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THE POWER AND ASSURANCE OF THE GOSPEL.

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*For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.*—I. THESSALONIANS i., 5.

THESSALONICA was distinguished for wealth, for commercial and mental activity, and also for its pomp, display, and architectural beauty. It was the first place in Europe, after the opening at Philippi, where the banner of the cross was uplifted by Paul. Here the great power of his ministry was manifested in awakening great multitudes to a knowledge of the truth. His success surprised the leaders of the people, and filled them with indignation. They were amazed that a Jewish adventurer, without power in person, ancestry, or oratory, proclaiming the doctrines of the despised, crucified Nazarene, should so move the people as to induce them to forsake the religion of their fathers, and overturn the customs of the place. They arose in their wrath and expelled him from their city. The Thessalonian Church was especially dear to Paul; and when he learned that strange, corrupt teachers had attacked the doctrine he preached, declaring it to be a delusion and a snare, he wrote this first epistle, in the fulness of his heart, and with the strongest devotion to its interests. He rejoiced in the fruits of the piety of its members, and reminded them that the Gospel he preached came not in word only. Like all concrete

the clergyman who reads doesn't know the fact, how can he rightly read a statement of the fact? *It is his duty to find out the fact.*

A multitude of cases might be cited where grievous blunders, and errors similar to those here indicated, lie in wait for the heedless clergyman. If he would

escape them all, he must have three qualifications for his work as a pulpit reader of the Scriptures,—

1. A complete Christian character.
2. A thorough mastery of the Scriptures themselves in the originals.
3. A thorough mastery of elocutionary and expressional art.—*Boston Academy.*

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## Christian Edification

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### Sweetening Bitter Things.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.

Every day practical religion often has to be parsed in the "passive voice" as well as in the "active." It does not consist only in working for Christ in church, Sunday-school, and elsewhere, or in praying or battling with temptations. One very practical quality of it is, bearing hard trials and sweetening the bitter things of life. A healthy Christian ought to be equal to either fighting bravely in the field, or suffering bravely in the hospital.

When God's people had just entered upon their wilderness journeyings, they came upon a very inviting fountain. Rushing eagerly to it in their burning thirst, they were provoked to find that the water was too bitter for either man or beast. So the disappointing spring was named "Marah," or the water of bitterness. The songs of gratitude for deliverance from Pharaoh give place to the murmuring growl, "Now what shall we drink?"

This scene is often repeated in the experience of God's people. Right in the midst of joys and successes and of high hopes, we sometimes come suddenly upon a *Marah* of most distasteful disappointment. We had set our hearts upon some favorite plan or project. Perhaps, for example, we had made our arrangements for a pleasant tour; but the day for our departure found us on a bed of sickness, and the hardest dose to swallow was the disappointment. But presently we began

to discover that the best place for us to be was at home, and even in that sick room. It laid right on our road to Canaan, and our heavenward Guide had led us there. We talked with our hearts in that sick room, we thought over our past lives, we tasted anew the comforts of prayer and the promises, we found out how much our friends loved us and how much God loved us. So as God opened the eyes of Moses to see a certain tree whose branches sweetened the fountain of Marah, he also opened our eyes to certain truths which sweetened the bitter cup which he had given us. By the time that the unwelcome sickness was over, we were ready to confess that it had been better for us to be shut up with Jesus a while than to take the voyage to Europe or the journey to California. God was wiser than we; as Jeanie Dean said, "He kens better what is for our good than we ken oursells."

I have often seen how, even in a worldly point of view, a sore disappointment proved to be a great mercy. An acquaintance of mine once felt terribly provoked when he reached a wharf and saw the steamer just moving out into the stream. But the next morning he read in his paper that the vessel he had tried to reach had been burned to the water's edge, and many of the passengers had perished. The only daughter of a dear friend was engaged to be married to a youth of aristocratic family. On the day appointed for their nuptials the faithless fellow ran away, and afterwards turned out to be a fashionable rake. She bore her disappointment so meekly that it won the admiration of a

young lawyer with more brains than money; with her as his noble wife he fought his way up to a seat in the United States Senate. These two are only illustrations of that vast number of people who have had occasion to say, blessed be disappointments!

Observe that God did not create that tree whose branches sweetened the Marah fountain at that moment. He only "showed them the tree." In like manner God opens our eyes often to discover compensations and comforts and rich blessings which sweeten the bitterest trials. The worst blunders that many Christians make is their way of looking at God's providential dealings. A worldlying who believes in "luck" and "fortune," cannot be expected to scan God's dealings rightly, but a Christian who professes to trust God, ought to know better. Yet how often we call things by wrong names; how often we christen as afflictions rich blessings in disguise; how often we congratulate people on gaining what proved to be a terrible snare, and we condole with people over a hard lot which turns out to be a gold mine of blessings! Probably the patriarch Jacob felt that he was to be pitied in his disappointment when Joseph, Simeon and the pet son Benjamin were all taken from him; yet the caravan was

on the road which restored two of the absentees and brought the glorious news that the third was Prime Minister of Egypt. When faith gets its eyes open it has some delightful surprises. It discovers many a happy escape that came in the disagreeable shape of a disappointment; it discovers precious promises that sweeten bitter fountains, and make them as helpful and invigorating as the springs of Saratoga. Faith, if it would always keep its eyes open, would see that all things, not only *some* things but *all* things, work together for good to them who love God, who are the called according to his purpose. We all have dark tunnels to pass through on the journey of life. We need good eyesight so as not to stumble or to lose sight of our guide or of the bright light which shines at the farther end of the tunnel. Let us all pray for spiritual discernment. Lord, open Thou our eyes! Then we shall see that this world is only a training-school for a better, and the hardest lessons yield the strongest discipline. We shall discover our Father's smile through the darkest cloud, and when we reach some *Marahs* that are exceeding bitter we shall always light on some precious blessings to sweeten the water.—*Christian Intelligencer*.

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## PRAYER MEETING SERVICE

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### A Model Prayer Meeting Talker.

REV. WM. HARRIS (BAPTIST), ST. LOUIS.

There are very few model prayer meeting talkers. I want to tell of one whom I have known for several years, and who has been a great comfort to me. His presence and influence and power in the prayer meeting are felt and appreciated by his brethren, and yet I doubt if he himself is ever conscious of the fact.

1. *He talks cheerfully.* Never has his pastor known him to talk gloomily or mournfully. He never puts ice in the pulpit nor in the pew. He rather melts the ice. His views are cheerful and his

talks are cheerful. Eyes brighten, hearts stir, heads are lifted, when he talks. The cheerfulness of his talks is often very striking and noticeable, specially after some one has delivered a sad and mournful address, lamenting the coldness of hearts and confessing sins for other people. He is a child of light. I have known him to talk cheerfully in the prayer meeting when he had just left sickness in his home and depression in his business, and when I knew that he had enough to make the average man gloomy.

2. *He talks to the point.* I have never known him to ramble. When he rises to