THE GRACE OF SILENCE.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

"I was dumb with silence."—Psalm 39:2.

Or if we translate it still more literally, "I was silenced with dumbness." The Psalmist adds to this, "I held my peace." A little farther on he says again, "I am silenced. I will not open my mouth, because Thou didst it." A wise man was the Psalmist when he wrote these words. He knew what an unruly member a tongue often is; so he determined to "keep for his mouth a muzzle" while the prosperity of the wicked moved him to murmuring.

In these passages, David reiterates the grace of silence, and upon this topic let us gather some suggestions for everyday use. There is a time to speak out, a time to be heard, when muzzled lips would betray cowardice and be treason to the truth. At such times "speech is silver," but there are other occasions when "silence is golden." And such occasions I will now point out to you.

WHEN PROMPTED BY INQUISITIVENESS.

The first occasion is when we are under the pressure of sheer inquisitiveness. There are some people who have a chronic itch of curiosity; they are the "busy-bodies in other men's matters." Instead of minding their own business, they pry into the affairs of their neighbors—not for the purpose of help, or sympathy, but for the gratification of insatiate curiosity. Now such persons ought not to be encouraged by being gratified. There are many things which we have a right to keep to ourselves, and which the public has no business with. Our newspapers (I am sorry to say) publish quite too often what ought to be private. Every man's "house is his castle"; if he chooses to let the whole community in, then he is responsible for the discoveries made—whether of silver on his table or of "skeletons in his closets." A wise man will keep his own secrets; the discreet and self-respecting will keep to themselves all those matters with which "the stranger" has no right to "intermeddle." There are sore spots in almost every household that delicacy ought to conceal; why allow unfeeling hands to increase their festering or make them bleed? A thousand domestic difficulties, a thousand scandals, would never get wind, if people were wise enough to padlock their own tongues about their own affairs. Be careful whom you make your confidants; "a tale-bearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a trusty spirit concealeth the matter." As for the crime of divulging what is entrusted to you in secret confidence, it is a crime compounded of falsehood and treachery. Upon the whole subject two sound rules ought to be observed—one is: never to ask what you have no right to know—the other rule is never to tell other people what they have no right to know. So high was the apostle's estimate of the grace of silence that he declared that "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body."

WHEN TEMPTED TO DISPARAGEMENT.

A second occasion for silence is when you are strongly tempted to disparage others. Remember that the tongue is a sharp instrument; it cuts deep, it often draws blood; you may commit murder with it as truly as with a dagger or a pistol. Alas! how many there are who limp along wounded, or carry the ugly scar which cruel slander has inflicted!

Wilful slander you will all detest, but a peculiar temptation to detraction often comes in this wise. We hear somebody extolled greatly; he or she has won great success, or received high praise. Envy (that hateful spirit that often disguises itself under the name of "Justice") says to us, "That person is set up too high; he or she ought to be taken down." So we set over against their virtues some deformities of character or some evil things that we know about them. Grant that we do know them—why speak of them? Why fling a nasty "fly" into that sweet ointment? When so fine a picture has been drawn, why thrust a daub of detraction over it? Grant it, even farther, that the person thus extolled has once slighted or injured you, and here is a chance for retaliation. In the name of generosity, "hold your peace." If you cannot honestly join in the praise, do not let your tongue croak an envious discord; if you cannot help to set another up, do not endeavor to pull him down. Silence is sometimes as magnanimous as a speech of vindication is at other times. Nay, my dear friends, if we cannot sincerely say anything good about our fellow-creatures, is it not better to say nothing at all? "Throwing mud" is always dirty work; if you do not defile the individual you aim at, you are pretty sure to soil your own hands.

WHEN MAINTAINED UNDER PROVOCATION.

If silence be golden under the circumstances of which I have already spoken—then does it shine with a peculiar lustre when it is maintained under great provocation.

When our house takes fire, the first impulse is to go after a bucket of water. But if temper takes fire, the first impulse is to throw on more fuel. Now, the best water-bucket for aroused temper is resolute silence. If, whenever a provoking word were spoken to us, or an irritating act were done, or an injury struck us, we should firmly seal our lips for even ten minutes, we would save ourselves many a quarrel, many a heart-burn, many a mortification, many a disgrace to our religious profession. Speech is often explosive and shattering. Silence is cooling. It cools us off and cools other people. One of the calmest men I ever knew told me that he used to be violently passionate, but he broke his temper by resolutely bridling his tongue until he cooled down.

What answer that can be given to many an irritating word, and even to a just provocation, is as effective as dignified silence? What eloquence there is sometimes in lips sealed tight by self-control, by patient fortitude, by the serene sense of right! What sublimity there is in silence when innocence reviled, reviles not again! How divine was the silence of our adorable Master, when, under all the buffetings and insults of His brutal enemies, He opened not His holy lips! Those lips might have summoned legions of angels to His rescue! That tongue might have shot the lightnings of heaven into the fiendish crowd of persecutors who hunger for His blood. "Answerest Thou nothing?" exclaimed the enraged high priest. "But Jesus held His peace." Then Pilate breaks in, "Answerest Thou nothing? behold, how many things they witness against Thee?" But Jesus yet "answered not a word." Other men have died for what they have said. Here was a personage who died for what He would not say, and was calmly silent. Wonderful composure! Wonderful silence of conscious innocence and Divine holiness! Wonderful patience of the Son of God! "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth!"

THE DISCOVERY OF GOD.

Ah! my friends, it is a glorious discovery that we make when we discover God's hand in an experience of joy or an experience of sorrow. If a fellowman has done us a wrong, we may kindle into resentment; we may scold at his stupid blunder; or vent our indignation at his wilful unkindness. But when we come up to face our Heavenly Father, and recognize His great, overshadowing hand, then there is nothing for us but silence and submission! Further questionings will do us no good, for God keeps His own secrets. Murmurings will do us no good, but only aggravate our sorrows. Rebellion is ruin. Push as far as we can, press as hard as we may, we cannot get beyond this tremendous truth: God did it, God did it! Grasp that truth, hold to that truth, and open your soul's eyes to that, and you have learned—what?

First, you have learned that an all-wise Father did it. There was no haphazard blunder about that stroke.

Why God's treatment of me was wise I do not comprehend, any more than your little boy comprehends the inner works of a clock, when he looks at the face and reads the figure "VIII." Then he says, "It is time to go to school." He accepts the fact without going behind it. This tangled web of God's providence I am not wise enough to unravel. God's wisdom can and will. My poor

"Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain,
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

His own command is, "Be still and know that I am God!" Another glorious thought is wrapped up in these words, "Thou didst it." Then a loving Father did it. That is a precious discovery, for we can bear almost anything if we are sure that love is behind it. Love never wrongs us. Love never tortures us. Love never robs us. Love never lays on us a needless load. The love that "spared not His own Son" can be trusted behind the heaviest blow or the darkest cloud. But some of you may say, "I cannot understand how a loving Father could lay His hand on me so heavily." Good friend! this is not the world to unravel mysteries in, or get explanations from God. Heaven is the world for enlarged knowledge. There "we shall know even as we have been known."

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE.

In this world the great purpose is the development of character. This is the school-life. You and I are little scholars. And when the Almighty, All-wise Teacher is speaking, the child should keep still. When He appoints us hard lessons, we should learn them. The mightiest lesson to be learned in this world is to let God have His way. Your brain and my brain are not big enough to comprehend the mysteries of Divine Providence; but your heart and my heart may trust Him enough to say: I will submit! I am silenced! I open not my mouth because Thou didst it!

Ah! brethren, the battlefield often costs less suffering and requires less courage than the hospital. So in the spiritual conflicts of life, the onsets of duty, with bugles sounding and drums beating, do not so test the metal of our graces as it does to be thrown down wounded and to be carried to the rear. Doing is always easier than bearing! Activity is more than quiet submission. To shout the battle-cry, or huzza from the battlements, is easier than to put our hands on our mouths and sit down speechless because "God does it!"

"He knows the bitter, weary way,
The endless strivings day by day—
The souls that weep—the souls that pray:
He knows.

"He knows! Oh, thought so full of bliss,
For though on earth our joys we miss,
We still can bear it, feeling this:
"God knows! Oh, heart, take up thy cross
And learn earth's treasures are but dross,
And He will turn to gain our loss:
He knows! He knows!"

One of the greatest of living preachers has beautifully told us that "over the arched gate of the Spanish Alhambra there is sculptured an open hand; over the next arch a key. The haughty Moors, who held that palace-fort for so many years, used to boast that the gate of the Alhambra never would be open to the Christians until that hand should take that key. Many a providence, like that Moorish fortress, contains within its frowning battlements sparkling fountains of living water. How many of you have been forced to stand before one of God's heart-trying mysteries—to stand silent—opening not the mouth because 'Thou didst it!' Oh, my friend, stand still a little longer! stand not in despair, but in patient hope! By and bye the hand will take the key; the gate shall open into the heart of the providence, and behind the stern 'Thou didst it' shall be revealed everlasting love and everlasting peace."

"Sometime when all life's lessons have been learned
And sun and stars forevermore have set,
The things which our weak judgments here have spurned,
The things o'er which we grieved with lashes wet,
Will flash before us out of life's dark night,
As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue;
And we shall see how all God's plans are right,
And how what seems reproof was love most true.

"But not to-day. Then be content, poor heart!
God's plans, like lilies pure and white unfold.
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart,
Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.
And if through patient toil we reach the land
Where tired feet with sandals loosed may rest,
When we shall clearly know and understand,
I think that we will say, 'God knew the best!'"

—*From "Stirring the Eagle's Nest."*

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—And what shall I say more? for the time would fail me to tell of all the virtues of Puttner's Emulsion.

Finding God Through Service.

By coming into relations with those around us in terms of kindness, politeness, truth, sacrifice, and service, we find ourselves growing rich in sympathy and tenderness and love. At first we are having to do with persons, but they are infinite, spiritual facts, because persons are the children of God. Persons come from God, who is our home, and they come "trailing clouds of glory." Serving them, denying ourselves for them, coming into sacred and holy relations with them, we find, when the days of childhood are over, that we have come into the possession of something more than human sympathy and affection. Our hearts have come, through this process, to be large and wealthy in the possession of infinite love. Serving God's children, we have come into spiritual commerce with the good Father of us all.

The universe is a loom God has provided for the purpose of weaving a marvellous fabric, a perfect and holy humanity. Human beings are threads of which this fabric is to be woven. It is only when we are in perfect relation to our fellows that God finds it possible to weave us in as parts of this wondrous texture. When we come into right relations with all human beings, we have come into right relations with the universal man, who was the Son of God, and who was the embodiment of the mind of God, and thus we have connected our hearts, with the lines which run through the human race, through Jesus Christ, straight to the heart of God.

And while we are going about doing good, often weary and heavy-hearted, serving our fellows and relieving their wants and seeking to assuage their sorrows, the Divine shuttles are flying, and the great loom is in constant motion, but never forgetting to deposit in our lives the very hues and figures which are necessary to make us beautiful and complete.

For every good gift we make to the betterment of our kind, for every good service rendered, there is an equivalent in the heart of God, which every law and force in the universe is under the necessity of helping towards us. When a grain of corn drops from our hand into the open ground, then the reins and the winds and the sea and the sun take it up, and all the machinery of the round heavens begins to move with reference to increasing and repeating it. When a good deed passes from us looking to the health of another, then it ceases to be a little, local, human thing. It is at once caught up by the forces of infinity, and passes into the spiritual currency of the stars.

And be it remembered that the throne of God itself would as soon dissolve and pass away as that the person from whom the deed proceeded should lose his reward—a reward, too, out of all proportion to the deed, a reward consonant with the nature of God. When a piece of bread passes from the hand of a kind, Christian woman to satisfy the hunger of a poor little boy on the street, it at once assumes infinite proportions, and the spiritual equivalent, which, too, is illimitable, will surely come back to enrich the heart of the woman.

Isolated and alone, we are fragments, we are nothing. It is when we stand in terms of service and love with humanity that we become great and strong and perfect. Of God we learned through our fellows; to God we are to go through our fellows. Of the depths of ourselves we learn through our fellows; to the heights of ourselves we are to go through our fellows.

Christ became perfect man by perfect relation with humanity, and through perfect sacrifice for humanity. He gave us the method and the secret of the Almighty. The refreshing streams, which are to bless and perfect the race, flow from the heart of God, through humanity, the structure of which and the nature of which Christ assumed. Touch humanity perfectly, and you touch God's Son and you touch God's heart, and you get all that is gracious and tender and sweet and holy God has to give.

—*Rev. J. W. Lee, D. D., in Golden Rule.*

"Loveth."

What a wealth of meaning is brought out by the revised translation of the Doxology, caught from the minstrelsy of heaven, with which the Apostle John opens the Book of Revelation! We have been accustomed to read, "Unto Him that loved us"; but now we find it translated from the past tense into the present, "Unto Him that loveth us." The love of Jesus to His own is an eternal noon; a perpetual present; an ocean fulness without tide or shadow of turning.

Of course, He loved us, and bore us on His heart before the worlds were made. It was for love of us that He emptied Himself, and became obedient to the death of the cross. Yes, and He will love us, with the love of the bridegroom towards the bride, through those golden ages which we are to spend with Him, dating from the marriage feast, and ending never. But this is the most priceless thought of all—that He loves us now. If He loved me when He gave Himself for me, it is certain that He loves me equally to-day; because He is the same in the to-day of the present as He was in the yesterday of the past, and as He will be in the forever of the future. He is always "this same Jesus" (Acts 1:11). Time, which changes all things else, is foiled when it approaches the heart of Christ. The flight of ages cannot lessen, or chill, or affect His love. "This man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."

We are so apt to judge of the love of Christ to us by our appreciation and enjoyment of it. It is easy to believe in it when we are bright in spirits and well in health; when the atmosphere is clear, the air invigorating, and the sun shines brightly; or when we are living in happy obedience and conscious fellowship. It needs no great effort, under such circumstances, to be sure of the love of Christ. But when our sky is overcast, and our way lies through a tangled jungle; when they are increased that trouble us, and misfortunes tread on each other's heels; when we are conscious of failure and sin—is it not natural to us then to calculate on the unchanged love of Christ. Yet we might as well suppose that the heat given out by the sun varied with the temperature of our fickle northern climate, as think that the love of Christ changes with every variation of ourselves. It is a constant quantity; it is not turned away by our sins; it is not lessened by our coldness and neglect. Like some perennial spring, it cannot be bound by frost, or reduced by drought, or exhausted by the demands of generations.

The truant servant, lying spiritless on the desert sands; the headstrong apostle, venting denials and oaths in the midst of the servants of his Master's foes; the backslider, reaping the bitter harvest of his ways; the discouraged exile, mourning in the land of the Hermonites over the happy past—all these may look up to the empyrean of the love of Christ, and be sure that He loveth with a constant and unwavering attachment. Write this on the tablets of your hearts, reader; that neither sin, nor depression, nor height, nor depth, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to alter the fulness and constancy of the love of Christ to you. If only Christians would really grasp this great truth, and would dare, in frequent contradiction to their own feelings, to believe in and affirm the unchanging love of God, they would reach a firm standing-ground, from which the great adversary of souls could never dislodge them. "I am feeling loveless and depressed; but God loves me!" "I am groping my way through the darkness; but God loves me!" "I have fallen, and am no better than others; but God loves me!" "I am passing through a season of sore chastening; but this makes me only more sure that my Father loveth me!" This is the secret of victory and rest.

Our Lord bade us abide in His love. "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Of course, this means in the consciousness of His love. It is one thing to be in the light, and quite another thing to know it. There is a sense in which all are living in the light of Christ's love; but we do not all enjoy it as a living, practical experience. "Keep yourselves in the love of God;" that is, cultivate an habitual consciousness of the love of God toward you.—*Rev. F. B. Meyer, M. A.*

A Faithful Servant.

It would oftimes help us bear our trials were we to reflect that we are God's servants rather than His guests. This does not degrade us, for the work of all the world is carried forward by underlings. No monarch saves a state, no commander wins a battle, no captain sails a ship, no trader amasses a fortune, but by the fidelity of his servants. To be God's servants, if faithful, is to be the world's co-redeemers.

But no house is builded with special reference to the servant's chamber. No table is spread with particular attention to him, ignoring the proprietor. His is not the reception-room, the boudoir, the conservatory, or the art-gallery. It is built for purposes foreign to himself, to his needs, his wishes, his understanding even. If therefore the affairs of this world seem to us at times more than out of joint, it may be worth while to consider that the world was not built for our pleasing, but for Divine purposes. Its owner and creator has intents and aims into which we cannot be expected to enter understandingly. Not ignoring us, He nevertheless built it as we build our homes, for Himself rather than for those whom He employs.

And the qualities of a faithful servant are such that he may make everything succeed which otherwise would fail. It is in the power of a scullion to ruin the comforts of a palace. The maid who knows more than her mistress, in her own estimation; the stable-boy who prefers his own judgment to that of his master—each brings many a wise project to grief. It is hard sometimes for the servant to realize that his best grace is fidelity, his most valuable wisdom, submission.

But gospel truths are as sweet as they are strong. The parables which begin with duties end with promises. It is the faithful servant who eventually enters into the joys of his Lord. The parable which begins with girding ends with crowns. He who is faithful in service is at last seated upon a throne. He who was a subaltern in the household becomes a ruler in the city. There is a chariot at last for God's every Cinderella; and he who knows how and when to abase the haughty, is certain in His own good time to exalt them of low degree. That man is most sure to become a ruler over many things who has proved his fidelity over few.—*Interior.*

Working by Faith.

Look at the artist's chisel. The artist cannot carve without it. Yet imagine the chisel, conscious that it was made to carve, and that it is its function, trying to carve alone. It lays itself against the hard marble, but it has neither strength nor skill. Then we can imagine the chisel full of disappointment. "Why cannot I carve?" it cries. Then the artist comes, and seizes it. The chisel lays itself into his hand, and is obedient to him. The obedience is faith. It opens the channels between the sculptor's brain and the hard steel. Thought, feeling, imagination, skill, flow down from the deep chambers of the artist's soul to the chisel's edge. The sculptor and the chisel are not two, but one; it is the unit which they make that carves the stone. We are but the chisel to carve God's statues in this world. Unquestionably we must do the work. But the human worker is only the chisel of the great Artist. The artist needs his chisel, but the chisel can do nothing, produce no beauty of itself. The artist must seize it, and the chisel lay itself into his hand and be obedient to him. We must yield ourselves altogether to Christ, and let Him use us. Then His power, His wisdom, His skill, His thought, His love, shall flow through our soul, our brain, our heart, our fingers. That is working by faith.—*Phillips Brooks.*

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Two Kinds of Sorrow.

Who that has ever observed carefully the faces that meet him on the crowded street, or any public thoroughfare, has failed to notice the large proportion of sad, discontented and unhappy faces among the passing throngs? Every shade and degree of unhappiness, perplexity, sorrow and distress, can be noted during the shortest walk along any city thoroughfare. Among them, however, will always be found two types of faces that reveal clearly the characters of which they are the indices. They are faces that are equally marked by lines that indicate deep suffering, and yet they convey to the beholder a totally different impression. Underneath the deep impress of sorrow one shows patience, serenity, peace, resignation, benignity; the other shows discontent, rebellion, envy, often hatred and malevolence. One has an expression that tells of sorrow and suffering patiently borne by a spirit that seeks relief in fleeing to the highest for refuge and strength and consolation; the other tells of sorrow rebelled against, of disappointments that have soured the spirit, of losses that have warped and embittered the nature. The one is the sorrow that leads to God and to life; the other is "the sorrow of the world that worketh death."

Theologians and philosophers are equally baffled in their attempted explanations of the necessity and uses of sorrow. Never this side the vail can mortal expect to be able to

"Justify the ways of God to man;"

but as to the effect of sorrow upon human character there can be no ground for dispute or question. Some natures are elevated, purified and ennobled by sorrow; others are shrivelled, warped and embittered. In some, sorrow arouses and deepens the sympathies, broadens the charity, and softens and purifies the whole nature. All the graces of the spirit seem to take deep and abiding root in the heart thus softened, and as some of the most wonderful and beautiful flowers burst into full bloom only in the night, so do these graces bloom and dispense their fragrance in the darkness of affliction; convincing us that, as in the case of the night blooming plants, some wonderful Divine impulse is behind these manifestations, the result of some secret communication of the Divine power and life.

On the other hand it is equally apparent that "the sorrow of this world worketh death." All those sorrows that come from the disappointment of worldly ambitions, from inability or unwillingness to exercise self-denial or to submit patiently to the inevitable crosses of life, from failure to curb the temper or the tongue, from envy and strife and self-seeking, from crushed vanity and unattainable worldly desires, all these constitute the sorrow of the world. It finds no alleviation in anything that the gospel has to offer; it knows nothing of the comfort that the resigned and submissive heart receives from the Divine Comforter. It has none of the supporting, inspiring, strengthening elements that the Christian heart alone can know. And so we see that sorrow, according as it is received, is either "a savor of life unto life, or death unto death."—*The Interior.*

Parental Example.

A parent's habitual conduct has more influence upon his children than his most positive precepts. If parents neglect to govern their own tongues, children will neglect to govern theirs. If parents neglect to govern their own tempers, children will neglect to govern theirs. If parents neglect to treat their superiors, inferiors and equals with proper respect, children will follow their ill example. If parents disregard and violate the Sabbath, children will do the same. If parents are prayerless, so will the children be. If parents are worldly-minded, children will imbibe the same spirit. If parents trample on the laws of the land, children will be unwholesome members of society. If parents are given to vanity, children will become still more vain in their feelings and appearance. In short, children will be more influenced by the example of their parents than by all their instructions and restraints. It is the want of good example more than anything else which so often defeats parental instructions.

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