

THE PULPIT.

A SCHOLARLY SUNDAY SERMON BY THE REV. J. A. R. CAIRNS

Theme: The Glory of Death.

Belfast, Ireland.—The famous Presbyterian divine, the Rev. J. A. R. Cairns, recently delivered the following sermon entitled, "The Glory of Death." He took as his text: "To die is gain."—Phil. 1:21.

"The victory."—1 Cor. 15:57.

It is not remarkable that the thing that haunts us like a terror is the thing that burns like an inspiration to the men who have written the teaching of this Book? What we try to forget, they strive to remember. What we call cursing, they called blessing and deliverance. What makes us cry, made them rejoice. The clearest teaching of this Book is that death is glorious. It is an inspiration. And that teaching makes the uniqueness of the Christian Gospel.

Let us gather the incidents that seem to present this teaching: The great Teacher is going to die. The hints at death grow clear and unmistakable, and the hearts of the disciples begin to tremble. The laborers and preachers and denials of those busy, ministering years appear as though they would issue in nothingness. Even friendship is going to be taken away, and out of all those years only a memory will be left behind. No other issue seemed possible. They had no knowledge and they had no power.

And how did Jesus face that? What does He say? What can He say? He seems to shut up by a logical necessity to admit the dark forebodings of His disciples. But it was just there that the opportunity for the new truth came—just at the point when human effort seemed to fail and human inspiration to die—that its meaning could be rightly and not easily understood. And His new truth is this simply: "That death is glorious." It has a glory all its own. John 14:19: "I will be with you, and you shall see me, and you shall know that I am in the world." "I will be with you, and you shall see me, and you shall know that I am in the world." "I will be with you, and you shall see me, and you shall know that I am in the world."

That friendship and that inspiration and that teaching that they loved so much and feared so much to lose, would become deeper and fuller and eternal because of the coming of death. They would lose nothing, they would gain much. "If ye loved Me ye would rejoice because I go." But you say, "Christ was somehow unique." He is, and yet without sin. With His spiritual vision and power we can see how He could be fearless of death, and find in it a rich and adding testimony to the truth of His Gospel, but when we think of the burdened men—the men who walk in mists and mysteries, who lack the vision and the power? Can death ever be less than a terror and a devil of glory? Let us see. Take Paul. Our text is his testimony and confession. "To die is gain." * * * the victory.

Paul's life was hard. His years were crowded with labors and denials. How little response there seemed to be for all he gave! And what was it that burned within him as the shining goal to which he longed to come—what was the inspiration that warmed his weary heart? It was death. "I am in a strait between two—having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more profitable to you." "I am ready." * * * Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown.

And what is the glad note that Peter strikes to cheer the hearts of those who suffer and who are persecuted and who are persecuted and who are persecuted? "What light does he throw through the dark pathway of their tribulation?" "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." "Who therefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless."

And what consolation stole into the heart of that lonely man on Patmos—what light shone from the friendship, and suffering for the cross? "Who are these that are arrayed in the white robes." "These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." "Therefore, are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun beat them, nor heat, nor any scorching wind. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Such, then, is the view of death that was taken by the disciples of Jesus and the apostles of the early Christian church. And I think it is abundantly clear that most of us are far away from such a view. Death is to us the end of all. We meet it with terror and uncertainty.

How is one to account for this strange disinclination? How has a joy become a heartbreak, and an inspiration become a terror? If we can answer this we shall answer many lesser questions. We shall know how it is that not only in death, but in sorrow and sickness and disappointment we are missing the consolation and the glory that ought to dwell over us in our hearts.

It is clear, I think, that the men who found and held to the glory of death were free from many of the subtle temptations that surround our lives. The atmosphere they breathed was pure. The work they did was unspiced. They were not flattered and flattered. These men could not live Christian lives as "of course." They had got to live it deliberately, passionately, earnestly. They were driven back to the teaching of Christianity the very thing that would give them to drift was impossible. They were definitely out of it. And as they faced it all with the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and with a great, heroic faith in Him, they discovered that the strength and what rivers of strength flowed from Him into them!

The foundation of their fearlessness was experience, and so personal experience of Christ and their utter inability to find joy in the world made the glory of death.

Out of their circumstances and experiences can't you catch a gleam of something that is not our own? Can't you see something in their circumstances and in their hearts that we lack? I think both are abundantly true.

Take our circumstances. We live in no pagan atmosphere. The churches consecrated to the program

of Christ are the most visible objects of our cities. They flaunt themselves in our faces. The bells peal out glad notes above the din and clash of traffic. And out of the Book that gathers up the teaching—the words and works of Jesus? All may possess and read it.

To be a Christian is no longer to be heroic. A man may confess Christ without apology. Nay? The underlying assumption behind all our actions is that a man is a Christian. To be otherwise a man must specifically and ostentatiously deny it. We start our life with Christian baptism; we are laid away with the undying words of Christ; hope rising above our sleeping place. We join our life to another, and rear our homes upon the Christian foundation. But all has degenerated to an idle form.

It has come to be taken for granted. Men ask for baptism for their children and burial for their dead because it is the usual, the expected thing. And, brethren, don't you see where it has led us to? To a Christian formalism that contains no vitality, no power. We are living lives devoid of experience. We do not feel the power of Christ, nor do we see the glory of His living presence. We murmur words that have no deep, abiding significance.

It is tragic, it is horrible. But it is the spirit of the age. The Christian life is losing much because of the success of Christianity. Because it has meant and has accomplished so much, it means and accomplishes so little to-day. Its success is the cause of our personal loss. It is an old historic truth that success is the beginning of defeat. It has happened in empires and religions. It is the man who has to fight for his faith that holds that faith as his most cherished possession. We take Christ as a matter of daily habit, without one thought of all it means, of all it represents.

And what of our experience? My dear brethren, it is because we find our joy in the world and miss the joy of Christ that death has been changed from a glory to a fear, from an inspiration to a dismay. We have grown to love the world—this fading, dying world—its joys, its music, its rewards. We have grown to forget the sacred, eternal words of Christ as we will His death, and His glory.

And the years race on—busy, crowded years of labor for place and money and success. When the night grows dark and lonely we cry for comfort, and when the day breaks away and we forget. We forget! We forget!

Al! It is the man whose night has been the longest that knows Christ the best and fears death the least. There are worse calamities than sorrow and death. One thousand and a hundred years ago Jesus warned us against success. It binds us and it holds much from us. In the day of our own sufficiency it is hard to see and plan for Christ. It is not impossible.

And then the days come when the strength grows weak and the body fails and the clash of the world goes back and back, and we lie and watch and wait and think? What comes, and what do we do? "We are afraid." We have had no true fellowship with Him. We don't know Him. We can't fearlessly trust Him. Others tell of His keeping, and of the great, dear love He gave. Others go into the mists singing and crying "Victory." But we—we don't know. He hasn't been experienced, and we miss the certainty.

Oh, my beloved! I warn you to-day! That day comes. You are growing older and weaker and tired; you are growing old, and you are old, and when the tiredness is very great, and when the world has got your best—will you be able to say, "I am ready." "I have gotten the victory?"

This certainty only comes out of faith in and service to Christ, out of experience of Christ. If the morning you have no rich memories of Christ inside your heart, if you have no experience of Him gathered inside your character—oh! face it very earnestly, for the faith that changes the world is the faith that changes the man. The inspiration that makes the corruption and loneliness of the grave an ideal and a power, is the greatest thing in the world.

Death has another side. Of all it means I cannot tell. Jesus uses terrible imagery that ought to startle us. The worm dieth not, first it is quenched, and a great gulf opens. I have seen the face of men who mis-spent their youth and years, and when manhood came it was hell! But what may he behind years and years of forgetfulness of God? Who can say? One thing it is—it is the loss of all that life can be satisfied with, and all that it was created for. It is missing life—and God.

Teaching Nuggets.

"His presence is our power."

"To love Him is to live for others. One remains hungry where He is born."

His glory has not lifted Him above the feeling of our infirmities.

Every profession of love must come to the test of the life of service.

It is in the evidence of His confidence in us in the call to His service.

It is always easier to discuss the duties of others than to do our own.

Many mistake the business of regulating others for their own righteousness.

They cannot see the Father's face—no cannot bend to serve the least of His children.

A life is great not by the measure of few mistakes, but by splendid mastery over all mistakes.—Henry F. Cope, in the Sunday-School Times.

God Loves Perseverance.

God does not always refuse when He delays, but He loves perseverance and grants it everything.—Scottish Reformer.

A Cave of Nature's Jewels.

By proclamation of the President the Jewel Cave National Monument has been established in the Black Hills National Forest in South Dakota. This formation is, in some respects, unique. It was explored in 1900, and consists of a series of chambers, connected by passages and galleries, the walls of which are encrusted with beautiful calcite crystals. It is situated in a canon on a limestone plateau, 6000 feet above sea level. It is believed to have been the channel for the waters of a now extinct geyser.—Youth's Companion.

"Sweetness and Light."

That most famous of Matthew Arnold's phrases, "Sweetness and Light," he avowedly adopted from Swift, who, however, used it as a relation to bees, because they make honey and wax. Arnold transferred it to the operation of culture, in making love and truth prevail.—Pall Mall Gazette.

The Sunday-School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON COMMENTS FOR JULY 12.

Subject: Saul Chosen King. 1 Samuel 9 and 10—Golden Text. 2 Sam. 23:3—Commit Verse 24—Read 1 Sam. 11—Commentary.

TIME.—1900 B. C. PLACE.—Mispah.

EXPOSITION.—I. Saul Chosen King. 17-23. Jehovah had already pointed Saul out as the one whom He had chosen to be king over Israel (cf. ch. 9:17), and Samuel had made known this fact to God and Saul (ch. 9:26, 21:10). Now there is to be a formal and public choice by lot. Samuel called the people together but not unto himself, "unto the LORD." They were to meet the LORD face to face that day and to hear a message from Him. We are our gatherings together unto the Lord or unto some man? The place of meeting was one that had been hallowed by former gatherings (Judges 20:1; 1 Sam. 7:8). Samuel again reproves them for asking for a sign (cf. ch. 8:19, 19:12, 17:19). But the reproval was not Samuel's but God's. God calls to their remembrance how He had saved them and brought them up out of the land of bitterness and bondage. How gross was the ingratitude! How gross could reject such a God, and how great was their folly that they should desire some human king and deliverer instead of Him. But their ingratitude and folly was nothing in comparison with that of those who reject such a Deliverer and Lord as Jesus Christ has proven Himself to be. It is the method of God in reasoning with men to call to their remembrance His loving kindness towards them, in order that they may see their own ingratitude and folly in the light of His abounding grace (cf. Ju. 2:1; 6:8, 9). It was a fourfold deliverance that Jehovah had wrought for them: (1) He had brought them out of Egypt, the land of bondage, and had delivered them from the hand of their own ingratitude and folly in the light of His abounding grace (cf. Ju. 2:1; 6:8, 9). It was a fourfold deliverance that Jehovah had wrought for them: (1) He had brought them out of Egypt, the land of bondage, and had delivered them from the hand of their own ingratitude and folly in the light of His abounding grace (cf. Ju. 2:1; 6:8, 9). 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