

The Lesson of Gladness.

Gladness is God's ideal for his children. The Christian is exhorted to rejoice always. This does not mean that his life is exempt from trouble. The gospel does not give us a new set of conditions, with pain and sorrow eliminated. Christian gladness is something that overcomes sorrow.

There are many things which are meant to minister gladness. This is a beautiful world in which we live. We do not think enough about what God has done for our pleasure in the adorning of our earthly home. Many have said that, when Jesus speaks of the many mansions in the Father's house, he does not refer to heaven only, but means that this world is one of the mansions, while heaven is another. Surely it is beautiful enough for an apartment of the Father's house. No doubt heaven will be more lovely, for sin has left its trail on everything of earth. Yet there is loveliness enough in this world to fill our hearts with rapture.

Another thing that ministers to human gladness is the goodness of God in providence. The world is not only beautiful, it is our Father's world. Jesus says that our Father feeds even the birds, and clothes even the flowers; and he assures us that his care for his children is much more tender and sure. "If I could not believe," says one, "that there is a thinking mind at the center of things, life would be to me intolerable." But there is not only a thinking mind—there is also a Father's heart at the center of things. On every leaf is written a covenant of divine love. On every flower and tuft of moss is found a pledge of divine thought and faithfulness.

"We are not left of God

So long as a rose blossoms at our window-pane;
So long as the sun shines, and the soft rain
Calls forth the early violets from the sod,
If but a wild brier by our pathway nod,
After its wintry death awakened again,
Seeing its life we may forget our pain
Of unbelief. Who brings forth life but God?
He stains with tender tint the lily's lip;
Feeds with incessant care the insect crew;
Drops honey for the wandering bee to sip,
In a white chalice set with pearls of dew.
The glow-worm hath its lamp; the firefly's light
Is but a pledge of love writ on the night."

It would minister greatly to our gladness if we had a firmer faith in the goodness of the providence that rules in life's affairs. It is said that one of the great diamond fields of South Africa was discovered in this interesting way: One day a traveler entered the valley and passed before a settler's door, where a boy was amusing himself by throwing little stones. One of the stones fell at the feet of the visitor, and he picked it up and was about to return it to the boy, when he saw a flash of light from it which arrested his attention and made his heart beat with eager surprise. The stone was a diamond. The boy had no thought of its value. To him it was only a plaything. To the passer-by it was only a common pebble which he spurned with his foot. But to the eye of the man of science a gem of surpassing value was enfolded in the rough covering. Then all the pebbles scattered about were also diamonds.

Many of the events of providence appear to ordinary eyes uninteresting, unmeaning, often even unkindly. Yet in each event there is wrapped up a divine treasure of good and blessing for the child of God. We need only eyes of faith to find in every painful experience a helper of our gladness. Precious gems of rarest blessing are enclosed in the rough crusts of hard-hip, care, loss, and trial, which we are continually coming upon in life's ways.

Another helper of gladness is a happy home. Many of us would never be able, day after day, to face life with its struggles, its duties, its antagonisms, were it not for the renewal of strength which we get in our home. A true home is a little fragment of heaven let down on earth to inspire us with patience and strength for the way.

A good life also ministers to gladness. One who neglects and disobeys God's commandments is making unhappiness for himself. Sin's pleasures yield briars and thorns. The later years of life are fields in which the sowings of earlier years come to ripeness. Nothing ministers more surely to happiness than a well-watched past. Good deeds, gentle ministries, unselfish kindnesses, yield memories of joy.

There is a Persian story of a vizier who dedicated one apartment in his palace to be a chamber of memory. In it he kept the memorials of his earlier days, before royal favor had lifted him from his lowly place to honor. It was a little room, with bare floor, and here he kept his crook, his wallet, his coarse dress, and his water-curse,—the things which had belonged to his shepherd life. Every day he went for an hour from the splendors of his palace into this humble apartment, to live again for a time amid the memories of his happy youth. Very sweet were his recollections, and by this daily visit his heart was kept warm and tender amid all the pomp and show, and all the trial and sorrow, of his public life. It would be a wonderful promoter of gladness if every one, in the midst of life's responsibilities and cares, its temptations and struggles, would keep such a chamber of memory filled with the mementoes of his youth's happy days. Most of us grow old too soon. We forget our childhood joys, and we take upon us too early the burdens of maturity. We should keep one room in our heart as a treasure-chamber for the sweet joys that we have left behind. Memory has a marvelous power to make gladness for us.

These are some of the ways in which gladness is promoted. The word "glad" comes from a root which means to be bright, to shine. Much is said in the Bible about the duty of Christians to be lights in the world. We are lamps which God lights that we may shine. We are particularly warned against having our light dimmed or obscured. Nothing does this more effectually than unhappiness. A Christian should be a lamp that always shines. A man who had lived an unusually long

and noble Christian life feared that he might fail to honor Christ in suffering. Many Christians fall at this point. When trials come, the brightness grows dim. We forget that it is as sinful to lose our joy and peace as it is to lose our honesty and truthfulness.

Gladness is not a mere privilege for the Christian,—a quality which he may or may not have in his life. It is not a matter merely of temperament. It will not do to say that, while some people were born with a sunny spirit, we were born with a gloomy disposition, and therefore cannot be glad. It is the mission of Christian faith to change nature. "The fruit of the Spirit is joy." Christian gladness is not natural exhilaration—it is converted sadness.

How can we learn to be always glad-hearted? Atmosphere is important. If we live in a malarial region, we need not be surprised if we have malaria. If we move to a place where the air is pure, sweet, wholesome, we may hope to be well and strong. There are spiritual atmospheres, too, some wholesome, some unwholesome, and we should choose our abiding place where the influences will promote gladness. "Is it always foggy here?" asked a passenger of the captain of the banks of Newfoundland. "How should I know, madam? I do not live here," was the reply. Too many Christians live in the fog of fear and unbelief, and then wonder why they do not have the joy of the Lord.

Then far more than we know is gladness a lesson to be learned. It does not come naturally to many of us, at least, although there is a great difference in temperament, and some learn the lesson much more easily than others do. To none is it natural to rejoice in sorrow,—this is something which all of us must learn. Nor can we merely, by resolving to be glad, go through all the days thereafter with a song in our heart and sunshine in our face. The lesson can be mastered only through years of patient self-discipline, just as all life's lessons must be mastered.

It will help us in this experience if we keep ever before us the ideal that we are always to be glad, that failure here is sin, and grieves God. It will help us, also, if we keep our heart full of the great thoughts which are meant to inspire gladness. Longfellow gave a young friend this advice: "See some good picture—in nature, if possible, or on canvas, hear a page of the best music, or read a great poem every day. Then, at the end of the year, your mind will shine with such an accumulation of jewels as will astonish even yourself." To this may be added: Take into your heart every day some cheering word of God. Listen to some heavenly song of hope or joy. Let your eye dwell on some beautiful vision of divine love. Thus your very soul will become a fountain of light, and gladness will become more and more the dominant mood of your life.

We cannot too strongly emphasize the truth that gladness is a Christian duty. We are here to lighten the world by our life. This we can never do by going about with sad face and heavy heart. If our religion cannot make us rejoicing Christians, whatever our temperament, or whatever our circumstances may be, we are not getting the best from it. We can serve the world in no other way so well as by being glad Christians. Then the light will shine through us wherever we go, and others who witness the victoriousness of our life will want to know of the Saviour who can help us to such triumphant faith.—S. S. Times.

Higher.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

Webster's famous remark to a young lawyer, who complained that the legal-profession was over-crowded, "there is plenty of room at the top," will apply to the Christian church. While there are quite enough minimum Christians (who will probably have only a minimum heaven), there are some who are becoming sick of themselves and of their low attainments. To be barely alive does not satisfy them. "Friend, go up higher!" He who imparted to you such spiritual life as you have offers to you "life more abundantly." Jesus Christ is the inexhaustible source of strength and joy, and it depends upon yourself how much of these you shall possess. Growth is not a momentary, magical gift; it is a process, and you must do the growing. Paul was no perfectionist when he exclaimed, "but one thing I do; I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." There was something higher yet before him.

Just what are the essentials of that more abundant life that you should strive after? The first one that I may name is, more faith. "Lord, increase our faith," was the prayer of men who felt that they were but children, and not full grown; they saw only through a glass dimly and often stumbled on the road. A feeble faith may move mole-hills; it takes a stalwart faith to move mountains. It is the feebleness of the grip on the Almighty Saviour and Lord that makes it so difficult to stand a heavy strain, or carry a heavy load, or exert powerful influence over other hearts and lives. This is the secret of a vast deal of the unfaithful preaching in the pulpit, and unfaithful teaching in Sunday Schools, and of failure generally to accomplish much good in the world. Look over the official reports of a great number of churches and you will see that they barely hold their own; many—in the mercantile phrase—have ceased to "pay any dividend." "According to your faith be it unto you;" that is Christ's measurement of spiritual power. If a minister does not know whom he believes, and does not know that the book he holds in his hand is God's own "fire and hammer," he will not be likely to melt, or to break many hard, stubborn hearts. Doubt means debility; unbelief means death. What is true of ministers is equally true of all Christians.

You will realize the vital necessity of an increase of

faith, if you will but understand that faith is vastly more than an intellectual process or a mental assent to divine truth. It is vastly more than a devout emotion, and a mighty different thing is it from the pious fetish that some religious quacks are now employing for purposes of delusion. A genuine Christian faith is just the grasping union of the soul with the Omnipotent Son of God. "I am the vine; ye are the branches; abide in me." That is the way in which Christ puts it, and faith makes that very union. The closer your connection with Jesus is, the greater will be the amount of grace that flows into your soul and out into your daily life. I have seen a current of electricity sent through a huge horseshoe magnet that enabled it to lift four thousand pounds; the moment that the current was drawn off the weights dropped to the floor. The more abundant your faith, the fuller and more potent will be the inflow of Jesus Christ. "Not I," exclaimed the old giant of apostolic days—"not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God." That sentence of Paul is about the best description of the sort of higher life that Meyer and Murray and Moody are now advocating. Stripped of all the language of mysticism that is about the core of the matter.

With increase of faith will come great increase of spiritual vigor. When a person's system is in a low, impoverished condition, he is liable to catch any fevers which are prevailing. It is a feeble spiritual life that breeds self-seeking and covetousness and worldliness, and also exposes one to the age-fits of unbelief. As weak blood breeds ulcers, so weak spiritual state breeds sinful lusts. With a sick soul, as with a sick body, the problem is whether there is internal vitality enough to slough off the disease. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," said Jesus, when Simon Peter was in a wretchedly bad way; and but for imparted grace that ugly assault of Satan in Pilate's courtyard might have been the end of poor Peter. After he was endued with the more abundant vigor of Christ's promised Spirit, he withstood fifty-fold stronger pressure without flinching. It is very encouraging to weak Christians that the poltroon who was frightened by the sneers of a servant-girl lived to face Herod's jellars and the threats of death without turning purple in the lips. Why should any Christian be so feeble and so easily upset when he might be strengthened with all power in the inner man, according to the might of Jesus Christ? The more vigor you pray for, the more you will receive. Rouse up to useful activities. Quit your Sunday afternoon lounge for some thorough mission work. Active exercise does for the soul just what it does for the body.

You say that you are not happy; and I do not wonder. None of us are as happy as we might be. Many professed Christians carry such repulsive countenances and irritable tongues, and shed around them such a chill, that if they should ever try to win an unconverted person that person might well retort: "No, I thank you; if your religion carries such a face as yours, I don't want it." Such Christians cheat themselves out of their birthright. Jesus promised them that if they continued to abide in his love, his joy would remain in them and their joy would be full. Mounts of rapture are only occasionally reached in the best lives; but a healthy person enjoys a ripe pear or a California orange. A loyal husband enjoys the welcoming kiss of a loving wife at his threshold; and there must be something wrong in you if you profess to be working for him, and find no delight in it. How can you possess Christ and a clean conscience, and not be happy over it?

Joy is love looking at its treasures. The richer you become in having Christ with you here, and in the expectation of being with him forever, the more inventions you make in helping other people, and drying tears, and saving souls, the fuller will be your jewel-casket. If you say to me: "I have not enjoyed my religion much lately, then I may suggest to you that you had not much religion to enjoy. Turn a new leaf; make a new start, with the honest question: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' and then do it. His smile will give you sunshine, and put a new song into your mouth. Put more conscience into your religion. Weakness means wickedness. Don't worry over 'hard times' or outside troubles; if you have peace of conscience you can stand rough weather cheerfully. There are always some chilly days in March and April, but summer will come along in its time, with the joys of harvest. Jesus offers you 'life more abundantly'; grasp the offer and, quitting the boggy and dark low grounds, let him lead you up higher!—Selected.

Vote Prohibition.

"The Plebiscite? Pooh! That talk is all bosh. Prohibition cannot hold sway; Besides, it tramples upon our rights,"
We can hear some voter say.
"My boys? They inherit common sense From both father's and mother's side; But I don't care; folks can do as they please; I shall let the whole thing slide.

Liberty! Rights! they are stirring words,
They strengthen the patriot's arm,
But is it right to give man the right
To do his brother harm?
And if Prohibition to prohibit fails,
'Twill be someone's fault somewhere,
But to blame those who've honestly labor'd for good,
Would be cruel, and unfair.

Is common sense a sure guarantee
One will always sober remain?
Or did greatness an Alexander save;
Or talent a Burns restrain?
The work of reformers is not alone, sir,
For the laddies on whom you may date,
Their platform is wide sir, so broaden yours out,
For the good of the race cast your vote!

A. J. C.

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