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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

“SAY SO.”

BY REV. MOSES D. HOGE, D.D., SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, RICHMOND, VA.

*O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.—Ps. cxvii., 1, 2.*

THIS Psalm is for the most part joyful. It is not so with all of them. Sometimes David fills his Psalms with strains of penitence and the wail of breaking hearts. He breathes out some of his sweetest music in the minor mode, and his tones grow sadly tremulous and low when in looking up he can scarcely see Heaven through his blinding tears. But now he has emerged from the depths, now he has risen above the clouds into the clear sunshine. Nay, with adventurous flight he has ascended yet higher, and stands as it were at the very gate of paradise, harp in hand, and strikes some notes responsive to those of the heavenly harpers, in harmony with the everlasting song. Let us hear him: “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” Let them give some expression to their sense of indebtedness. If they have experience of the preciousness of redemption let them make frank, open acknowledgment of the same. Let remembered mercy inspire both heart and tongue, that God may be glorified by the praises of His people.

But it may be, in a congregation as large as this, there are some not ready to respond to such a call, some who are more ready to say, such are our perplexities, anxieties, and sorrows, such our remembrances of past griefs, such our forebodings of coming troubles as to make the indulgence of sadness and tears more appropriate as the tribute which is due to disappointed hopes and bereavements freshly remembered. In sympathy for such, permit me to say, were my heart tender enough and my hand gentle enough I would take yours in mine and try to comfort and encourage you. I would say: If you can but realize the truth that God sits in the chariot of providence and guides every turn of its mysterious movements through the world; that under the control of His righteous, omnipotent, and loving hand all events are working together for the good of His people; that when the toils and trials of this weary life are ended there remains a certain rest in Heaven, and better than all, that there is in reserve for you a richer inheritance in God Himself as the soul's final recompense and portion forever; then you will have sources of comfort and causes for thanksgiving which will render you in a great degree independent of external circumstances, enabling you, even when there is nothing outward and nothing temporal to fill you with gladness, to rejoice in God by whom you have received the atonement, and with sorrows sanctified to know what David means when he speaks of “songs in the night.” Take down your neglected harp and bid some string awake to the praise of Him who though He cause grief will yet have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies; “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.”

The great theme of the Psalm is gratitude for enduring mercies—mercies the very memory of which is full of consolation—mercies which not only cause the heart to swell with thankfulness, but which constrain to due acknowledgment and proclamation of them.

All strong emotion struggles for expression. It will express itself if it be intense, in the countenance, in the voice, in the life. A heart without gratitude is like a grate filled with fuel unlighted, and the room all the colder because of the unfulfilled promise of glow and warmth. A grateful heart is one in which the fire of holy love is kindled. Let those who have received favors and feel their obligation either to God or man, give some expression of it, and although the text points to the fountain of all good, yet since the streams which issue from it flow through earthly channels let thanks be given to whomsoever thanks are due.

The world is filled with illustrations of the propriety of such acknowledgments. You must have observed how in great campaigns it is customary for commanders to make honorable mention of those who have distinguished themselves by successful valor—not for the purpose of ministering to the soldier's pride or flattering his vanity, but for awarding him a tribute founded in justice and truth. It is right that the soldier who has stood upon the bloody front of battle and vindicated his valor and patriotism should receive the grateful acknowledgment of the country he has served. The leader of brave men is not content with thinking well of the prowess of those who have done nobly; he proclaims it as something due to those who have struggled and triumphed. In kind words from such a source there is both inspiration and reward. This is true not only of words spoken by the great commander in the field, but equally so in civil, social, and domestic life, when spoken by employers, teachers, parents or friends—by all who have the control and guidance of others.

You have heard of the young artist seated before the canvas upon which he was painting a picture which he hoped would link his name to fame, when a great master entered his studio and stood silently watching the progress of the work. At last the artist turned and with a face full of eager and almost passionate questioning, cried, "O speak, say something, say anything!"

There was something pathetic in the appeal which a little boy made to his father, when he cried, "I often do wrong, I know, and then you scold me and I deserve it; but, father, sometimes I do my best to do right! Won't you let me know when I do please you?"

In many families there are sensitive children, diffident and easily intimidated, who need, above everything else, encouragement; while there are others pert, forward, and offensive, that need any amount of repression. Even in the same family children are so unlike in temperament and disposition as to require very different training. Solomon's family regulator is out of fashion now, but it had its use in his day, and can find occasions for practical application in ours. When discipline was stricter than it is now, parents received more honor. It was so in the days of the Apostle, for he says, "Our

fathers *corrected us* and we gave them *reverence.*" There are roundabout ways of reaching the heart of a child, and the rod of correction may be one of the indirect methods of stimulating the better nature. But quite different is the case with children of a highly nervous organization, often with that pensive, plaintive air about them that touches our pity. Even their own parents do not know how such natures are injured by the stern, well-intended, but mistaken discipline to which they are often subjected. They little know how such spirits are blighted by harshness, and how traits of character which, under the influence of tender, fostering care, would have developed into grace and beauty, never unfold at all for the want of it. Such discipline to the child is what a dark, cold cellar would be to a delicate, exotic plant, craving light, air, and genial warmth. What children of this temperament need is kind words of encouragement, and the little tokens of appreciation with which the ingenuity of parental love should ever surround them.

Let the discriminating parent, pleased with the child's progress in any right direction—"say so."

So, too, there are parents who have to wait long for the recognition of their devotion to their children—a devotion which gathers into itself the prayers, the anguish, the sacrifices of body, soul, and spirit.

An old Virginia minister said lately, "Men of my profession see much of the tragic side of life. I have seen men die in battle, have seen children die, but no death ever seemed so pathetic to me as the death of an aged mother in my church. I knew her first as a young girl, beautiful, gay, full of joy and hope. She married and had four children. Her husband died and left her penniless. She sewed, she made drawings, she taught, she gave herself scarcely time to eat or sleep. Every thought was for her children, to educate them, to give them the advantages their father would have given them had he lived. She succeeded. She sent her boys to college and her girls to school. When all came home they gave themselves up to their own selfish pursuits. She lingered among them some three years, and then was stricken with mortal illness brought on by over-work. The children gathered around her bedside. The oldest son took her in his arms. He said, 'You have been a good mother to us.' That was not much to say, was it? It was much to her, who had never heard anything like it. A flush came over her pallid face, and with husky voice she whispered, 'My son, you never said so before!'"

Teachers also sometimes err on the side of impatience with the dulness of their pupils and their slowness to comprehend what seems so simple to the irascible pedagogue. To the undeveloped mind truths that seem self-evident to the mature thinker are quite obscure, and the process of development and comprehension cannot be hastened by storming at the slow scholar. You do not get up and wrathfully shake a young fruit tree because it does not bear mellow apples in the spring of the year. You wait for time and nature; you wait for dew and sunshine to ripen the immature fruit. Why not be as

patient with children as you are with trees? This was certainly the spirit of the great Teacher. He said, “Come and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart”—I am gentle and forbearing; I am not like the teachers that upbraid the dulness of their scholars. Never was there a master so full of encouragement as our Lord.

Pupils, too, mindful of former benefits, may have their “say so.” One day, sitting in the library of an eminent university professor, he took up a letter and said, “I received this from one of my old pupils, in which he tells me that the longer he teaches others and the larger his acquaintance with the philosophy of language, the more he appreciates my method of instruction. He says I put him on the right course, and he writes so gratefully about it as to give me much satisfaction.” “A satisfaction you must often get,” I replied. “No,” said he, “it comes rarely, but in this instance I am compensated for the silence of others, for this was a favorite pupil, and his acknowledgment is a pleasant recompense.”

And who in this list of illustrations of those deserving of gratitude and the heart-felt, outspoken acknowledgment of it—who should come next but the good wife? She who has made the hearth bright, the table tempting, and the home beautiful for so many years that the husband takes it all as a matter of course, as he does the daily rising of the sun, and no more thinks of thanking the good woman than he does the morning newspaper. She has long ceased to expect it, but it would do her good for all that, were she surprised some day by a tender expression of appreciation of all her care and toil and self-denial. There are thousands of wives, who are little more than upper household servants, without the upper servant’s wages. It is an extraordinary fact that in some wealthy families the wife is the only person who never has any pocket-money! When she timidly ventures under some strong constraint to ask for some, she is met with a burst of astonishment: “Money! What in the world can *you* want with money?” Now I say, though such things are not often mentioned in sermons it shall have a place in mine to-day. Every man in comfortable circumstances should keep his wife supplied with money, the disbursement of which she should never be required to account for. There are private charities which her benevolent heart prompts her to bestow. There are contributions which she longs to make for objects in which her husband may have no sympathy. It is her *right*, in the most delicate and refined sense in which a woman can have a claim on a part of her husband’s money—and yet a still more sacred right is hers—the right to some expression of appreciation of all her unselfish devotion to her husband’s interests during all the years of married life, which would lighten her burdens and fill her with a new joy which would be her strength—if she could only get it. Her husband may be all the while full of loyal devotion to her, though for a want of comprehension of a nature more sensitive and dependent than his own, he never gives her any assurance of his appreciation. To others he may boast of the treasure he finds in her, and is really proud of her, but he does not care to spoil her by telling her so!

Some of you may be familiar with the story of the grim ex-artilleryman in "Bleak House," whose wife, made for wear, had accompanied her husband in all his campaigns, thought for him, wrought for him, lived for him, and was loved by him in return with the devotion which sometimes makes humble life more beautiful than the court of kings.

Says ex-artilleryman, Mr. Bagnet, to his old comrade, George, "You know that it is my wife that advises, and I always take her advice, but I never tell her so."

"She is a treasure," says Mr. George. "She is more," says Bagnet. "She is like a fine day, which grows finer as it advances. I never knew her equal. But I never tell her so."

"She is worth her weight in gold," says Mr. George. "In gold!" responds Mr. Bagnet, "there is no metal that can be weighed against her. Think of her as high as the rock of Gibraltar, and you will think too low of her merits! But I never tell her so."

And how many Mr. Bagnets there are in commercial life, in society life, in church life, in every-day life!

There is another class needing the stimulation of the "say so" of kind words, and yet I hesitate to speak of that class for a reason which I may or may not mention further on in my discourse. The prince of Baptist preachers, Mr. Spurgeon, tells us that he knew a country parson who preached to the same congregation for twenty years and saw no fruit of his labors. In utter discouragement one Sabbath day he announced his purpose to resign his charge and give place to some one who might be more useful. When the service was over, as he passed down the aisle an aged woman stopped him and said, "Oh, you must not go. Four years ago I was converted under your ministry, and I have been living on your sermons ever since." He said, "My good woman, why did you not tell me of this before?" Before the week was over some twenty or thirty persons came to him ascribing their conversion to his instrumentality, and entreating him not to leave them. To all of these appeals he could only answer, "If all this was true, why did you not say so?"

Now when I speak of the appreciation due to the faithful pastor, do not misunderstand me. For a hearer to flatter his pastor is to degrade himself, and to insult the intelligence and finer feelings of the man to whom the coarse adulation is offered. The pastor who thirsts for praise dishonors his own character; the parishioner who gives it is consciously or unconsciously guilty of self-debasement. But look on another side of the subject. What shall be said of the man who has sat for ten, twenty, forty years under his ministry, who has gone to him for counsel in his perplexities, who has gone to him in bereavement for sympathy and consolation, who has asked him to bury his dead, who has held him at his beck and call in every trouble and always found him quickly, lovingly responsive, and yet who never by look, word, or sign gave him the slightest expression of gratitude or appreciation? "I have earnestly, conscientiously striven to do my whole duty," wrote a disheartened

pastor to a friend, "but I can never know when I please this people." Is there not some way consistent with self-respect, consistent with the regard due to the sensibilities of the man of God, yearning for usefulness and for some evidence on the part of those to whom he ministers that his efforts are appreciated, by which the "say so" may cheer and strengthen him? When a discourse has been delivered which constrains some wanderer from the path of duty to return to his first works and his first love, may not the recovered backslider embrace some suitable opportunity to tell his pastor how much he feels indebted to the grace which brought him back again through the instrumentality of the faithful word spoken? When a sermon filled with affectionate counsel to the young is ended, may not the father whose heart trembled with emotion in remembrance of the dissipated son at his side, grasp the hand of his pastor at the close of the service and say, "God bless you for that sermon, which I hope may touch the heart of my—" and here he falters, but calming himself he adds, "of the young people of our church?" When the sermon was one that was the means of lifting the burden of care from some heavy heart, or of soothing the sorrows of some bereaved mourner, may not the comforted child of God find solace in giving expression to the gratitude awakened by the word of consolation so seasonable, so supporting, so soothing to the weary and heavy laden?

I hesitated to say these things because, as I intimated a little while ago, there were reasons that constrained me. I feared you might imagine that I was craving some expression of regard that had been withheld. The very contrary is what embarrassed me, for I have had assurances—so many demonstrations of affection on your part so far beyond my expectation or desert, that while I am grateful for them I feel humbled in the consciousness that I am not more worthy of them.

Pardon me if I have dwelt too long on the gratitude due to human benefactors when the text directs our thought and affection to what we owe to the very Father of mercies. "*His* mercy endureth forever." How illimitably broad is the field which is thus opened before us—the field of the divine mercy! It is like the field of creation. In that field the telescope cannot pierce to depths of space where shining worlds do not declare the glory of God—nor can the microscope search out a point which is not still bright with evidences of His handiwork. The eye of sense looks out and everywhere goodness and mercy rise before it, until the horizon shuts down and bounds the vision. And then the eye of faith opens, and new fields, measureless and glorious, meet its gaze, until, in *its* turn, its powers fail. Yes, its powers fail, but the *field* has not failed; onward it stretches, illimitably, and over it the redeemed shall range with every new delight to all eternity. God's mercy is *from* everlasting, and so the treasures of memory will ever be increasing; it is *to* everlasting, and so the anticipations of hope can never be diminished.

But more particularly, the crowning obligation of the redeemed of the Lord to love and serve Him springs from the fact that they *are* His redeemed

people, and so made the special objects of that mercy. Redemption is God's greatest, best, and most blessed work. The method by which it was accomplished was the most wonderful. Hear how the Apostle condenses these great truths into one short sentence, showing at a glance the Author of our redemption, the pangs it cost Him to achieve it, the justice of our condemnation, the complete satisfaction which was made to justice for our sins, and the firm foundation on which we may now build our immortal hopes : "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

What was this curse? It was "the curse of the law," therefore just, legal, a judicial sentence from a heavenly tribunal, and our deliverer from this inexorable doom was "Christ." It was *His* work—the cost of unknown agony. All the pains and penalties of our sins fell on Him ; He came under the power of the law we had broken ; entered our prison, was bound with our chain, suffered for us "the rigid satisfaction death for death," and thus "redeemed" us, in the full, glorious, inexhaustible sense of that precious word. All this we owe to Him. Then "let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Let them say it with the voice of joyful thanksgiving, with the heart of adoring love, with the life of generous, uncalculating, unreserved consecration.

In the swift and strong tide of these emotions I am suddenly arrested. I am perturbed, am pained, and sadly perplexed, because in this congregation there are so many who give hopeful evidence of regenerated lives in all respects, save one. They have never made any open profession of the faith which they secretly cherish. All who know them wonder at the strange delay. They seem to be so conscientious ; they surpass many church members in their consistent walks and conversation. They give every evidence of the fact that with the heart they have believed unto righteousness except that with the mouth they do not make confession unto salvation. By some unaccountable perversion they seem resolved to put asunder what God hath joined together. The light which we would think they would hasten to put on the candlestick they hide under the bushel. They are stumbling-blocks in the way of those of inferior intelligence and opportunities who would confess Christ before men but for the fact that they are hindered by the example of those whom they believe to be more pious than themselves and therefore more sure of salvation, but who persist in refusing to make any public profession of their faith. If any men ought to understand duty and obligation, they are the men. Yet there is an immense, imperative obligation which they disregard—an immeasurable privilege and possibility of usefulness which they apparently contemn. They seemingly obey every command of Christ except the tenderest and last, "Do this in remembrance of Me." They exhibit the strange contradiction of men who having secretly forsaken the world, still permit themselves to be ranked with it, and who having chosen Christ, will not openly acknowledge it, and so allow themselves to be classed with those who deny the Lord that bought them. Were they assured that they would die to-night they would not be without hope of salvation,

yet they will not enter the Church which their Saviour loved and gave Himself for, and which He has made the training school for Heaven. Would that on this very day they could be induced to abandon their untenable position and openly, gratefully say : What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits ? I will pay my vows unto the Lord in the presence of all His people—in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. " Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

Finally: We have recently passed through what we call "The Week of Prayer." For what are these continuous and united prayers offered if not for the reviving influence of God's grace? Who does not feel the need of such a revival in his own soul, in the family, in the community, in the Church universal? Are we in full sympathy with the Psalmist when he cries : " Wilt Thou not revive us again that Thy people may rejoice in Thee ? " Then, " LET THE REDEEMED OF THE LORD SAY SO."

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THE SONS OF GOD (*Now are we the sons of God.—I. JOHN iii., 2.*).—Men take upon themselves great names without any right to them. But who calls the saints the sons of God ? I. The Father Himself does so. He is pleased in infinite love to bid them say, " Our Father ; " and He answers them by calling them children and heirs. He acknowledges their sonship, pities them as His children and says, " I will be a Father unto you, etc." II. Jesus calls them the sons of God. He is the First-born among many brethren—is not ashamed to call them brethren, speaks of them as belonging to the one family of which He is the head. He thus takes them into union with Himself. III. The Holy Spirit by dwelling in them calls them sons of God. He bears witness with their spirit that they are the sons of God, and gives them " the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, ' Abba Father.' " IV. The holy angels are in full accord in this matter with the Holy Trinity, and by acts and deeds declare them to be the children of God. The angels bear them up in their hands because they belong to the divine family, and act as waiting servants on them as heirs of God. V. All providence owns them to be children of God. Chastening providences gently whisper " What son is there whom the Father chasteneth not ? " Trials, afflictions and persecutions for the truth's sake witness that they are no longer of the evil seed but are the adopted sons of God. VI. They are called children of God even by men who are not themselves His children. " Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the children of God." Their peacefulness is a mark of their descent from the God of peace. Those who are well known to bear injuries with patience, and return good for evil shall be recognized even by scoffers and blasphemers as children of God. God is love and wherever there is love men trace it to God. The stream testifies of the source. All things bear corroborating witness to what God calls believers.—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, London.*