

THE GOSPEL OF HOPE

FOLLOWING our public address at Havana, a lady of some prominence came forward and expressed herself as greatly pleased with what she had heard. She said she appreciated the hopeful outlook which we had held before the audience respecting God's Love and care, and the comforts of the Truth in the present life, and the hopes respecting the future life.

"But," said this lady, "I wish, Pastor Russell, that you could inoculate THE WATCH TOWER readers with this same spirit of hope breathed in your discourses. I am well acquainted with some who are deeply interested in your presentations of the Bible teachings, but who seem to lose sight of the hope and the good things, being chiefly impressed with matters that are very doleful and discouraging. They seem to dwell upon a coming time of trouble to such an extent as to make both themselves and others about them sad. I believe that if they could be inoculated with more of the spirit of hope in respect to the future, they could be much happier themselves and make others about them much happier. I believe that they would really make much more progress in the propagation of the Truth, if indeed your presentations *are* the Truth, as they seem to be." We promised to lay the matter before THE WATCH TOWER readers, and are now doing so.

YE HAVE NEED OF HOPE

The Apostle wrote, "Ye have need of patience." We are not contradicting his statement when we add that also, "Ye have need of hope." Without hope, patience would soon fritter away; and no length or breadth or depth of character could be expected. The very word Gospel is full of hope; for it means *Good Tidings*. Whoever, therefore, would preach the Gospel should be sure that his message is one of Good Tidings, one of Hope. True, it may be necessary and

appropriate at times to say something respecting the time of trouble that we see near. Yet even that subject is to be approached from the standpoint of Good Tidings. To tell about the time of trouble merely to alarm people, would not be to use it as a part of the Good Tidings. If necessary to refer to the time of trouble, we should mention it merely as that dark cloud which for a little season will obscure the dawn of the rapidly oncoming Day of Christ – the Day of blessing and joy – the world's jubilee – the time of rolling away the curse and substituting God's blessing.

"THE WHOLE CREATION GROANETH"

The majority of the world and also of the Lord's consecrated people have plenty of trouble in the present time without being terrorized needlessly in respect to the great day of trouble. Let us remember that, additionally, the world has a latent fear respecting the future. They have been told by distinguished religious teachers and by musty creeds that nearly everybody was damned in advance to spend an eternity of torture. And although this is no longer outwardly preached to intelligent people, and no longer would be believed, nevertheless insinuations are often thrown out; and a secret fear lurks in the mind lest there should really be something terrible awaiting the masses after death – a Catholic Purgatory of awful severity, if not the endless torture of Protestantism. Much of the present day tendency toward intoxication with pleasures and travels, as well as with alcoholic intoxicants, is the result of an attempt to get away from fearful forebodings – to substitute more pleasant and happifying thoughts.

What the world specially needs is what the Bible alone can give. Bible Students alone are qualified to introduce others to this comfort of the Scriptures. More and more, therefore, it should be our aim to bind up the broken-hearted and to say to the weary and heavy-laden, "Come to Christ, and find relief and rest. Come now, and see who is the great Burden-bearer for all who become His followers. Then look

beyond the present and see how, in harmony with the Father's gracious arrangement, He will eventually scatter the blessings of Restitution far and wide. Behold the Love of God, which constraineth us! Cast away your fear of Him! Draw nigh unto Him through Christ, and He will draw nigh unto you."

As there may be proper times for telling something about the time of trouble coming, which will inaugurate Messiah's glorious reign, so there may be proper times [R5214 : page 106] for telling the wayward that those who sin shall suffer; that walking in the ways of sin they are walking away from God; that the end of that way is death – the Second Death; and that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But these features of the Divine Word are not so necessary to be repeated every day; for mankind instinctively know that sin leads to suffering of some kind, and that righteousness sooner or later brings its reward.

What the world needs most is encouragement to turn away from sin, to realize the sympathy of God for the rebellious family of Adam, and to know of the arrangement which God has made whereby He will have mercy upon all, through Christ. We need to follow the Master's course when He declared, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." We need to tell those who see and hear what a blessing they enjoy.

It is necessary at times to point to the narrow way of self-sacrifice, self-denial, suffering, which the followers of Jesus must take if they would share with Him in His Kingdom glories, honors and immortality. But they *will find the narrowness* of the way, even if we should not tell them. No one can walk in the narrow way, no one can follow Jesus, without knowing the truth of the statement, "Through much tribulation shall ye enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

What then shall we tell the people? Oh, give them also the Message of hope, the Message of joy, the Message of peace! Let us draw the attention of the brethren to the blessed privileges that are

ours, rather than frequently to point them to the trials and hardships of the way. But what are the privileges of the Christian, if through great tribulation he must enter the Kingdom? They are, oh, so grand! It is his to know the joy of sins forgiven; and many need to have this told them over and over again, that they may fully appreciate it. It is his to know of the Heavenly Father's Love and care – matters so easily forgotten in the stress of life. These assurances of the Word need to be repeated over and over: "The Father Himself loveth you." "God is for us." "All things shall work together for good to them that love God."

As these promises of God's Word abound in our hearts, they promote the fruits of the Holy Spirit; joy and peace come in, such as the world can neither give nor take away. The peace of God, which passeth all human understanding, thus gradually comes more and more to dwell in our hearts; and so thankfulness results. Thankfulness in turn leads to more joy and praise, and to more sympathy for our fellows – for our families and for the world. Thus the Christian finds himself growing in grace, knowledge and love.

"THINK ON THESE THINGS"

All this is in full accord with St. Paul's advice: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, **[R5214 : page 107]** whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Philippians 4:8.) Following this course then – of preaching the Gospel of Hope – we are following the Master and the Apostles. They had so much of this spirit of hope, trust, confidence, love, joy and peace, that they could rejoice in tribulation; and they did so. The Apostles even sang praise to God that they were accounted worthy to share in the sufferings of Christ, that they might also share in His coming glories.

Let us then, dear brethren, realize that the world has tears and sorrows enough, and fears aplenty. Let us more and more use our time, strength, talents, joys, etc., in relieving the poor world of its mental distress. Harken to the words of Jesus, "God shall wipe all tears from all eyes." "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." As it will be God's great work in the future, through Christ and the Church, to wipe away earth's tears, let us chase away some of those fears at the present time. Thus we shall help to prepare the way for the world to come back into fellowship with God by and by, for the faithful of the present time to walk more carefully in the footsteps of Jesus and to encourage one another in the good way.

GETHSEMANE

I journeyed through the twilight
Where all was dark and drear,
And wondered why my Savior
Did not seem always near.
As steeper grew the pathway
And full of thorns the road,
I stumbled, deaf and blinded,
Beneath my heavy load.

The tears of *my own grieving*
Had filled mine eyes with mist,
And thro' the vapory veiling
The face of Christ I missed.
At last I fixed my vision
On Heavenly Heights of Love,
Whose tips were ever glowing
In sunlight from above.

And wandering thus, up-gazing,

I earnestly pressed on,
Unheeding thorns and thistles
By which my feet were torn.
At last, worn out and weary,
I fell upon the ground.
Where, worn by time and tempest,
A granite cross I found.

I leaned my head upon it,
My *all* on it I laid;
Together with my sorrows,
My joys I also gave.
Then suddenly a rustling
Of pinions filled the air,
And lo! beside me kneeling
I saw an *Angel* there.
And midnight in the Garden
Was bright as day to me,
For Christ stood 'mid the shadows
Of my Gethsemane!

BIRLA I. MORRIS.

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