

THE FULL REWARD

DR. CHAPMAN'S SUNDAY SERMON.

A Full Gospel Exposition of What the Finally Faithful May Expect in the Great Day of Accounts.

New York City.—The distinguished evangelist, the Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, is the author of the following sermon entitled "The Full Reward," which was preached from the text, "Every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. But I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." 1 Cor. ix: 25, 27.

Paul, in the figure of speech, is on the race course. He is striving to reach the goal and win the prize. Here, therefore, it is not a question of life, but entirely a question of awards. He is not writing to the unregenerate, but to the children of God. He says: "I will keep under my body, lest I shall become a castaway." The word "castaway," in the Greek is literally "disapproved." Paul is teaching that even if he is to win the crown that is incorruptible, he must deny himself, he must put forth heroic effort, he must be faithful until the very end.

This spirit is needed in the church. If the first crown is for the passive Christian the second is for the enthusiastic follower of Christ, and next to the baptism of the Holy Ghost the church today needs the baptism of enthusiasm. It is a great mistake for men to allow their prejudices to lead them against the methods of church work upon which God has set His seal. There is a cry to-day against new methods, and people say the need of the time is for the old methods of our fathers. There is some truth in this, but the trouble with the advocates of this proposition is that they do not make their methods old enough. We ought to go back to Pentecostal methods of giving, for in those days the disciples gave all they had. We ought to go back to Pentecostal methods of preaching; the early preachers had just two themes in mind—namely, Jesus and the Resurrection. We ought to go back to Pentecostal living, for in the olden times the disciples lived in the expectation that each new day would bring back the Lord Himself, and having this hope in Him their lives became pure and their testimonies powerful.

Every church ought to change its method every Sunday, if the methods in use do not compel the people to accept the gospel. We have no responsibility for conversion—the Spirit of God takes care of that, but we do have a tremendous responsibility resting upon us to make every man, woman and child understand that the Son of God died to set them free from the penalty of sin, and that He ever pleads at God's right hand to liberate them from its power. The church is not an end, but rather a means to an end. If counted an end, the membership becomes satisfied with the church in itself, its preaching, its music, its social standing, its ability to influence the minds of the people, and in all seriousness I dare to say that such a church will be a curse to a community in the thought of God, rather than a blessing. We have this to remember: when counted as a means to an end the church loses sight of herself and realizes that she is in existence only to bring to every lost sinner the message of the gospel. So long as there is one soul in the world unsaved God calls His children to carry the message of peace and glad tidings of great joy to that one.

There is a Scriptural warrant for this frequent change of method. It is all summed up in one word: until. How long did the father wait for his son. "Until" he returned. How long did the woman search for the lost piece of silver? "Until" she found it. How long did the shepherd look for his sheep? "Until" he had it in his arms and was bearing it back with rejoicing to the fold. How often ought we to change our methods in the church? "Until" we have a method upon which God will set His seal, and to which the Holy Ghost will give His approval, because that method compels the people to hear the gospel and to know that Jesus Christ died to save all mankind.

Paul was willing to be counted a fool if only he might better influence men. To the wise he would be wise; to the ignorant he was willing to be counted ignorant; to the weak as a man of weakness—if only by all means he might save some. May the Lord God fill the church with this spirit! We could shake the cities and move the world with the power of God. And when the great day of awards should come, simply because we had been dead in earnest, had counted personal ease as nothing, had labored incessantly by day and by night, in heat and in cold, we should receive the crown that is incorruptible.

THE CROWN OF REJOICING.

1 Thess. ii: 19—"For what is our hope, or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"

When Paul remembers the Thessalonians whom he had won for Christ, he immediately replies: "Ye are our crown of rejoicing," and so this third form of the reward is properly called the soul-winner's crown.

This is the crown that the sainted Spurgeon is to wear. It is said that 13,000 people joined his church in his ministry, and this was only the beginning of the multitude of others that have been influenced by his life the world around. It is the crown that Mr. Moody is to wear, because in all parts of the world he has pointed men to the crucified One. It is the crown that faithful Sunday-school teachers and devoted workers are to wear.

I had in my home at one time a very celebrated Sunday-school worker. He told me how he became a servant of Christ. He was converted as a boy before the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor was known. He wanted to do something for Christ, and all he could think of was to teach a Sunday-school class. He went to the superintendent with a request that he might be made a teacher, and was refused. He went a second time, with a like result. He went a third time, and proposed to bring in a class from outside, and this time he secured the consent of the superintendent. When he went out to find boys his first visit was to a great brownstone mansion. He rang the bell and the servant opened the door. He asked if the lady of the house could be seen. He was shown into the parlor, and soon the mother of the boy entered.

He said: "I have come to ask if your boy can come to Sunday-school?"

Her face flushed, and her eyes flashed as she replied: "My child has been to Sunday-school and has had such miserable teaching that I have made up my mind that he shall not go again, until either I can teach him myself or get some one who can."

After a little waiting she asked: "Sup-

pose I should send him who would teach him?"

He became greatly embarrassed at this question, and thought that if ever he got out of the house he would never again think of any work in the church. But finally he replied:

"Well, if he comes I will teach him myself."

There was something in his frank statement—the ring of his voice—which touched the mother, and she said:

"Next Sunday he will be there."

He came—he was the only boy in the class—and when the young teacher told him the story of Jesus Christ he was converted.

As he told us the story the tears were in his eyes, and he said:

"Let me tell you the rest. Just before I left New York I was called to the room of a man who was dying. As I entered he called me to his bedside and said: 'Come just as near as you can.' I took his hand and pilloled it on my arms, and we talked. He said: 'Teacher, has this not been a wonderful work?' His voice was almost gone, but he still whispered. Finally his wife sprang up and cried, 'He is dying.' I held him closer and kissed him, for I loved him as though he had been my own child."

I shall never forget how he looked as he added:

"That was the boy I led to Christ. He was my associate in Sunday-school work. We led hundreds of souls to Christ."

Then he said with great emphasis and in tears: "I had rather have had the satisfaction of leading that one boy to Christ than to have conquered the whole world."

Such a work as this is possible to all men everywhere, and he who is thus faithful has awaiting him a crown of rejoicing. The hymn—"Mast I go empty-handed?"—was written by one dying in his youth, without one single soul to his credit. When the shadow of death fell across his face some watcher by his bedside expressed concern for his happiness or his fear of death. He quickly answered:

"Oh, no, not that. I am not troubled about that, but must I go empty-handed?"

Alas! many of us may be obliged to stand in the presence of the Master, and to be crowned in this respect.

1 Peter v: 4, "And when the chief shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Peter seems to have a special message here for officers of the church, Sunday-school teachers and church members generally, for in fact we are all of us shepherds. A shepherd is one who looks after the sheep, and the sheep that requires most of his attention is the one most likely to wander and fall by the wayside. We have a way of looking at the people, especially those who are new born babes in Christ, and saying: "We will see how they hold out," and if they stumble we not infrequently exclaim: "It is just as I expected."

A most un-Christly speech, and one most deserving the censure of God! The fact is, we are called into the church to be laborers together with God, and He has placed before us the privilege of helping to hold up the weak ones in Christ. There never is a time when one needs a warm hand clasp or a word of sympathy as the time when one is beginning his Christian life, just taking his first steps toward God.

When my little girl first began to walk, after she had taken one step she started to fall, and I had to put my arms about her and hold her up. She walked in this way for days, but how we never think of holding her up; she can run along and not be weary the whole day long. To all those who are faithful in this special ministry God has promised a sure reward.

The crown of righteousness, 2 Timothy iv: 8—"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

I have never yet been able to figure out just when the Lord shall come again, for the Bible contains no record, but with all my heart I am looking for Him. I know not but that He may come to-day. He may come to-morrow. I am perfectly sure that the greatest blessing that could ever come to this world would be the visible presence of the Lord Himself. He would lift up the down-trodden. He Himself would relieve the oppressed, and He would apply the whip to the oppressor.

But there is something better still, and that is the full reward in Revelation iv: 10. This is a picture of the glorified church. We are told that the four and twenty elders came in with crowns upon their heads, clothed with white raiment, seated about the throne. Suddenly the King of Kings appears. At once the four and twenty elders fall down before Him, and taking off their crowns cast them before the throne, saying:

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power."

The best reward of all, then, is to be with Him.

That was a glad day in England in 1855 when the soldiers came back from the Crimean war, and the Queen gave them medals, called Crimean medals. Galleries were constructed for the two houses of Parliament and the royal family to witness the presentation. Her Majesty herself came in to give the soldiers their reward. Here comes a colonel who lost both his feet at Inkerman; he is wheeled in on a chair. Here is a man whose arms are gone. And so they came, maimed and halt. Then the Queen, in the name of the English people, gave the medals, and the thousands of people with streaming eyes sang: "God save the Queen." But I can think of something that would have made the scene more wonderful. If these men had taken off the medals which the Queen had placed upon them and cast them back at her feet, saying:

"No, Your Majesty, we cannot keep them. We give back the medals. To see thee is the greatest reward."

That shall we do in heaven.

I have a friend who was in the Crimean war. He told me that he had that day received a medal with "Inkerman" upon it, for that was his battle, but he said the most touching part of it all was the experience of a friend of his who fought by his side. A cannon ball took off one of his legs, but the brave fellow sprang up immediately and taking hold of a tree, drew his sword and was ready to fight even to death. Immediately another cannon ball came crashing past and took off the other leg. They carried him wounded, bleeding and (as they supposed) dying, to the hospital. Strangely enough he came back to life again. When the day came for the awarding of medals they carried him upon his stretcher before Her Majesty, the Queen. To the other soldiers she had simply given the medals by the hands of her secretary, but when she saw this man carried in on a stretcher, his face so maimed and pale, she rose from her seat, stooped down by his side, and with her own hands pinned the medal upon his breast, while the tears fell like rain upon the face of the brave soldier.

Thus I trust it will be with many of us. We shall come into His presence, stand face to face with Him, and He will rise from His throne, coming forward to receive us. As we look up into His face, thrones will vanish away and crowns will be as nothing, for to see Him in all His beauty will be the full reward.

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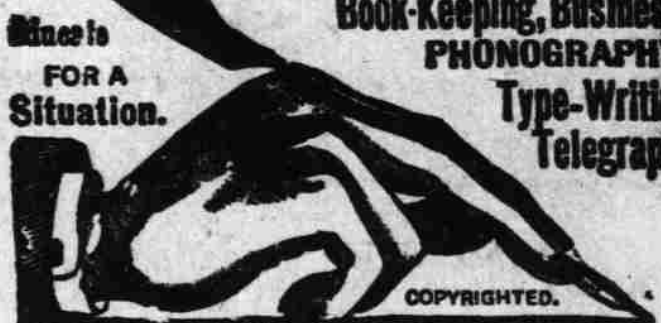
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