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→*SERMONS*←

FAITH IN GOD.

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And Jesus answering, saith unto them, have faith in God.—MARK xi., 22.

How brief a charge from lips that never uttered an idle word, much less hinted even an untrue one; and these words, few as they are, if simply obeyed, would change the whole aspect of nature, and throw the history of the world into new and better shape. Yet there are those who think themselves wise when uttering the most disparaging language with regard to the life of faith. But, in truth, how mighty is faith, even when exercised in our fellow man. See how the veterans, bearing, it may be, in their faces the wounds of former encounters, but exercising faith and trust in the energy and skill of the captain who guides them and who shapes the campaign, obey him implicitly, and follow unquestioning whithersoever he leads. And so doing they alter, perhaps, for the century the entire face of the national history.

How much an Alfred and after him a Cromwell accomplished in the history of the English people; a Gustavus Adolphus in that of Sweden and Central Europe; and in our times how great was the power which Napoleon infused into the numerous hosts that he gathered and guided, until some of the ablest statesmen of England stood as in despair before him, and with the younger Pitt said that the whole map of Europe must be altered.

Think of the triumphs of the inventor. When Morse in your own city, and in the chambers of your own University, was pursuing his experiments, discouraged by many, and finding few among those who might listen who

and his penitential psalm was poured forth from an agonized heart. Wandering yet again in old age, numbering Israel in a pride forbidden beforehand of God, he lifted again the prayer, after reviewing each of the previous stages of his successive conversions: "And now, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not." One that has gone through all these stages, childhood, youth, maturity and old age, knows that he has attained to the true idea of "conversion" in individual experience.

Having come to comprehend Christ's *individual* appeal, "When thou art converted," the experienced Christian is prepared to apprehend the added injunction, "Strengthen thy brethren," Christ's second thought. The *fruits* of individual conversion are these two: power to reach by sympathy the abandoned and unrenewed; and grace to bring back the wanderers from Christ's fold. After his first conversion, the youth David, surrounded by outlaws whom he could only control by military authority, thought again of his own childhood piety; and in his mountain exile writes: "Come, ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord," the Sabbath-school having had an early suggestion and a noble leadership. Pleading for his second restoration, he prays: "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me by Thy free spirit; then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." None but a sinner can enter into sympathy with sinners; and none but one who has wandered from the fold till he is far enough away to reach them in their haunts can teach those never within it

the way by which the Shepherd leads His flock. Had John, the beloved, a favorite even at the High Priest's palace, assumed to lead as preacher on the day of Pentecostal power, he could hardly have given hope to the convicted murderers; while, on the other hand, converted Peter, seen and heard by those murderers when with cursing he denied his Master—Peter could give emphasis to the exhortation, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted."

The *confirming of brethren* wandering and needing to be reclaimed, is equally a fruit of individual conversion. He that has been through any one or more of the successive stages of Christian conversion can, like Moses and David, and as Christ and His apostles alike taught, aid by counsel and prayer those behind him in the Christian course. If in our churches and in our Young Men's Christian Associations their own ideal became real, as when Christ first warned Peter, then "prayed" for him that his "faith fail not," then "looked" on him as He "went out and wept bitterly," there would be more Peters who would be *rocks* in Christian steadfastness. If there were more like "Barnabas, a good man and full of the Holy Ghost," to meet headstrong Sauls, not yet grown into the grace which makes a Paul, some erring young preachers, now driven away by harshness, might be turned into wide fields of usefulness. Were the fallibility of Peter's successors contended for in the Roman Church in all ages by students of Jerome and Augustine in their comments on the meeting of Peter and Paul at Antioch, recognized generally, even aged leaders in every branch of the Christian Church might prolong and promote their influence.

INSTALLATION SERVICE.—CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE.

By JOHN HALL, D.D., AT WASHINGTON HEIGHTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, N. Y.

It is now my duty, dear Christian friends, to speak a very few words to you as members of this congregation. Technically speaking, these words are called by the name of "Charge;" but as far as that word implies anything formal or lengthy, then I have not a charge to bring to you.

I shall venture to make to you a few simple suggestions that are in the line of the statements to which you have already listened, and the substance of which, indeed, must have been suggested again and again to your minds in the progress of these statements of truth.

You have called a brother minister to come and live and labor among you.

In one aspect of his official work he is a bishop having the oversight of this particular flock, and associated with his brethren in the eldership in the oversight of this congregation, and with his brethren in the Presbytery, in the oversight of their churches in the city.

In another aspect of his official character he is a teacher, bound to do everything that it is competent for him to do to instruct the people of his charge in the best things. His teaching work is mainly to be done in the character of a preacher, and he has no choice about that which he is to preach; it is the word of the living God. You have invited him to come among you in these relations and he has accepted your call, and has now been duly and formally installed.

It is for me to mention to you two or three things which it is competent for you to do, which indeed you have become bound to do, in order to make his ministry among you a happy, useful, and eminently fruitful one.

In the first place, then, dear brethren, will it be your care to give to him adequate material support. You have promised in your formal call to give him such recompense as will keep him free from care. I beseech you be in earnest, be conscientious about that duty. It may be regarded by some as a very small matter, but it has a very direct bearing upon his usefulness and efficiency in the Church of Christ. Bear in mind that it is not the minister by whom the standard of his living and expenditure is fixed; it is you, brethren, who fixed that standard. Every minister knows, when he settles among a people, that they have certain ideas beforehand about that which is fitting and proper for him—in the home in which he dwells, the manner in which he lives, and a hundred other things going to make up the common and prosaic details of our ordinary life. You fixed this standard, and I need not remind you how cruel it would be to fix that standard and then put it out of his power to come up to it. Fail not in this if you would

have a minister free to lay out all his powers and energies in doing the great work of preaching and teaching which he has undertaken among you.

In the second place, do all you can to give him social support.

I do not need to tell you how rapidly ideas are spread from avenue to avenue, from street to street, from house to house and from family to family; how rapidly the community come to form a notion of the value you put on his labors and the opinion you have of his services among you. In all the forms of social life, sustain him as your pastor, and let people round about feel that around him, both officially and personally, there is a body of faithful, Christian people, prepared to sustain him in every good word and work. There are many men who are faithful, and whose fidelity would be acknowledged by the people to whom they minister, left to suffer for lack of that social support which they have a right to expect at the hands of their people. It is not that they mean to do him a wrong, but evil is done for want of thought as well as from intention.

Let it be your constant care to give him true spiritual support; the support of intelligent sympathy; the support of waiting on his ministrations; the support of believing intercession on his behalf.

Bear in mind that when a minister of the Gospel preaches the truth as it is in Jesus he is bringing a message unwelcome to the natural heart. It is food, indeed, to the spiritual soul, but in the highest degree unwelcome to the natural mind.

Pray that your pastor may be strengthened with might by the spirit of the Lord, that coming from immediate intercourse with the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls, and keenly alive to the task he has in hand, he may be able to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long suffering and with acceptance to Him whose work he does and whose lesson he carries. These three forms of support let me ask you to think of, remember, and cheerfully render your pastor in things material and social, and in things spiritual.

You have been told again and again to-night that your pastor, and indeed all clergymen, are dependent on the grace of the Holy Spirit. If you would have that grace given to him who is to minister to you take care of your own spirit.

Maintain that harmony of feeling, that sweet reasonableness, that Christian magnanimity, to which my brother, your late pastor, has already made allusion; and when you do this you are inviting the spirit of grace to come and work among you through the ministrations of the Lord's servant. You remember how the Holy Spirit is presented to us in the Scriptures as a dove. It is not, indeed, into the scene of contention, into an arena of selfish strife, that we can expect that gentle dove to come down; it is not there he lingers. Try to maintain such an atmosphere of kindliness, thoughtfulness, prayerfulness, earnestness, as will continually invite this good Spirit to come; and as he dwells among you, and as your pastor catches fresh inspiration from day to day from the obvious response of the people to whom he preaches, Christ will be glorified here among you.

I can suggest to you no weightier thoughts than these; nothing more practical. It is not needed that one should multiply words. You have intelligence, dear Christian brethren; you have had the word ministered to you many years with fidelity; you are students of the Bible and know something of the constitution of the Christian Church. Every truth coming within these lines of thought will emphasize and recall to your minds how much you owe of that light to him who undertakes to be a shepherd, a messenger of Christ, to you, a professing Christian people. If I wanted to say one word that might perhaps emphasize this and bring it home to the heads of families, I should remind you of the fact that failure in these regards is a fault on the part of Christian people which God oftentimes visits with the tokens of His displeasure, even in this present life. Take a family of growing boys and girls where, though never perhaps articulated or directly suggested—

yet the impression prevails that the ministrations of the sanctuary are of no account, that the Sabbath is an elastic institution, and there is no obligation on the part of Christian people to give heed to such arrangements—let such impression be made on the minds of the young, and in many instances the penalty of the error is paid even in the lifetime of the parents. One careless daughter going to ruin, one reckless son on the downward career, ending in destruction, is a dreadful price to pay for your freedom from church obligations. If, therefore, you would have a true, pure, sweet family life, and the Gospel brought home with power to your children and children's children; if you would have breathed into the young that inspiration that will stimulate them to all that is pure and holy, then make much of the Christian ministry. Your obvious respect for your pastor, your sympathies with him in his work, your prayers on his behalf—in all these ways make those around you feel and know what estimate you place on these ministrations, and as you do this you invite the society of Christian persons and the power of the divine Spirit; give you glory to Jesus Christ, whose message we ministers are called to bear, and you secure to yourselves, under God's gracious arrangements, all spiritual blessings in holy things, in Christ Jesus. So, when you come together from time to time during the week, at prayer meeting, or on the Lord's day, try to be a congregation somewhat like that which greeted the Apostle Peter in the house of Cornelius, when they said, "Now, therefore, we are all here, present before the Lord, to hear all things that are commanded thee of the Lord."

Who would not preach with fervor and with power who realizes that such an assemblage is waiting upon his words!

Brethren, farewell! Be perfect. Be of one mind. Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

"If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."