

FIVE

GOOD

CHEERS

Five Good Cheers

By ALFRED P. GIBBS

It has been a long established custom to give three cheers for a person whose character, or whose service on behalf of others merits such a token of appreciation. It must have been this idea that caused a human derelict, after God had marvelously saved him to exclaim: "Three cheers for Jesus!"

Let us think of five good cheers which God is prepared to give to each reader, and which will guarantee both his present and eternal satisfaction. God reveals Himself as being the blessed, or happy God. He delights to bless humanity and nothing gives Him more pleasure than to bring a lost and guilty sinner to a saving knowledge of Himself. The Lord Jesus declared: "There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth;" and who dwells in the presence of the angels but God Himself? (Luke 15:7,10)

Christians are said to "joy in God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have received the reconciliation." (Rom. 5:11) One of the most remarkable statements in all the Scriptures is found in Zephaniah 3:17, where we read: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing!" The very word "gospel," means "good news." The well known words of the angel to the shepherds, at the birth

of Christ, will serve to emphasize this fact: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11).

We shall call our first cheer:

I. *The good cheer of his pardon to us.*
(*Matthew 9:2*)

On one occasion there was brought into the presence of our Lord a paralyzed man, utterly helpless and without any natural hope of cure. As this man was let down at the feet of the Son of God, the Savior said to him: "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." The Lord saw that the greatest need of this man was not the healing of his body, but the salvation of his soul. But these words aroused the enmity of some who were present, and they said among themselves: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" In this they were perfectly correct, for only God has the authority to forgive sins. What they failed to realize was the fact that the One who had uttered the words of forgiveness was none other than the eternal Son of the eternal God who had become incarnate!

The Lord Jesus, who could read their thoughts like an open book, now turned upon His critics and asked: "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say: 'thy sins be forgiven thee;' or to say: 'arise and walk?'" Then, turning to the man He said: "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house!" At these

words, to the wonder of all, the man arose, picked up his bed roll upon which he had been lying, and walked out of the house.

Now which was easiest for the Lord Jesus to do: to forgive this man his sins, or to heal his body? There can only be one answer to this question. It was easier for Christ to heal his body than to forgive him his sins. The Lord Jesus was the Son of God, and had omnipotence at His command. But for Him to say: "Thy sins be forgiven thee," necessitated His going to the cross and bearing those sins in His own body and paying the full penalty due to them, which was death. The word of healing was by virtue of His mighty power; the word of forgiveness could only be made possible at the cost of His precious life's blood.

Has the reader received this good cheer of God's pardon? Do you know, on the assurance of the holy Scriptures, that all your sins have been forgiven because of your faith in the work that Christ accomplished on the cross when He bore your sins, took your place and suffered all the judgment of the holy God in your stead? If not, then own yourself to be as helpless to save yourself as was that paralyzed man, believe the good news that "Christ died for the ungodly," and that He accomplished on the cross all the work needed for your salvation. Thank Him for it and accept Him as your own personal Savior and then own Him before others as the Lord of your life. You will then be assured, by the word of God that all your sins are not only forgiven but are forgot-

ten by the One against whom all sin is committed.

What greater cheer could a believing sinner have than to have these words addressed to him: "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake!" Or to have the assurance, from the God of all grace, that he has "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (1 John 2:12; Eph. 1:7) May it be yours to be able to sing with another:

"My sins, O the bliss of this glorious thought!

*My sins, not in part but the whole;
Were nailed to that cross, and I bear
them no more—*

*Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord! O
my soul!"*

The second cheer we shall name:

II. *The good cheer of His peace in us.*
(*Luke 8:48*)

Let us briefly describe the circumstances under which the Lord Jesus gave this good cheer. A woman, possessed of an unclean and incurable disease, hearing of the power of Christ to heal went to Him. As she approached Him she perceived that He was surrounded by a great crowd of people, so that He was apparently unable to give her His undivided attention. Instead of giving up all thought of getting in touch with Him and going away unblessed, she argued, in the simplicity of her faith: "If I can but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be healed." Pressing through the jostling crowd

until she was close to Him, she reached out her hand and touched the hem of His garment. No sooner had she done so than she felt in herself that the disease, that had so long plagued her life, was completely healed.

Needless to say, the Savior was perfectly acquainted with all her deep need, earnest desire, simple faith and her miraculous healing. No sooner had she touched Him than He stopped and inquired: "Who touched Me?" The woman, realizing her act had been discovered, shrank back in dismay, but the Savior said unto her: "Daughter, be of good comfort, (or cheer) thy faith hath made thee whole, go in (or into) peace." Thus this poor woman, through contact with the Son of God and His assuring word entered into perfect peace.

The lesson from this story should be obvious to all. Each unsaved person, like this woman, is suffering from a disease for which nature has no cure, the disease of sin. Make no mistake about it, sin is a dis-ease: that is, it produces an uneasiness in the sinners' conscience. In fact, the Bible definitely declares: "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked." (Isa. 57:20-21) How then can a diseased, defiled and distressed sinner receive the cheering assurance that he is at peace with God?

One thing is certain: no person can make his peace with God. All the sinner's prayers, tears, good works, religious rites and forms and good resolves can never give his guilty conscience peace, or secure the forgiveness of even one sin

or obtain acceptance in the sight of a holy God.

Now pay close attention to what follows. God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, has made our peace with God by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross. What we could not possibly do, He has accomplished at the infinite cost of His precious blood, or outpoured life. In marvelous love He who had no sin, knew no sin and did no sin offered Himself to God as a substitutionary sacrifice on our behalf. He willingly allowed God to put all our sins on Him and then endured all the outpoured judgment of God against our sins, and thus "made our peace by the blood of His cross." (Col. 1:20). God has signified His complete acceptance of the work of His Son by raising Him from the dead and glorifying Him at His own right hand.

The moment a guilty sinner rests in the accomplished redemption of the Lord Jesus and receives Him by faith to be his own Savior, he is described in the Bible as being at peace with God, for we read: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1) Trust no longer in your own efforts to make your peace with God, but rest where God rests: in the finished work of the One who made your peace, and thus enter into the enjoyment of that peace. Say, from your heart:

*"In peace let me resign my breath,
And Thy salvation see;
My sins deserved eternal death,
But Jesus died for me!"*

The third good cheer we shall entitle:

III. *The good cheer of His power upon us.*
(John 16:33)

Just before the Lord went to the cross, He gathered His disciples around Him and imparted to them such counsel as should stand them in good stead when He was no longer physically with them. See John, chapters 13 to 16. Amongst other things He said: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." This should certainly come as a good cheer to the person who has already received the good cheer of His pardon and peace.

On being saved each Christian is left in a world that is at enmity to God, Christ, spirituality and the people of God. How is the believer to stand against this fierce opposition? The Bible gives no uncertain answer to this question. Each child of God has been linked, by a bond of eternal union, to God as his Father; to Christ, as his Savior; and to the Holy Spirit as his indwelling Comforter. Christ declared: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. 28:18) Thus, in Christ, there is all sufficient power, and this power is made available to each believer. What a cheer it is to know that: "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye having all sufficiency in all things may abound unto every good work." (2 Cor. 9:8) The apostle Paul realized this fact and testified: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13)

As the believer yields himself wholly to the Lord, reads and studies the Bible and keeps in

constant touch with God by prayer, he will discover that the same power, that saved him from the penalty of his sins, now keeps him and enables him to “fight the good fight” of faith and “grow in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior.” Surely this fact should bring good cheer to every Christian who is thus brought to realize that he has within him that which is sufficient to overcome that which is around him!

The fourth good cheer we shall term:

*IV. The good cheer of His presence with us.
(Matt. 14:27)*

On one occasion our Lord sent His disciples in a little boat to cross the lake of Galilee. As they crossed, a great storm arose and they were in peril. In the midst of the storm Christ walked on the sea and drew near to the boat as it tossed on the waves. The disciples, not recognizing Him, were troubled and cried out in fear. At this, the Savior said to them: “Fear not, be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid!” In these words the Lord gave them the good cheer of His presence with them.

What inexpressible comfort these words have given to the people of God as they have been tossed on the billows of this world’s cares, trials, perplexities and sorrows! Sometimes a Christian will fear he will not be able to weather the storm, but amid the howling of the tempest comes the reassuring voice of the strong Son of God: “Fear not, be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid.” How good it is to know that the Lord Himself has promised:

“‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ So that we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.’” (Heb. 13:5-6)

To those passing through severe trial and facing great difficulties He says: “Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.” (Isa. 43:1-2) Notice, He does not promise to deliver us from the trial, but to be with us as we pass through it, and to prove to us that His grace is sufficient for us through every circumstance of life.

*“‘I will never leave thee,
Never, never thee forsake,’
Is the Savior’s promise to His own;
Though the day be dark and dreary,
And the path seem long and weary,
He’ll not suffer them to walk alone!
He has gone before and
Knows the path that they must take,
Well He knows their needs and trials too;
All sufficient grace supplying,
No good thing to them denying,
He’ll be with them all the journey
through!”*

The fifth good cheer we shall call:

*V. The good cheer of His promise to us.
(Acts 23:11)*

The apostle Paul had been unjustly arrested

in Jerusalem, and now faced imprisonment and the threat of death. As he awaited his trial, the Lord Himself appeared to him and said: "Be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." What comfort this must have given to this servant of Christ! He was now assured, by this promise of the Lord Himself, that a future of useful service awaited him in the great metropolis of the world. In the strength of this cheerful assurance he went on to do further exploits for his Lord and Master.

Many centuries have passed since these words were addressed to Paul, but we are assured that the Lord Jesus is "the same, yesterday, today and for ever." (Heb. 13:8) However difficult the circumstances may be under which His people are laboring, the Lord draws near to give them the promise of His presence, strength, guidance and comfort. It has been well said that we do not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future! The child of God has the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the word of God to sustain him as he faces the unknown future.

How particularly cheering is the promise our Lord made on the eve of His death. Let us hear it again: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3) What

could possibly be more cheerful than this precious promise?

Here then are God's good cheers. The good cheer of His *pardon* to us; the good cheer of His *peace* in us; the good cheer of His *power* upon us; the good cheer of His *presence* with us and the good cheer of His *promise* to us. We may well praise God for these very cheerful cheers! May they prove to be thus in the experience of each reader!

*“Pardon for guilty,
Sight for the blind;
Peace for the troubled
In heart and mine;
Freedom for captive
By sin fast bound,
All this in Jesus
Only in found!*

*Beauty for ashes,
Joy for the sad;
Strength for the helpless,
Life for the dead;
Trust now this Savior,
Strong, true, Divine,
Sing with the ransomed:
Jesus is mine!”*

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