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→ SERMONS ←

THE MESSAGE OF PEACE.

BY PHILLIPS BROOKS, D.D., TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH, BOSTON, MASS.

And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say: Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it, if not, it shall turn to you again.—LUKE x. 5, 6.

THIS was Christ's charge to His disciples when He sent them two and two before His face into every city and place whither He Himself would come. It was at the opening of the world's missionary era, and this charge to the first missionaries was a declaration of the way in which all men, actuated by the Spirit of Christ, were to present His truth to others. Every believer and every disciple was to be a missionary. Christ says His disciples are to go forth into the world, carrying the Gospel of peace with them, and into whatsoever house they enter they shall first say: "Peace be to this house." Peace is one of the great words of Jesus. It was spoken by the angels when they appeared to the shepherds of Bethlehem, saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." It was Christ's word of assurance to His disciples in view of their immediate separation: "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye might have peace." Then, again, it is found in His utterance as He stood weeping over Jerusalem: "Oh! that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace." It was used also by the disciples, in their salutations and benedictions: "Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." And surely the word must have no little meaning to the heart of every individual.

nest supplication. "There came a voice from Heaven, saying, I have glorified it and I will glorify it again." Like as the minstrel's music quieted the soul of Elisha, or as the soothing voice of the mother calms the restless and uneasy child, so this voice lifted the clouds from the soul of Jesus, and He went on, not only with calmness, but with triumph to anticipate the time when in consequence of His being lifted up from the earth He should "draw all men unto Him." O ye troubled ones, is there no comfort here for you? God does not forsake those who trust in Him and put uppermost the glory of His name. He will not fail you any more than He did Christ. Only remember that in all your spiritual conflict your safest prayer is "Father, glorify Thy name." God's name shall be glorified also in those who do not repent. But it shall be glorified in their destruction, not in their salvation, and in the light of the sacrificial agony from which the Saviour momentarily shrank, what must be the anguish of the soul that is eternally lost?

Partakers of Glory.

BY MOSES HOGE, D.D., LL.D., SECOND
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, RICHMOND,
VIRGINIA.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us into His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.—I. PETER, v. 10.

That man is a sinner is proved by the existence of innumerable laws, libraries, judgments and gaols. The ear is pained too, by the sounds rising everywhere of sorrow which result from sin. The Scripture teaches us the connection between his sorrow and sin, and how his sins may be forgiven. The Apostle had discovered that secret. Hence his prayer that the God of grace might stablish and strengthen believers.

The Apostle's creed is in this text.—Note the pains which the sacred writers take to give us a conception of *the dignity and blessedness of the life to come*. The Apostle tells us that we are called to be "partakers of His glory." What is that glory? Positively we cannot know. The

Bible declares what is not found in Heaven—tears and sighs, sin and sorrow. That is enough to make Heaven attractive. There is only one city in the universe where there is no sorrow and pain and sin. It is not Paris, or London, or New York, but the New Jerusalem. Here is an affirmative description of Heaven's glory. We walk on a plane so low that we realize not that we are destined to a glory such as is revealed in this text.

No one goes to the top of the monument by a single stride, nor can we understand this text at a glance. That we may realize its force let us begin low down. We are sinners saved by grace. The righteousness of our Lord is imputed. Then we are adopted. Then we are made joint heirs with Christ. Then we are to "behold His glory." Moreover, we are to be changed from glory to glory. To see the face of Christ is the joy of the angels, but to be like Christ is the glory of the redeemed. Lastly, the text tells us that we are "to be partakers of eternal glory." What is human glory but the breath dying away? In the moment of its clamor it is transient. God's glory lasts, and whatever it is, and last long as it may, we are to be partakers thereof.

Mark now an abrupt transition. We drop down to suffering. Glory comes, but not yet. Now the promise, then the performance; now the sigh, then the song; now the battle, then the banquet; now the humiliation, then the exaltation. This is God's plan. We assent to it. Many men complain of this divine arrangement. The proclivity in our natures is to prefer the present. God says we must wait. He has to send us suffering that we may awake to the glory. What a sight it is to see a stalwart man prostrate, or to see another when the "wings of riches so swift" have been moved; or to see another bereaved. A child's coffin is large enough to cast a shadow to bereaved parents right over the earth. The suffering draws us away from earthly things. A father on the bay put his child to play on an island. The fog came down while he was at a distance in his boat. Then he lifted up his voice to let his boy know where he was. He heard the ail-

very voice at length gladdening his ears: "Steer straight to me, father." So a bereavement leads men to think of the future. Painful discipline oft leads us to steer to Heaven.

In the Richmond hospitals eleven thousand wounded men were lying at one time. In the corner of one hospital I saw an aged couple watching the dying of an only son. The mother pleaded hard as she smoothed with gentle hand the soft hair of her boy, for only one look of recognition, but the poor fellow died without giving it. The aged father stood up and said: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." Then there was a long pause. Faith had not conquered; submission had not come. At last it triumphed, and in a strong voice that, quivering with emotion, brought tears to every eye that gazed on the touching scene, the bereaved man said: "Blessed be the name of the Lord." That was a victory overcoming the world. That was a preparation for future reunion and glory. That was going in the way to be a partaker of divine glory. Submission is needed as well as conflict. The martyr is needed as well as the missionary. God knows His best way to take His children to Heaven and to make them partners of His glory. We must bear the cross to reach the crown, and as we patiently bear the cross we find the cross bears us.

Sanctification.

BY R. S. MACARTHUR, D.D. (BAPTIST),
CALVARY CHURCH, N. Y.

Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth.—JOHN xvii., 17.

Progressive sanctification is a divine grace. The disciples already possessed it in part. To sanctify has in Scripture two meanings. The first is to separate from a secular to a sacred use. The second and more exalted meaning is to make holy. Men in God's service need both consecration and holiness. The two senses of the word are always the same in human experience. Christ's prayer is that this grace may be continued, confirmed and completed. The Author of the good

work of grace in a man's soul will gloriously complete that which He has so graciously begun. To grow in grace is both a duty and a privilege. The man who ceases to grow either intellectually or spiritually has begun to die. All the figures used by Christ and the Apostles as applied to the Christian life imply continued growth. Young believers are to desire the sincere milk of the Word in order that they may grow thereby. Christians are to press on in the path of the just until they reach the perfect day. God's people shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such things. Christ shall present them blameless in the presence of His Father and ours. Even now they are to gain the victory over the world; it is to be beneath their feet. The head of the Christian ought to be among the stars. This transcendent victory is to be theirs even here and now. Body, soul and spirit ought to be wholly sanctified unto God. This work is to be done through the instrumentality of truth. God has unexhausted and inexhaustible resources. His Word is the channel through which the consecrating graces of the Holy Spirit come. "It is the seed of the new birth; it is the food of the new life." The Psalmist hid God's word in his heart that he might not sin against Him. God's Word is true. The Son of God is the Word of God in the highest and fullest sense. I am simple-minded enough to take this Word at its face value. Christ meant just what He said when He declared that God's Word is truth. This Word is the end of all strife. This Word must be true though all interpreters and opposers be false. We stand on this everlasting Word as on an eternal rock. With the Rock of Ages behind us and this Word beneath us we defy all powers of opposition on earth or in hell. We have no apology to offer for God. Our business is simply to declare His eternal truth. That Word is its own witness and its own best defense. To-day in the presence of angels and of men I beseech you to submit to Jesus Christ who is the true Word of God. Yield Him the homage of your heart and give Him the obedience of your life, and the sanctifying grace of God