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→*SERMONS*←

CHRISTIAN HOPE.

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Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.—ROMANS xv., 13.

LIVY, the Roman historian, died in the eighteenth year of the Christian era. Thus his life was in part cotemporaneous with that of St. Paul. Livy placed on record the fact that there stood at one time in Rome a temple dedicated to Hope. He added significantly that this temple was struck by lightning and consumed. He probably shared in the feeling that prevailed in his time that human hopes are delusive; that if Hope is a deity at all, it is a deceitful deity, and one whose temple ought to be struck by lightning.

It was not long after this, probably about half a century, when St. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans. The Christians at Rome were a miscellaneous company. Part were Jews, part Gentiles. Some of them lived amid the squalor of the Ghetto; some of them were slaves, some of them freedmen. Among them were none of the great and prosperous. All apparently had little to hope for. But St. Paul sends to them a message of hope. Their lives so dreary to all outward appearance were to be triumphantly hopeful. This was their privilege as followers of Jesus Christ. "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

Here we see at once that there is a difference between Christian and

ness here. But that is not what it means. It means taking Christ as a teacher and believing what He said. It means taking Him as your Master and Lord, and endeavoring, day by day and year by year, to do His will. It means the conviction that you need to be forgiven and to confide in Him, on His own terms of repentance, obedience, consecration, to do for you and in you what you cannot do yourself.

The True and the False.

BY JOHN HALL, D.D., LL.D. (PRESBYTERIAN), NEW YORK.

Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust and respecteth not the proud nor such as turn aside to lies.—Ps. xl., 4.

One of the lessons men soon learn in their lives is that where there is anything real there will soon be an imitation of it. Much of practical life is the distinguishing between the counterfeit and the true. How often do we see a piece of gilt plate sold with the assurance that it will last the time of the buyer, who soon discovers that the assurance is false. So in matters of health. How common it is to have public announcements printed that there are infallible cures for certain or all diseases. Those who have tried them have found a temporary allay of pain only to find the disease still the same. The real cure deals not with symptoms but with the disease. Even so men in business and out of business find out the distinction between the real investment and that which is spurious. Often we are made to think that by such an investment we may immensely increase our income, but it is soon found that capital and income have disappeared together. Every one finds out the distinction in these things, and precisely similar discoveries have been made respecting happiness; between the real happiness and the happiness that is transient, or hollow, or delusive, or perhaps destructive. The charm of this text is that it brings before us the genuine happiness—"Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust and respecteth not the proud nor such as turn aside to lies." We all desire happiness and the desire is not sinful. It is

natural, and the human heart everywhere seeks for it. Happiness, to be real, must be good; it must have certain features belonging to itself. For example, it must come in an honest way and it must be pure in its nature; it is not real if it corrupts. It must be safe. A man, for example, suffers from asthma, some one gives him temporary relief, but presently he finds that he is losing his sight by means of that very remedy and then he discovers that he is buying that relief at too high a price. Such relief is not safe. Then happiness must be lasting, enduring. In every one of us there is a voice that speaks of immortality, and any solid happiness must have immortality in it.

There can be no trust till there is knowledge. It is to be regretted that many men give their endorsement to public matters they know nothing about. If they would only get a knowledge of what they indorse it would save trouble to many. How are we to get this knowledge? I can know something about persons by reading of them. For instance, I know Gambetta and Bismarck by reading of them. One may know a person by speaking with him and through correspondence. Now, all these ways of knowing men are open to us to know God. We can read about Him, for He has given us a revelation about Himself; we can know Him by learning from Him; also from others—from His servants, living and dead—and we can know Him by meeting Him and communing with Him, and this knowledge produces trust. There are persons who, the better you know them, the less you trust them. But God is perfect; the more you know Him the more you will trust Him.

There is a class of persons, recognized as "leaders of thought" in some quarters, who, alluding to God, do not always formulate their conceptions, but the tone they take is this: "Religion may be a very good thing; there may be a God, but in the nature of the case we can know nothing about Him. Therefore we need not trouble ourselves much about what those teachers say to us." According to them the heavens do not declare

the glory of God, He has not spoken unto us, we are left to grope our way in the dark, feeling after an unknown God with the paralyzing thought that this vain search is forever! But God has spoken in His works, in His Son, and it is possible for you and me to know Him. There is another form of lies. It is not the lie of the agnostic, who is willing to admit possibilities, but of the atheist, who says there is no God. Oh! the desolation of this poor world of ours if this were true! Then had been commendable the Epicurean maxim: "Let us eat and drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die." There is the lie of the infidel: "Oh," he is willing to admit, "there is a God, but so great and so far above us is He that it is absurd to suppose He will think of us. Therefore pay no attention to Gospel or Sabbath teaching; from our lofty stand-point the good men you have had among you have been only idiosyncrasies of this or that created spirit." This is talked by men under the influence of the basest and most selfish motives.

Notoriety is confounded by many with fame. There is the name of one in all newspapers and on every lip. If he has achieved the real success the next thing will be to hold him up as an example. The young girl at school sees glowing eulogiums on some actress, and to her imagination she thinks that success and glory might be hers. "Could I not realize it in my career?" She does not know such eulogiums are paid for. This is not the true ideal success. Looking to these mere forms of success, to be dazzled by them, will not be to make a real, dignified, and glorious success of life.

Growing in Salvation.

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As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby.—II. PETER II., 2.

The peculiarity that distinguishes the letters of Peter from the writings of the other Apostles, is their action. His nature was an active, sanguine and intense one, and his writings take the form of his

personal characteristics. He loved to contemplate the practical Christian life, and he watched the growth of the believer in that life. He was practical rather than argumentative. The tone of his epistles is that of exhortation. He came to strengthen the faithful in the culture of personal piety. There is much doctrine in them, but the central thought is personal holiness, the cultivation of integrity of character. "Grow in grace," he says. There are three thoughts suggested in our text for us to contemplate. First, we consider the end in view, which is growth. In the earliest, and therefore in the best manuscripts, there is a different rendering of the last verse of our text, which has been adopted in the revised edition of the Testament. It reads: "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow in salvation." What does this mean? In what sense are we expected to grow in salvation? How are we to grow in grace when in other parts of the Scriptures we are taught that salvation is a gift from God, and that from the first inception of the new life to its completion it is said to be the work of God? In other places we are told that the believer is a subject of salvation at his conversion. There is no reason for us to be puzzled here, if we only take pains to study the idea of the Apostle. What he means by salvation is character. There are some who feel that salvation is something outside of man, and to speak of character and salvation in the same breath is in their opinion blasphemy. But the purpose of God in sending His Son to this world and of His dying on the cross for us was for the cultivation of integrity and character in the child of God, and that he might become perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect. Let those who think that the Gospel takes away the pleasures of this life remember that the aim of the Gospel is to cultivate integrity, to make man perfect. If we understand in salvation the deliverance of the soul from the dominion of sin, lifting man up unto personal holiness, we shall have no trouble in understanding the Apostle's command. It is a development, a growth. There is