"A GREAT VICTORY."

Sunday Discourse by Dr. Chapman, the Noted Pastor Evangelist.

The Soul's Deep Longing After God—Faith Will Conquer in the End—God is Our Strength and Life.

NEW YORK CITY.—The Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman has furnished to the press a most striking and popular sermon which is intended for all those who would rise to better things. It is entitled "A Great Victory," and is preached from the texts: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." Psalm 42: 1. "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance." Psalm 43: 5.

The first verse is a lamentation in the wilderness, the second is a shout of rejoicing when victory is won. The territory stretching out from the wilderness in the one text to the presence of God in the other is not only the story of the experience of David, but of the most of Christians. My message last week was to those who occasionally fall under juniper trees and want to die; here it is to all who would rise to better things.

The Psalms are divided into five books, and the ancient Rabbins say in these five books in the Psalter we have the image of the five books of the law, or in other words a kind of a second pentateuch, the echo of the first. In the first God speaks and in the second the voice of the people is heard. God presents Israel with the law, and grateful Israel responds with a shout of praise. These two Psalms form the first division of the second book. They are dedicated to the master musicians or the sons of Horah. They were the celebrated musicians and singers of the day; they were in David's time the keepers of the threshold of the tabernacle, and still earlier in the time of Moses they were watchmen at the entrance of the camp of the Levites; they were a part of that band that acknowledged David as leader at Ziklag; they were warriors with faces like lions, and who for speed were like gazelles on the mountains.

Mr. Spurgeon says that although David is not mentioned as the author of these psalms they must be his, for the truth is so like him. It has the character of his style and the work of his experience in every letter. I had sooner question the authorship of Bunyan's second part of the "Pilgrim's Progress" than to question David's right to these psalms. Whoever wrote them has given a name to the soul's deep longing after God and made a sigh a melodious thing.

There are three divisions in the psalm, each closing with the refrain, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" The whole psalm is the picture of a soul climbing Godward, not without backward slips, but climbing nevertheless, until the sigh of the first text gives way to the shout of the second. Perhaps the singer during his exile on the eastern side of Jordan had seen some gentle creature with open mouth and heaving flanks eagerly seeking water in the dry river bed, and he saw in this a picture of himself. The whole psalm is like what we have seen on some early spring day, when the sun was warm, the sky blue, the trees ready to burst into bud and the birds were singing, but only for a day, then the clouds returned, the atmosphere was chilled, the birds are all stilled and the sun was under a cloud. Viewed in one way it is a psalm of gloom, in another way it is a psalm of glory. Streaks of brightness are ever flashing through the gloom. First there is a sigh as of a breaking heart, then comes a word of hope like a rainbow spanning the waterfall; once again the contending enemies meet as in verses 9 and 10, but finally above it all comes the refrain without a complaint, "I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance."

There are certain expressions most striking in the psalm. Three times does David say "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" as though he were two men. The psalmist talks to himself. John Trapp says it is David chiding David out of the dumps. To search for the cause of sorrow is often the best surgery for grief. In verse 8 notice the words, "The Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime." No day has ever dawned in which an heir of grace could be utterly forsaken. In the same verse we read "In the night His song shall be with me." Affliction may put out our light at times, but if it does not silence our song the light will come again. Verse 3, psalm 42, "Send out Thy light and truth." These are like angels to guide him to the object of his affections, but finally above all sounds the note of victory, "Hope thou in God." This is like the singing of Paul and Silas, it looses chains, shakes the prison walls and sets the prisoner free. Two graces mentioned in this psalm were used frequently by Christ, hope and faith. Faith tells us what Christ has done; hope tells us what He will do, and hope is like the sun as we journey toward it; our burden is cast back of us. Faith may have many a struggle with fear, but it will conquer in the end. These two psalms are really one; there is a constant unfolding of experience and rising to a higher appreciation of God, and as faith acquires more strength you will notice that not only David but ourselves come to think of God in a different way and address Him in more endearing terms. There is no better illustration of this than these two psalms.

I.

"O God." Debarred from public worship David is heart sick. He is not seeking ease, he needs God. He is not after comfort, but like a traveler whose water bottle is empty and who finds the well dry, so he must have God or he will faint. When it is as natural for us to long for God as for an animal to thirst, it is well with our souls. "O God," we hear him saying. It is as if he can scarcely breathe for thirst. He does not know just what he is needing or just how God would reveal Himself to him, but he must have God. All unrest or thirst or outgoing of desire are but the reaching out of the soul after God. We shall be satisfied only when we find Him.

II.

"The Living God." My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. This is an advance upon the first expression, and this is Jehovah's name of power. Ancient Israel was accustomed to use it before every victory, since it is higher than "O God." In the first cry we naturally find it followed with a shout of victory, "I shall yet praise Him." Hunger and thirst are God's instruments to call us to Himself. When the prodigal was an hungered he said, "I will arise." It is a picture of one who has tried other things in the world, pleasure, wealth, honor and then cries out, "O for the living God." But thirst is better than hunger; you may palliate hunger, but thirst is a perpetual appetite. The next best thing to being in the light of God's love is to be unhappy until you have it. He is the living God because He has life in Himself and because He bestows that life to others.

III.

"O my God." Appropriation comes next, and once it is taken it is never dropped. He says, "God of my life, and God my rock." There are five "mys" in the forty-third psalm, "my cause," "my strength," "my joy," "my soul," "my God." You never really appreciate God until you begin to apply Him to your life, and He will be to you just what you wish. He is like a locked casket filled with jewels. You may have such a casket in your possession. Only the key unlocking it can reveal to you the preciousness of your possession. This possessive pronoun is the key in this case, "my God," and when once you have grasped it nothing can stand against you. David speaks of Jordan, the Hermonites and Mizar. At Jordan the water rolled back on the Hermonites, the kings were defeated near to Mizar, the law was given, and he may have meant to say difficulties as great as Jordan, enemies as strong as the kings, none of these things shall move me, He is my God; or it may mean that since these places are farthest from the tabernacle David is saying, "What if I am afar off, no trial can be too severe for me."

IV.

"God of my life." This is further on in the line of truth. You will notice that the two preceding expressions are thus put together. One who is learning of God is like a child learning his alphabet. He knows his letters, but who is there that knows all the words into which the letters may be shaped, and who has read all the books which they can make up. It is so with God, He is the God of my life. What if I am forsaken, He is my Father; what if I am comfortless, He is like my mother; what if I am cast down, He is my restorer; what if I am hopeless and undone, He is my hope.

V.

"God my rock." David was a fugitive and had little means of defense. He is continually pursued by his enemies, and since the country is full of mountains and caves of refuge are on every side of him they become to him the picture of God. He calls Him my rock. The names of God are suited to every circumstance in life. Nothing is more fitting for us than to get hold of this expression of David's. You will be tempted on every side, the enemy is too strong for you, but literally David's expression is, "God is my cliff." That is, He rises above the things of this world, and He wants His children to understand that wherever there is a heart big with sorrow, wherever there is an eye filled with tears or a lip quivering with agony His ear is wide open to all their cries. He marks down every necessity in His memory; He will not forsake His own.

VI.

"God my strength." This means my strength belongs to God, and I must use it only for His glory. He is taking note of all that I do, and one day I shall be called to an account. God might if He pleased wrap Himself about with night as a garment. He might dwell alone far above this world, and look down with indifference upon the doings of His creatures. We might look up into the heavens and behold the stars and say, "I am nothing compared with these, and God does not care for me," but not so. He notices every one of us. He knows our names, has numbered the hairs of our head, and not a sparrow falls to the ground except beneath the gaze of His eye. Whatever we do or bear or suffer the eye of God is upon us.

One of the most interesting pictures in the Louvre is that of Christ with eyes so wonderful that walk which way you will the gaze is upon you, and so God is the God of my strength and one day I must answer to Him for it.

VII.

"God, my exceeding joy." This includes all that has gone before, and it exceeds all others, first, in its nature, for it is not happiness, that depends upon circumstances. It is joy of which David speaks which may be ours, though the night is upon us and the burden is really too heavy for us to bear. It exceeds all others in its duration, for it never ends. This can be said of no other experience, all others have their boundaries, but this is an illimitable sea reaching beyond the bonds of time and lasting through eternity. "O God," this is a soul's cry, "the living God," no one else can satisfy. "My God." He is mine, and nothing can separate me from Him. "God of my life." He will be whatever I long to have Him be. "God my rock." He is my defense in every time of need. "God my strength." All that I have is His. "God, my exceeding joy." He is beyond all that the world can give, and when that joy fills the soul earth is changed to heaven.

Gave Up All For Christ.

There is a most impressive story related of the conversion of an old lady of seventy years, in a little town in Western China through the instrumentality of a Bible woman. One market day, as she was selling her wares she heard a Bible woman talking about a God who loved and cared for people of every race and land. Becoming much interested in this message the old lady began attending the Sunday services conducted by the missionaries, walking four miles each way in order to do it.

At last she was converted to Christ, a step which meant much to her, for in surrendering herself to the Master she must give up her idol worship, which she realized fully would bring upon her persecution and hatred.

After destroying all of her idolatrous pictures on the walls and her many other idols there yet remained in the centre room of her house a tablet to "Heaven and Earth," which she dared not touch, for it belonged partly to a nephew whom she feared to offend.

One night she had a wondeful dream. She thought she saw Jesus Christ coming across the valley to her house, and she cried out, "Saviour of the people, I am a sinner; come and save me." But though He drew near her house it was only to look sadly in and pass sorrowfully by. On awakening she could not forget her dream, and every time she looked at the idolatrous tablet she felt that perhaps this was keeping Jesus out of her house. So she determined, at whatever cost, to get rid of it, and accordingly wrote her nephew to that effect, and was given permission to do with it what she felt inclined. But this was not all. So earnest was she in the new faith that she insisted that her house be whitewashed throughout that the Lord might not smell any trace of the incense.

Thus was born into the kingdom what proved to be one of the most devout of Christ's followers.

A Safe Refuge.

The day may be one of calamity. Dark clouds may be over us and a terrible storm about to break upon us. Where shall we find safety? The providence of God may fill us with alarm, and we may feel ourselves left destitute and helpless. Where may we hide ourselves from the impending evil? Or, while all is peace about us, while others are rejoicing because of great good, we are depressed in spirit, and in the thought of ourselves see only sin and judgment. How shall we escape? The spirit of God has given us the answer: "God is our refuge; a help in trouble most readily to be found." He is at hand and His ear is open to every cry of distress. He is the Almighty, and within His loving care we are safe. He is the faithful, unchanging One, and, therefore, will not forsake us. Hasten to the open door and to the outstretched arms of Him whose love infolds you, and whose arm will guard from every harm.—United Presbyterian.

Every Day's Blessing.

All that God gives to us day by day is, as it were, a new creation. We never received it before. It never was our need until now. We may have received something like it before, but that was not this, nor could that have filled the place of this. Every day's blessing are to each of us as a special miracle from the hands of the ever-loving and the Almighty God. As John Bunyan says, "Things that we receive at God's hand come to us as things from the minting house—though old in themselves, yet new to us." What should we do if our Father failed to give us current coin of his minting day by day?—Sunday-School Times.

Divine and Spiritual.

Our Lord speaks of things divine and spiritual just as if He were speaking of things human and material. When danger has passed over joy arises, nay, even greater joy than if the danger had never been.—The Rev. J. J. O'Neill, R. C., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Plumage of Sea Birds.

Why are sea birds white, is a question that is often asked. Many learned men have attempted to solve the problem and among the reasons they have given is the one that enemies which prey upon birds of white plumage at sea are very few, and so those birds have escaped and have increased in numbers. Then, too, 'tis said that the fishes and other creatures of the sea upon which sea birds live can see their enemies best when they have black coats, and thus escape them. White plumaged birds usually have, however, some few black markings, either on their wings or tails, which serve as a badge by which they may be recognized by their friends. Thus the young birds can easily detect their mother while out on the water and follow her to the places where food can be secured. The colors of sea birds correspond with those of the fishes on which they feed. Most fishes are dark above and light beneath, this arrangement of color helping them to escape observation. It is, no doubt, an advantage to the birds to have their white feathers turned seaward, so that they may be less easily seen by the fishes they are in search of. Eagles, which have taken to fishing, are colored like the other sea fowls, instead of being like their relatives who feed upon land creatures.

Curious Scheme to Recover Money.

An effective scheme was worked by Wilbur Labar to recover William V. Lundy's roll of money from the river at Delaware, Del., a few days ago. Lundy fell into the river and had no time to look after the big roll of bills in his pocket while swimming to a place of safety. Consequently the greenbacks floated off on the bosom of the Delaware and were soon lost to view. Search for them was diligently made, and was about to be given up when young Labar proposed a scheme he had seen worked in finding the body of a man. He threw a light pine chip in the river at the exact spot from which the money started and watched it float in an eddy a mile or so down the stream, where it stopped, and there, floating on the current, was found the most of Mr. Lundy's bills and checks.

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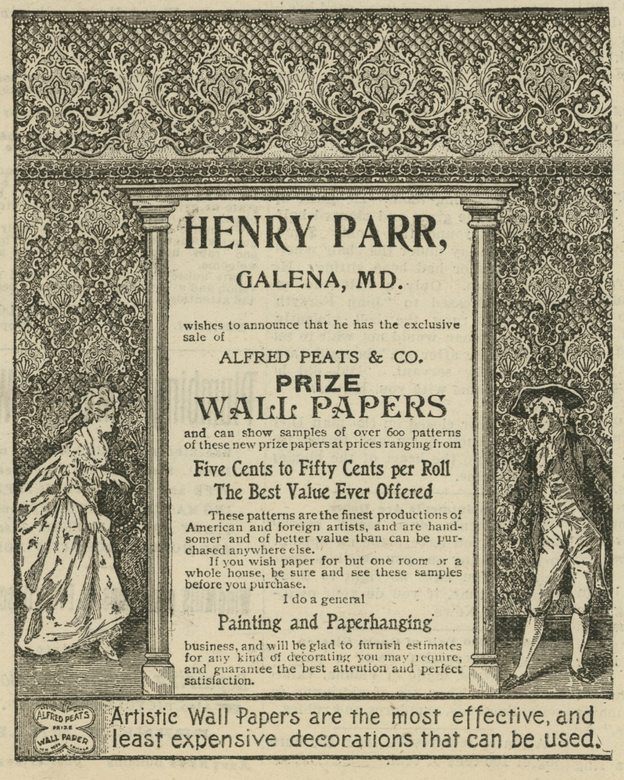

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