

The Approval of the Spirit

by J. Wilbur Chapman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit's approval and the significance of being sons of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

Scripture: Revelation 1:15

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Eschatology"

Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches on the profound revelations found in the book of Revelation, where John, inspired by his surroundings, presents a panoramic vision of the past, present, and future, unveiling the glorified Christ, the church, the doom of Satan, the final judgment, and the new heaven and earth. The sermon delves into the significance of 'Yea, saith the Spirit' in Revelation 14:13, emphasizing the Holy Spirit's affirmation of truth and the deep spiritual insights He provides. Chapman highlights the Holy Spirit's various representations in the Bible, showcasing His love, gentleness, power, and directing influence in believers' lives.

Transcript

TEXT: "Yea, saith the Spirit."--Rev. 14:31.

The world has had many notable galleries of art in which we have been enabled to study the beautiful landscape, to consider deeds of heroism which have made the past illustrious, in which we have also read the stories of saintly lives; but surpassing all these is the gallery of art in which we find the text. Humanly speaking John is the artist while he is an exile on the Island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. The words he uses and the figures he presents are suggested by his surroundings, and it would be difficult to imagine anything more uplifting than the book of Revelation if it be properly studied and understood. When John speaks of the Son of Man he describes his voice as the sound of many waters--undoubtedly suggested by the waves of the sea breaking at his feet. Locked in by the sea on this lonely island he gives to us this Revelation for which every Christian should devoutly thank God. His eyes are opened in an unusual way and before him as in panoramic vision the past, the present and the future move quickly, and he makes a record of all the things that he beholds. His body is on Patmos but as a matter of fact he seems to be walking the streets of the heavenly city and gives to us a picture of those things which no mortal eye hath yet beheld. He describes the risen Christ. It is a new picture, for as he beholds him his head and his hair are white like wool, as white as snow; and yet it is an old picture he gives, for he is presented as the Lamb that has been slain, with the marks of his suffering still upon him, and these help to make his glory the

greater, and if possible to increase the power and sweetness of the angels' music. He presents to us a revelation of the glorified church and of the four and twenty elders falling down at the feet of Jesus, casting their crowns before him and giving him all adoration and praise. He cheers us with a knowledge of the doom of Satan, for in the closing part of the book he presents him to us as bound, cast into the pit and held as a prisoner for a thousand years, while in every other part of the Bible he is seen going about like a raging lion seeking whom he may devour. He gives to us some conception of the final judgment, and the great white throne is lifted up before us; the dead, small and great, stand before God, the books are opened and those whose names are not found written in the book are cast away from his presence forever; and then as a climax of the picture we have before us the new heaven and the new earth. Again I say, there is nothing so wonderful as Revelation if only we have the mind of the Spirit in its interpretation.

In this text John is speaking of those who die in the Lord and the whole verse reads as follows: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). Ordinarily this text has been used only on funeral occasions, but literally interpreted the text which stands as the heart of the verse may be read as follows, "Amen, saith the Spirit." It would seem as if the Holy Ghost were giving his assent to the truth which has been spoken. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." It is like an old time antiphonal service, when choir answered choir in the house of God; or, to put it in another way, it is one of those remarkable interruptions several instances of which are found in the Scriptures.

One is in Hebrews the thirteenth chapter and the eighth verse, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." According to the revision this verse has an added word and reads as follows, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever." I call special attention to the little word "yea." Somebody has said that it is as if the Apostle were saying that Jesus is the same to-day that he was yesterday, than which no thought could be more comforting. And it would seem at the closing part of the verse as if the angels of God had broken in upon his message to say, "Yea, and he is forever the same," which is certainly true. Could anything be more inspiring than to know that we have the approval of the Holy Ghost of the things we say or think?

There are many representations of the Spirit of God in the Bible. His love is presented under the figure of the mother love, as in Genesis the first chapter and the second verse; "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved [or brooded] upon the face of the waters." In this text the Spirit broods over the world as the mother bird hovers over her little ones. We see him in the figure of the dove in Matthew the third chapter and the sixteenth verse: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." And here we have a revelation of his gentleness. Again he is presented to us under the figure of the wind, "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2). Here we see his power. We catch a vision of him in the fire in Acts the second chapter and the third verse, "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them"; and here we understand his cleansing influence. But here in this text we have his directing power. It is as if he were giving particular attention to all that John is saying and giving his approval to it because it is the truth. Since the day of Pentecost he has occupied a new position.

However, he has existed from all eternity. We behold him in his work in the Old Testament Scriptures. But from the day of Pentecost the affairs of the church have been committed to him, its organization, its

development, its services, whether it be the preaching, the praying or the singing. We cannot ignore him, for he has to do with all the work and with the preaching of the word. He convicts of sin. John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." He applies Christ to the awakened sinner, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." He helps to interpret the Word of God because he inspired men to write it. It is impossible to get along without him. I put no mark of disrespect upon scholarship. I know what it has accomplished; it has filled libraries with knowledge which has made the world rich, it has weighed planets and given us almost a perfect understanding of the heavenly bodies. It has estimated the velocity of light until we have stopped to say, "Such things are too wonderful for us." It has read the tracings upon obelisks, and made the past an open book to us, giving us the secrets of men who have been thousands of years in their tombs, but I do wish to say that that which comes to us directly from the Spirit of God is beyond scholarship. Hear what Paul has said to us in 1 Corinthians the second chapter and the ninth to the fourteenth verses. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

There are certain great truths to which I am sure the Holy Ghost would say a deep amen.

I

The Bible is the word of God--not simply that it contains the word of God, but is that very word.

Peter tells us where we got our Bible. 2 Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It is an inspired Book, and inspiration is the inbreathing of God himself. This makes the Bible different from every other book. We cannot study it exactly as we study others. We may pick it up and say it is just paper, ink and leather, like any other book, but we have missed the power of it if we say this. We might say, "Jesus is just a man, eating, drinking, sleeping, suffering like a man"; but we have missed his power if we say only this, for the Bible is filled with God, and Jesus is God Himself. Jesus said, "Ye must be born again if ye are to enter my Kingdom," and this makes the difference in men. Because of this new birth one man sees the things of God to which another would be totally blind, and this makes the difference in books and leaves the Bible incomparably beyond all other books.

How may we know that the Bible is the word of God? Not simply scientifically, although the Bible is a scientific book; but not in this way any more than we could find life in the body by cutting it up with a knife. The Bible is like a sensitive plant; approach it in the wrong way and it will close its leaves and withhold its fragrance. Come to it reverently and there is no blessing that it cannot bestow.

1. Accept it by faith and act according to its principles. If God exists, as we know he does, then talk with him; if Christ is here presented to us with all his uplifting teachings, then walk with him; if the promises of God are written here, as we know they are, then present them to him expecting him to keep his word.

General Booth of the Salvation Army once said in a great meeting where I was present that we were poor, weak Christians to-day because we were not living up to our privileges as Christians. He described a young man who had lost his position and had gone from one degree of poverty to another until at last he was on the verge of starvation. With his wife and little ones about him he sits in deepest gloom. There is a rap at the door and the postman brings a letter which is a message from a former employer who tells him that he has just learned of his distress, that he will help him, and that in the meantime he incloses his check for a sum of money which he hopes may make him comfortable. A check is simply a promise to pay. The young man, says General Booth, looks at it a moment and then begins to rush about the room in great excitement. "Poor man," said his wife, "I knew it would come to this. His mind is giving way." Then he presents the check to her and says, "I know what I shall do with it. I will frame it and hang it on the wall." Then again he exclaims, "I shall take it to my friend and have him set it to music and sing it each day," and he might do both of these and starve to death. What he should have done was to present it for payment and live off of its proceeds. "We have been framing God's promises long enough," said General Booth, "and singing them quite long enough; let us now present them for payment, and we shall know that God is true."

2. Live its truth. Whatever God presents as a principle translate into your life and then believe that God will transform your living. It will support you in trial and it will comfort you in the deepest sorrow.

The world was shocked by that great railroad accident which meant the death of Mrs. Booth-Tucker, but when in Carnegie Hall Commander Booth-Tucker stood to speak great words concerning his noble wife he said: "I was once talking with a man in Chicago about becoming a Christian and he said to me, 'If God had taken away your beautiful wife and you were left desolate with your little children would you believe in him?' And," said the Commander before his great New York audience, "if that man is in this audience to-day let me tell him. God has taken my beautiful wife and I am here surrounded by my children, but I never believed in him more thoroughly and was never more confident of the truth of his Word."

II

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. To this truth I am very sure the Holy Ghost will add his amen. In John the fifteenth chapter and the twenty-sixth verse we read, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." And if you would know that Jesus Christ is God's Son I would suggest,

1. That you simply test him; try him in heathen lands and tell me if any other story could thrill and transform as does the story of his life and death. Dr. Torrey says that whether the story was told in China or England, whether the story was told in India or Australia, it was always the same and never was without effect.

2. Try him in your own life. One day in a service in a western city an old woman was wheeled into the church in an invalid's chair. I knew by the expression of her countenance that she was suffering. When I met her after the service and asked her about her story she said as the most excruciating pain convulsed her body, "I have not been free from pain in twenty years and have scarcely slept a night through all that time," and then, brushing the tears from her eyes, and with an expectant face, she exclaimed, "but if I could tell you all that Jesus Christ has been to me in these twenty years I could thrill you through and

through."

3. If you would know that he is the Son of God just lift him up and behold him as he draws all men unto him. This is the secret of the power of great preaching. It made Mr. Moody known wherever the English language is spoken and constituted Mr. Spurgeon one of the world's greatest preachers. As a matter of fact there is no other theme which may be presented in the pulpit by the minister with an assurance of the co-operation of the Holy Ghost. There may be times when he may feel obliged to preach concerning philosophy, poetry, art and science, but unless these things lead directly to Christ we have no reason for believing that the Holy Ghost will add his amen to our message, and without this amen the time is almost lost.

III

The church is the body of Christ. I am persuaded that to this truth he will give his hearty assent. This is Paul's over and over. Notice the following verses.

Acts 2:41, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." The words "unto them" are in italics, so not in the original, and we ask "added to what?"

Acts 2: 47, "Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord 'added to the Church' daily such as should be saved." Here we are beginning to get the truth.

Acts 5:14, "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." This is the truth.

You will see that Christ is the head, the church is his body and we are, as individual members of the church, just being added to him. One day the body will be completed and then the Lord himself will appear. If Christ is the head he must control the body. If his life is hindered and not permitted to flow through every part of it there is confusion, strife, unrest and loss of power.

There are certain things which we must do if we are to be in this world as he would have us.

He must control the preaching. If given an opportunity he will direct in the choice of a theme, he will quicken our intellect in the development of that theme, he will give us an insight into the best way to present it to our hearers, and putting faith in these preliminary conditions he will take care of the results. He must also dictate the praying in a church. There is much of it that is meaningless. It is too formal, too lifeless, and entirely too general in its character. In Matthew the eighteenth chapter and the nineteenth verse, we read, "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." It does not mean that if the two should agree together as touching any one thing, but agree with him, for wherever you find two in prayer there are three, and wherever there are three there are four, and the additional one present is the Spirit of God waiting to help us in our praying and to present our prayers unto the Father in the name of Jesus Christ.

He must inspire the singing of the church. In Ephesians the fifth chapter and the nineteenth verse we read, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." One reason why there is such a lack of power in many churches in this country is due to the fact that the singing is simply used as filling for the services. Hymns are used in a haphazard way with

little thought as to their bearing upon the theme to be presented. I am quite persuaded that when the preaching, praying and singing are all submitted to his control, whatever may be man's opinion of the service, he himself will give to it his hearty amen.

IV

We are the sons of God. In Romans the eighth chapter the sixteenth and seventeenth verses we read, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." To this truth he will say amen. A careful study of the Scriptures will reveal the fact that,

1. We are heirs. If therefore this be true we have but to claim our birthright privilege, and there is no weakness in our lives but may be offset by the strength of his. Whatever Christ has received as the head of the church he has received in trust for the body and we may have our possession in him if we but appropriate it.

A man in England died the other day in the poorhouse. He had a little English farm upon which he could raise no grain and he let it go to waste and died a pauper. His heirs discovered that on this little English possession there was a copper mine and they are living in luxury to-day in the possession of that which belonged to their ancestor [Transcriber's note: ancestor?] all the time but was not appropriated and used by him.

2. Being sons of God, we are not free from trial; but there is this one thing to say about our Christian experience: "Our light afflictions which are but for a moment work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and God's presence with us in trial is infinitely better than his absence from us in the time of prosperity. Our trials are but the discipline through which we must pass in order that we may one day be prepared to stand in his presence and do his bidding throughout eternity.

3. Being sons of God, we are sure one day of glory. The song which has been singing its way around the world in the Torrey-Alexander meetings presents this thought to us beautifully.

"When all my labors and trials are o'er And I am safe on that beautiful shore, Just to be near the dear Lord I adore Will thro' the ages be glory for me.

"When by the gift of his infinite grace I am accorded in heaven a place, Just to be there and look on his face Will thro' the ages be glory for me.

"Friends will be there I have loved long ago; Joy like a river around me will flow; Yet just a smile from my Savior, I know, Will thro' the ages be glory for me.

Chorus.

"Oh, that will be glory for me, Glory for me, glory for me, When by his grace I shall look on his face, That will be glory, be glory for me."

Whatever may be our limitations here, they shall be gone there; whatever may be our weakness here, it shall be lost there.

Dr. Charles Hodge in his "Lectures on Theology" has given us an imaginary picture of Laura Bridgman, the famous deaf-mute. The celebrated theologian has described her standing in the presence of Christ in

that great day when we shall all be before Him, when Christ shall touch her eyes and say, "Daughter, see," and there shall sweep through her vision all the glories of the sky; when He shall touch her ears, which have been so long closed, and say, "Daughter, hear," and into her soul shall come all the harmonies of heaven; when he shall touch her lips, which on earth have never spoken a human word, and say, "Daughter, speak," and with all the angel choir she will burst into the new song. What Dr. Hodge has said concerning Laura Bridgman will be true of us. Our day of limitations will be past, the experiences of weakness be gone, and we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

This, therefore, is a good outline of a creed for us to-day. We believe the Bible is the Word of God, we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we believe that the Church is the body of Christ, we believe that we are by regeneration the sons of God, and making such a statement we have a right to stop and listen and I am sure we shall hear as from the skies, "Amen, saith the spirit."

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