

THE TRUE OPTIMISM

Dr. J. B. Chapman

It is now a good many years since I heard a rugged old preacher use the text: "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God" (Acts 27:25), but I still remember his illustration. Firemen, he said, saw the face of a child at the window in an upper story of the burning building. The extension ladder was set, and a courageous fireman went swiftly up. But he encountered flames and hot air. The ladder swerved, the man hesitated. But his fellow fire-fighters on the ground below, and the anxious crowd that had gathered about joined in cheering him on. The words of encouragement were what was needed. The brave man pushed on up, broke open the window and rescued the child. This, said the old preacher, is the way it is with many a soul: faced by the fires of trial, scorched by the hot breath of hell, uncertain of his own ability, and tempted to give up, he is cheered on by those who have seen visions of God in the night and who now rise up to say, "Be of good cheer: for I believe God."

There is a shallow optimism that without reason tries to say, "All is well." And this baseless cheer is mockery to the tried and trembling, who know by present pressures that all is not well. The passing and easy saying, "All things work together for good," is of no use to one who wonders whether his plight is due to his obedience or to his folly. The true optimism is well-founded upon the promises of God and the obedience of the believer. When one can look up in loving defiance and say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him," that soul reached the place where nothing more can harm him, and his future "is as bright as the promises of God."

Warning His disciples against anxious care, the Master said, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34); He was not speaking of moral evil in their own lives: for God makes no allowance for evil in His people except His grace to deliver them from it. But evil comes in many forms. It comes as sickness, weakness, poverty, persecution for righteousness' sake, a disappointment, bereavement and an unnamed sense of impending calamity and death. God does not remove all these from any one, but He does give assurance that He Himself knows and cares. And, moreover, He gives assuring promise that "when I am tried, I shall come forth as gold." He gives assurance that we shall "come forth." We shall come forth into a better day either in this world or in the world to come. We shall not stay always in the crucible. We shall be "purified, made white and tried," and shall come forth to "shine as the stars forever and ever." "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."—Herald of Holiness.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND POWER

The Watchman-Examiner quotes Dr. John Roach Straton in relation to the power that enabled the humble disciples of Jesus Christ to win such marvelous victories. "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you." That is the last thing. He said before He left: Only one thing we were to do, that is to pray. If we have lost

this cry of prayer, we will be lost; and that is just what the Church has done today. I do not want a half-way thing; I want the best I can have, for God has it all. We are depending upon learning, and we make this a fundamental. We are insulting God. He made preachers over night. Stephen and Philip both were deacons, but were transformed into preachers for Him. Money and wisdom would never have made Philip go into the wilderness as he did; infinite wisdom could do that. Because Philip was under the guidance of God instead of men, he went down and found the eunuch and led him to Christ as simply as could be. There was divine wisdom and divine guidance. Then they were not depending upon learning, money or movements. We are like Ezekiel seeing wheels upon wheels. The cry today is 'efficiency.' What is efficiency? It is human skill. I know that a good deal was said in the literature of the Inter-church World Movement about prayer, but where were their prayer meetings? Where were there any haystack prayer meetings? Instead, after the meeting began some bishop would get up and ask God to bless their plans, but never asked to give them plans and then to give them power to carry them out. Not until we see the people waiting on God will we see the Church going on in her right place."—Selected.

THE BIBLE—THERE IT STANDS

Century follows century—there it stands!
Empires rise and fall and are forgotten—
there it stands!
Dynasty succeeds dynasty—there it stands!
Kings are crowned and uncrowned—there it
stands!
Despised and torn to pieces—there it stands!
Storms of hate swirl about it—there it stands!
Atheists rail against it—there it stands!
Agnostics smile cynically—there it stands!
Profane, prayerless punsters caricature it—
there it stands!
An anvil that has broken a million hammers
—there it stands!
The flames are kindled about it—there it
stands!
The arrows of hate are discharged against it
—there it stands!
Radicalism rants and raves against it—there
it stands!
Fogs of sophistry conceal it temporarily—
there it stands!
The tooth of time gnaws, but makes no dent
in it—there it stands!

—A. Z. Conrad

THE RETURN OF THE LORD JESUS
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briefly to some things connected with the Lord's return of which we may be certain because God has spoken clearly concerning them. First, the return of the Lord Jesus is the blessed and comforting hope of all truly saved persons, and of the church, which is Christ's body. Second, it is a strong incentive to holy living. Third, because of our lack of knowledge of the exact moment of His return, Christians are exhorted to maintain a continual separation from the present evil world and that sanctified readiness of which Jesus spoke when He said: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." (Matt. 24:44).

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

John Wesley said, "The direct witness of the Holy Spirit is an inward impression on the souls of believers, whereby the Spirit of God directly testifies to their spirit that they are the children of God."

It is an assurance given directly by the Holy Spirit, not by the Word, as some assert, for it cannot certify of our adoption, but it is the Spirit giving assurance by crying in our hearts, "Abba, Father."

It is a divine communication to the soul. What is the manner of the communication? We reply, with the Master, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

The direct witness of the Spirit is advantageous. It is salvation from doubts on fundamentals, certainty with respect to adoption and forgiveness, and the joy of the Lord and the strength which always springs therefrom. It gives positiveness and convincing cogency to testimony. It is a great safeguard against apostasy. A sudden conversion, bright and joyful, is a towering monument in memory. It is a rebuke to a backslider so long as memory is unshaken.—Selected.

MARKS OF RELIGIOUS DECLENSION

1. When you are reluctant to religious conversation, and the company of serious, heavenly-minded Christians, and enjoy yourself best with men of the world.

2. When from preference, rather than necessity, you are often absent from meetings of the church for prayer and conference, confine yourself to Sabbath meetings, are easily detained from them, and are ready at an excuse or pretext for such neglects.

3. When there are certain duties which you are afraid to consider carefully and seriously, lest your conscience rebuke past neglect and insist on your fidelity now.

4. When it is more your object, in going through with a duty, to pacify conscience than honour Christ, obtain spiritual profit, and grow in grace, or do good to others.

5. When you have an over-critical spirit respecting preaching, are dissatisfied with the manner, as inelegant, or too plain, or too intellectual, or not according to some favourite model; or with the matter as too doctrinal, or too perceptive; or when you complain of it as too close, or as suspicious of personality.

6. When you calculate more carefully for the security of earthly prosperity, than for that of your precious soul; and are more bent upon being rich than holy.

7. When your reading of the Bible is formal, hasty, lesson-wise, or merely intellectual, and unattended with self-application, quickening to conscience and gracious affections, increase of prayerfulness, watchfulness, readiness for every good work; or when you read almost any other book with more interest than the book of God.

8. When you are, secretly, more gratified at the miss-steps and falls of some professor, of another denomination, or at variance with you, than grieved for the wounds which he inflicts upon Christ, and the hazard at which he places his own soul.

9. When you **confess**, but do not **forsake**, easily besetting sins.

10. When you **acknowledge**, but still **neglect**, duty.—Selected.