man who lay at His feet, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." "When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea they were troubled, saying 'it is a Spirit,' and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, 'Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.'" So also in the text, when He had been telling them of the sorrows which awaited them through many tribulations, He used the same words, "Be of good cheer," and the thought thus suggested seems to be, that at all times it is the duty and interest of Christians to be both of good cheer, or heart, and of good courage; to keep up a delight and confidence in God whatever presses, and a good hope, whatever threatens; sorrowful indeed, but always rejoicing, know that all is in good hands.

Writing to the Philippians Paul says, "Let this mind be in you which was always in Christ Jesus," and we know what this mind was. "This mind," of which Paul spoke was the whole tone and all the thoughts of our Lord. He had a mind, and this had a character of its own. He had opinions, and these were definite. On all the relationships of man to God and of God to man He formed opinions, and on all His own doings He held unalterable and unerring opinions. Thus, the "mind of Christ" in its great features, and the opinions of Christ in their great features, are all before us. There are, however, lesser traits which do not so clearly appear. His habits as a man are not prominently set forth. Minor ways and idiosyncrasies are not set forth. We see the Prophet and His doctrines; we see the Moralist and His rules; we see the Son in relation to the Father; we see the Priest in His sacrificial work; we see the Intercessor in His meditation; we see all that economically belongs to His divinity and His humanity, all that belongs to the Father's glory and man's salvation; all this is clear, but the unofficial and specially human features of the Divine Man do not so prominently stand forth. No picture of Him remains. We do not know His height. We cannot tell what were the tones of His voice, and His manners in dealing with His fellows are not recorded. But these also were part of the mind that was in Christ Jesus. Thus, we never read of His being moved to laughter. He was moved to tears, He was moved to depression, awfully profound; He was moved to pity; He was moved to anger, but to laughter not, so far as we know. That He smiled we may well believe, for all good men smile, but beyond this He seems not to have passed. Nor in this gravity is Jesus meant for our example. The guilt of the world was laid on Him; the glory of His Father was entrusted to Him, and sufferings which we cannot understand were laid on Him; the salvation of mankind depended on Him. His was a tremendous load, such as no man bore before, nor shall bear again, and if when our own load is great we grow grave, even so, as I believe the son of man was grave. Ordinary life has its lightness, its gaiety, its abandon; but the life of Jesus could hardly know such relaxation. The mighty responsibility which excluded this was in truth part of His sorrow. He walked and spoke and looked as one on whose shoulders rested the burden of hell and the hopes of heaven. Such seems a just conception of the constant aspect and attitude of the Son of man. So also, doubtless, there was a quiet imposed on His immediate followers and friends. We read of His disciples being troubled with their mutual jealousies, with their quarrels, with their self-seeking, with their bursts of anger, with their

various littleneases, but, in His presence, at least, gravity mastered them all. Even Judas Iscariot was silent in all the hardness of his sin. Just as our friends, when pressed with a great care, are honored by our decorum, so may we understand that our Lord was honored by the thoughtful ways of those who were most with Him. We find no trace of lightness amongst the men who walked with Him as He journeyed, any more than we find lightness with them at the last supper, or before the Sanhedrim. The Spirit of the Man of Sorrows overawed them all and at all times. But it so overawed them that there was no severity in it all, but incitement to the profoundest honor and the tenderest love.

His was the graveness of a God. While then we would feel that the mirth which becomes us well and is needed for our happiness and health is not exhibited by our Lord, it is surely never forbidden. His word of "good cheer" tells us that what He was in this respect we need not be. "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." What then is the fashion which becomes a true follower of Christ? We have read in these times of "muscular Christianity," and much folly has linked itself with the phrase. All it lawfully means, however, is that manliness in action, in speech and in conduct is quite compatible with true godliness. For a time and with many there was a notion from which religion has severely suffered, that if a man became a Christian his manliness must be more or less laid aside; that he must no more seem as other men seem, speak as other men speak, laugh as other men laugh, amuse himself as other men sinlessly may; but that on the other hand, not only must he depart from evil, but he must throw off his natural habits and assume habits often wholly foreign to them, and which are supposed to be peculiar to persons of religious life. Against this there has arisen a strong protest, and, while in all things good men must avoid needless offence and defy no reasonable opinion, still in the name of Christ and for the sake of Christianity it is well that this protest against pretence and unnaturalness should be made.

Men may be cheerful Christians, sturdy Christians, energetic Christians, if only they be consistent Christians. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Thus, when the holiest of men are happy, they will show their happiness in the ordinary way, and laughter is one of the ordinary and most natural ways. Carlyle says that the "man who cannot laugh is only 'fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils.' His whole life is already a treason and a stratagem. Of none such comes good." There is a laughter which is brutal and there is the laughter of a fool, but the laughter of a good man, whose mind is at peace with God and with men, if they will let him, is the outcome of qualities lying deep down in the purest portion of his soul. I am pleading, not for grimace, but for that cheerfulness of habit which is a joy to its possessor, and should be a characteristic of any follower of our Lord. "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." There are many things which make us afraid, and we are afraid about many things which should not frighten us. But a Christian man is a man in the government of all things in the hand of his Redeemer, and surely he may, when he is cast down, wrestle against undue despondency. There are stormy nights and stormy days; there are cloudless and there are cloudy skies; there are glassy seas, and there are great green waves which threaten to engulf; there are dews which beautify the morning, and there are mornings which are the outcome of sleepless nights and which usher in hours of weeping; there are meetings too happy for speech, and there are partings where speech cannot be; there are lonesome walks by the sea, when nought is heard but the sullen dash of salt, salt waters, and nothing seen but a sky lowering into darkness. Then, Oh, then doth the Master come! And then, Oh, then, may the Master come! And then, Oh, then, let us hear Him say "It is I; be not afraid; be of good cheer." The palsied man was too weak to rise. His hollow face had heavy wrinkles and his eyes had a wistful look, and the Christ saw it all and felt it all and knew all that it meant. He would fain be well. But could he ever again rise from that bed, and could he ever again walk as other men walked, and speak as other men spoke, and act as other men acted, and be glad as other men were glad? Would he once again clasp his child in his arms and dandle it on his knees? Would he ever again sing as he followed the plough, or bargain as he stood at his stall? Would he ever again earn an honest man's bread? And the answer was "Son, be of good cheer," while sin was pardoned and he walked—a man erect, to his own home. The cares of a sinning nature at times are very heavy, very oppressive; nay, more, they threaten to overwhelm; but then comes the word "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Yes, He has overcome, and His people shall also overcome. Their fortunes are linked with His life, and as the ages pass on He is always their Saviour. So they are safe, and may throw off their dread and go on assured and of "good cheer." Whether, then, we look at this life or at the next, the words of Christ apply, and we should seek to walk, not in gloom, not in fear, not in cowardly shrinking, not in despair; we should travel in faith, and often say, as we pray for His help, "It is I; be not afraid; be of good cheer." How different is the thoughtless manner of the unreflecting man of the world, or the stolidity of the unfeeling, or the stoicism of the cold, strong man, from the invited confidence of him who, knowing every difficulty, quivering with every sorrow, bowing under every weight, nevertheless lifts up his head, knowing that God is on his right hand so that he shall not be greatly moved. He is of good cheer, for, poor and miserable and blind and naked as he is in himself, he yet knows that greater is He who is for him than all they that be against him, and that his Elder Brother will be his sun and shield, will give him all needful grace, and will at last bring him into that glory which will be all-sufficient, even should he sit on the lowest seat in the temple above. May we then, while we pass on, ever look to our Great High Priest and "Be of good cheer."