

TO GET OUR REWARD

DR. CHAPMAN'S SUNDAY SERMON

He Shows to us the Great Mercy of Christ Who Grants us a Reward For Faithful Service.

New York City.—The distinguished and well-known evangelist, the Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, has furnished for publication the following sermon entitled "Rules of Service." It was preached from the text: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." 2 Timothy, ii: 4, 5.

It is not enough simply to perform what might be called good deeds, in the estimation of the world, for one might receive the applause of men, and miss his reward at the hands of God. Neither is it enough that one should be so given to service that he might win the applause of people everywhere. There is no special promise in God's word written to the man who is simply faithful in outward service. Paul must have had this in mind when he said: "Yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully." It is a good thing for the Christian to square his life, both public and private, his innermost thoughts, and the hidden man of his heart, by the word of God, to see if in any point he is falling away from God's plan and the Holy Ghost's guidance. When John, in Revelation, wrote, "Let no man take thy crown," he presented what to my mind is one of the most solemn subjects in all the Bible, namely, that one might be saved, have his sins forgiven, stand before God justified, be perfectly sure of being ultimately received into His presence, and be saved throughout eternity, and yet miss his reward and lose his crown.

This chapter is a note of warning and a heart cry to people everywhere to search their lives, aided by the Spirit, to ask God to deal very thoroughly with them even though this dealing may mean the cutting off of some very much loved sin or the giving up of some long cherished plan.

All service must be prompted by right motives. It is not so much how the work appears outwardly that commends it to God—in this His judgment is given differently from that of man, but it is altogether a question as to what, back of it all, prompted the service. The giving of the widow's mite and its hearty acceptance by our Master is an illustration of this fact, for in the desire that prompted the gift was found that which was of ten thousand times more value than the gift itself.

One might preach the gospel and win hundreds of souls for Christ, and the motives that prompted the preaching be wrong. One might superintend a Sunday-school with much success, be a teacher of acknowledged ability, lead the young people's work in the church, be a chosen leader of the mission work, and upon all these positions have the seal of the approval of men and the plaudits of the multitude because of acknowledged success, and yet miserably fail at the great day of awards to receive one single crown for faithfulness—simply because the work was born in selfishness and carried on in pride. It was not done for the glory of God, but rather for the glory of man. One might build churches, and for his supposed generosity be highly esteemed of men, and yet receive a rebuke from the lips of the risen Christ. One might endow schools which God would use for the betterment of society and for the accomplishment of His own purposes or the working of His own plans, and yet have no recognition on the great day of awards. One might give his money to clothe the poor and feed the hungry; he might be known wherever the English language is spoken, for his charitable works, and when the great day of awards should come might hear the Master say: "Depart, for I never knew you."

His soul is saved, but his life is lost. All of these things are true, because, while outwardly the service was wonderful and the success great, the motive that prompted it all was selfish. Jesus Himself has said that there would be some who should say: "Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" Thus the teaching becomes more intense and the lesson more startling, for one might even think that he was shaping his life according to God's plan and yet most terribly miss the reward.

When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians he said: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." This is very clearly, to my mind, a lesson to Christian workers in general, but to ministers in particular. The foundation is the same for us all—Jesus Christ, but the superstructure may be very different. It is a most solemn thought—one of the most solemn I know—that when the great day of fire shall come every man's work shall be tried, of what sort it is. The ministry of the man whom the world honored shall be touched by fire. The service of the Christian worker, from the first effort made for Christ to the last, shall certainly be tested. The teaching of the Sunday-school teacher, throughout his or her entire Christian experience, shall be brought beneath the searching light of the Son of God. The testimony of every Christian in every land shall be searched through and through. The life in the home, in the place of business, in the streets, at home or in foreign lands, by day and by night, shall be tested by the fire of God. If the work is burned, the man shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, though as by fire. It is a tremendously solemn message.

I might have all the experience God has given me, as preacher, teacher, evangelist, father, husband, friend, and then stand before God at the last with all my work swept away, going into His presence with the smell of fire upon my garments, God forbid. Paul had this fate in mind when he said (1 Cor. ix: 27): "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we are incorruptible. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be castaway," or "as we have already seen," "be disappointed."

God keep us from meeting such an experience as this on that great day!

2. We must labor with clean hands. God never uses an unclean man. It is possible that one may be saved, and yet allow sin in some way to control him, but it is not possible for God to use that which is either common or unclean. "Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing,"—from which command of the Scriptures we learn that if one is in the very slightest touch with the world he is against God, and soon loses his power; he is shorn of his testimony, and God sets him aside. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know

my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me," ought to be the cry of every Christian everywhere.

The old law touching the priesthood is a good thing for us to remember (Leviticus xxii: 1 to 3): "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they profane not My holy name in those things which they hallow unto Me: I am the Lord. Say unto them, Whosoever he be of all your seed among your generations, that goeth unto the holy things, which the children of Israel hallow unto the Lord, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from My presence: I am the Lord." The doctrine of separation in the Old Testament for the priests is for us in the New Testament, for Peter tells us that believers are priests unto God, every one of us, The Old Testament doctrine has, however, been intensified by the teaching and the touch of Jesus Christ.

"And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre. Then thou shalt take the anointing oil and pour it upon his head and anoint him." (Exodus xxix: 6, 7). The anointing oil put upon the head of the priest was a sign that he was separated from all worldly services and every selfish principle of life. Henceforth he was not his own man, but God's. The oil in the Old Testament represents the Holy Ghost in the New, and whether we have recognized it or not, nevertheless it is true. By the Spirit of God we have been regenerated, by that same Spirit we have been quickened, and by the same Spirit have been sealed or anointed as God's own special treasure. If we have not allowed Him to use us we have robbed Him of His right, and at the great day of awards shall be called to a strict account.

"And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother; neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him; I am the Lord." (Leviticus xxi: 10-12). How close this teaching is, and how completely many of us are condemned as we apply it to our own lives!

And yet there is no reason for discouragement. In the olden times, when the priests or the people were in touch with sin, the ashes of the red heifer were sprinkled upon them for cleansing, and immediately they stepped back into fellowship, and God clothed them with power. In the New Testament a better provision is made—Hebrews ix: 13, 14: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot unto God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?"

I have not been able to find in the New Testament, with the exception of the Lord's Prayer, any place where it is said that the Christian must ask for forgiveness of sins, but I do read in 1 John i: 7, 8, 9: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I learn then that if I confess my sins He is faithful and just to forgive them and cleanse me perfectly, and when He forgives sin He always forgets it.

God Sees the Best.

God does not set the less against the greater, as we do; He sets the greater against the less; that is His way. Who will not say: Blessed be His love? Man being small, being petty at the kindest, finds a flaw. Thus the wise fool talks: He is honest, he is wise, he is gifted; he is, on the whole, a man of notable intellectual stature and influence; but—man thinks he is clever when he discovers a but. He gathers himself up into Pharisaic perpendicularity and says: I discovered that, I pointed out that frailty, I saw it. There can be no pit deep enough for a wretch like that. How doth God speak? Thus, hear the music of infinite love: He has gone astray, he has been unfaithful, he has turned aside from Me a thousand times, he has done the things he ought not to have done; yet—that is the difference between human judgment and divine judgment in relation to that greatest of all mysteries, human character. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. Your brethren like to peccadillo, one little sin and to have fingers dainty enough to pick out that little hair and to be able to say: "I've got it!" The Lord saith: "You have wounded Me and disappointed Me and gone away from Me, yet—how can I give thee up? Return!" That is the difference between your human theories and the great Divine idea of redemption—God always seeing the best, fixing His eyes upon the salvable points, looking to those elements that are still left out of which He can rear manhood. He will not quench the smoking flax. He will not break the bruised reed.—Joseph Parker, D. D.

The Foe to Fear.

Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler, in estimating what he deems to be our worst enemy in this life, says: "Dangerous as the devil is, dangerous as worldly amusements are, the most dangerous enemy that we often have to encounter walks in our own shoes. That cunning, artful, smooth-tongued heart-devil, self, is the foe that needs the most constant watching and subjects us to the worst defeats." The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other. Paul had a tremendous battle along these lines, beating down his carnal nature by hard blows, and the old hero was able at last to shout: "I have fought a good fight; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!" Whoever has, by God's help, laid his desires, his plans, his purposes, his property, and, above all, his own will at the feet of Jesus Christ, is already one of the overcomers. He already begins to wear clean raiment, and the omniscient-eye of God discerns on his brow the first flashings of the victor's crown!

The Lord is Good.

The Lord is good. Sometimes we forget it. Sometimes we feel it. Always we know it. Few men are really skeptical as to the goodness of the great God who is at the heart of the whole universe as its author and upholder. We pity the man, that rare man, who has lost all faith in goodness and all faith in God. The Lord is good. The need is to translate that declaration of Holy Writ into terms of a personal experience, to carry it with one as a daily conviction and comfort, and to live in a constant atmosphere of praise and prayer in the spirit of the Psalmist, who declared: "I will bless the Lord at all times."—New York Observer.

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