

# GOD'S OWN PLAN.

DR. CHAPMAN'S SUNDAY SERMON.

The Eloquent Pastor-Evangelist Argues that God Has a Plan for Every Man's Salvation.

NEW YORK CITY.—The following sermon is one of a series preached by the famous evangelist, the Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman. It is entitled "God's Plan For Us," and was founded on the text: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Philippians iii: 12.

God has a plan for every life, and when this plan is realized there is always in the experience of the believer both joy and peace, blessing and power. If any one is having an up-and-down Christian experience, hot to-day and cold to-morrow, near enough to Christ to-day so that he may almost touch Him, and so far away to-morrow that he questions if he has ever been saved, this is a certain evidence that he has not allowed God to work out His plan for him, and there is yet much work to be accomplished by the Holy Spirit of God. An experience of unrest dishonors God, and when you find a heart in which there is this unrest and dissatisfaction you always find a life in which God has not yet finished His work. "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you," was written for such an one, and is his inheritance. While it would be a most difficult thing to define peace, yet possibly the best definition would be to take its opposite, and so it would read like this: Peace is the opposite of unrest, of confusion, of strife. This blessing is for every one of God's children; if they will but claim it.

It is no more disastrous for one's arm to be out of its socket than for one's life to run contrary to the plan of God. Paul evidently had this in mind when he said: "If I may apprehend that for which I am also apprehended of Christ Jesus." It would be no more disastrous for a planet to go swinging out of its orbit than for a life to run contrary to the plan of God. The fact is our crosses in this world always come to us when our wills run contrary to the will of God. One piece of wood placed over another and running in the contrary direction always makes a cross. Our peace and joy come to us in this life when our wills run parallel to that of God. Though we may be obliged to live in poverty and meet with what this world calls disaster and failure, if we are perfectly sure we are doing according to God's will we may say with the apostle: "All things work together for good."

God has a high ideal for every life, and we have but to read the Scriptures to find plans to be true. We find in Romans ii: 7, that we are called "saints"; this is our name. We learn in 1 Corinthians iii: 9, that we are "laborers together with God." We are told in 1 Corinthians ii: 9, that it is our privilege to be in fellowship with God's Son, and this word "fellowship" is literally "partnership." In Revelation ii: 17, God promises to give to us His own hidden manna to eat. Of this the world knows nothing—it can neither give it nor take it away. In the 25th Psalm, 14th verse, we have a pledge that God will tell to us His secrets, but it is not to be forgotten that we only tell secrets to those who are near to us. God never gives His secrets to those who are out of fellowship with Him, and every man is out of fellowship who has in his heart any unconfessed sin, unforgiven sin. In Philippians iii: 20, the conversation of the child of God is described. It is to be in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Ephesians ii: 19 the whole of the Christian character is described. We are told that we are His "workmanship," and the word workmanship is literally poem, so that in God's plan we are all that is complete and beautiful.

We may have God's rest. Hebrews iv: 1 to 3—"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into His rest, if they shall enter into my rest; although the works were finished from the foundation of the world."

We may have God's holiness. Hebrews xii: 10—"For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." Not infrequently we find Christian people who are afraid of the word holiness; and yet the Bible has distinctly declared that without holiness no man shall see God. If we are shutting Him out of our lives then we are depriving ourselves of our birthright as His children. We might say God's plan for our lives under three heads:

1. It is God's will that we should be regenerated. John i: 13, 14—"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Regeneration is not a working over of the old nature, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and never can be anything else. It may be educated flesh, cultured flesh, but after all it is flesh, and is displeasing to God. It does not come as the result of reformation, for while reformation may touch a man's present and possibly his future, it has nothing to do with his past sins, which are like the sands of the sea in number. Environment has nothing to do with our passing from death unto life. If environment could save the soul or keep it, Adam never would have fallen, for he dwelt in paradise. Let would have been a model citizen, for he abode in the fairest city of the then known world.

Regeneration is God's breathing into man His own life—it is literally being born from above.

2. It is God's will that we should be sanctified.

1 Thes. iv: 3—"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." Some people feel much prejudiced against the idea of sanctification, but it is in God's Word, and it would be well for us to study it and realize it in our experience. To be sanctified is to be separated, and it is certainly the plan of God that His people shall be a separated people. While they are "in the world" they are to be in no sense "of the world." They are commanded even not to touch that which is unclean, and all the old law respecting the Nazirite is a law for the Christian, except that in the New Testament times that law has been intensified by the touch of the living and risen Christ.

If your life is not sanctified you will live contrary to the will of God.

3. It is God's will that we should be ultimately glorified. 1 Peter v: 10—"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto

His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." John xvii: 24—"Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me."

It is a good thing to turn again and again in this way to the Scriptures to find what is the plan God has marked out for us, and then to square our lives according to this plan, to see wherein we have followed it or have failed. If the failure has been grievous it is not necessary that we should go in mourning all the day long, for, just as a mother forgives the weakness of her child and forgets the many shortcomings, so God has promised again and again in His Word to blot out all our transgressions and to remember them no more against us forever.

It is not therefore a question as to whether we can keep from sinning ourselves—we know that we can not, but it is altogether a question as to whether Christ can keep us if we will but give Him the right to do so. I have no question but that one could walk from one corner of the street to the other with Christ so constantly before him that, in his own judgment at least, he would be overcoming sin. I am perfectly clear that he could increase his journey by many miles and still be more than conqueror. I am absolutely confident that one could walk the whole day with Christ so vividly before him that it would be peace and joy. And what could be accomplished in one day could be made the rule of a man's entire life.

After the return of Christ for His church there is to be a great day of awards, when those who have been faithful shall receive recognition at the hands of the Lord Himself, in the presence of the assembled hosts in the skies. We can tell just what this reward is to be, and yet this needs a word of explanation. We can not give the exact description of the crowns we shall wear, nor can we estimate, in human language their value in the opinion of men. But we know, after studying the New Testament, that it is to be according to our faith and in proportion to our faithfulness. It is in this way that every child of God may confidently say: "I know what my award is to be." He measured it himself. It is very true that one may stand before God and receive from Him only a measure of reward, and it is likewise true that he might have a greater blessing from the hands of his Master. John speaks about "a full reward," as if there might be a reward that is not complete. Alas, this is only too true! But the opposite is also true, that one may have at that great day at the hands of God Himself a full reward. And the purpose of this book is to induce us to lay hold of the promises of God, so that our lives may be so shaped according to His will that when that day comes we shall stand before Him with rejoicing and not with sorrow.

A crown is always a symbol of reward. Expressions containing the word are many times used in the New Testament. It is sometimes a "crown of life," again a "crown that is incorruptible," a "crown of glory," a "crown of righteousness," rejoicing, a "crown of glory." But these names are given not simply for the sake of emphasis, as the change of a name might be, but because each crown means a certain kind of reward. So far as I have been able to see there are but five crowns in the New Testament Scriptures. Every Christian may have one, but oh, the joy of it! every Christian may have five. But the message is still sweeter, for if we should receive from the hands of our glorified Lord the crowns there would still be something in reserve.

Naturally the crown that should come first in order would be the one mentioned in James i: 12—"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." This crown is also mentioned in Revelation ii: 10—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

It was to be given to the Church of Smyrna that suffered the most. I wish to read the text—"Be thou faithful unto death," and I supposed it meant simply that we needed to be faithful during life and that when death came our responsibility was at an end, but the word is "unto," and means not simply that one should be faithful and willing to suffer for the Master, but to suffer and to die.

This leads me to say that the crown of life is undoubtedly the one to be given to the martyr—not simply the one who has died at the stake, or the woman who has been thrown to the wild beasts that they might devour her, but the one who has suffered in body and mind unknown to fame, but suffered nevertheless, and suffered for the glory of God.

It is likewise the crown that is to be given to the one who is able to do only little things for Christ. So many seem to think that they can do but little for Christ and therefore leave that little undone. This is a most serious error. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these ye have done it unto Me," said Christ. A cup of cold water given in His name, a word of cheer spoken for His glory, a warm hand-clasp that He may be exalted in the opinion of men—these little things win the eternal reward.

So many people are asking: "What can I do to help on the cause of Christ, to assist my minister, or to help the church?" If I were to suggest one thing that would be most helpful it would be the offering of unceasing prayer for the spread of Christ's kingdom, and for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the man who preaches Christ, at when I first became pastor of the church to which I now minister. After I had preached my first sermon and the people had presented themselves to say words of cheer, an old man came walking down the aisle, leaning upon his staff because of his age, and he said to me: "I am afraid you will make it a failure."

I did not consider that much of a word of cheer, and heartily wished he could have given it to me at another time. Then, looking about the church, he added: "We have always had a man of large experience, and the church is large." Then he came nearer and said: "If I have made up my mind to help you," I wondered in my own mind what he could do. He added: "I have determined to do for you every day that you are pastor of this church, and I have covenanted with two other men to pray for you." At this my heart was filled with joy, and I thanked God and took courage, feeling confident from the beginning that He had given me the victory. The three men soon grew to ten, and the ten to fifty, and the fifty to 200, until in these days from 350 to 500 consecrated men pray their heads in prayer with me every Sunday morning at 9.45, praying God's blessing upon me as I preach; and upon the people as they listen. The most wonderful place in all the world to preach in is a church where the atmosphere is permeated with the petitions of faithful Christians for God's blessing upon His ministers. And these are they who, upon the great day of awards, shall receive the crown of life. They do little things well, to the glory of God.

Iceberg 100 Miles Long. The French mariners' record for big icebergs off Cape Horn was broken recently, says a San Francisco dispatch in the Chicago Inter Ocean, when the British ship Anglesey, Capt. Thompson, arrived from Newcastle, England, and reported that on Sept. 20, off Cape Horn, she sailed into a great icefield, in the midst of which was a gigantic iceberg, approximately 100 miles long and over 100 feet high.

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Superstition never dies, and much might be said for the theory that it is a constant quantity, in spite of all the modern improvements. Still it seems a little queer to read that a Pennsylvania woman, convicted of witchcraft in the Cumberland County Court, has lately been released from jail, after an imprisonment of three months.

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