

S.N. July 15 82 AM.

THE GREAT CONTRAST

I Peter 1:24-25

INTRODUCTION:

On the journey of life, we find that the Holy Scripture is always true to human nature. It is faithful in what it says about the features of life. It has on its side, some severe things. It has counsel for comfort. It tells about the darker patches of life. It tells about the streaks of sunshine. It tells about the poetry, the touching, and most of all - about the human struggle.

The Scripture rings like Christmas bells across the snow. Like music across the waves. "All flesh is as grass. And all of the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass whithereth and the flower thereof falleth.

Peter writes a letter to a scattered congregation. He is writing to comfort, to stimulate, to encourage. These poor struggling Christians are surrounded by heathen people. They need all the assistance they can get.

Peter has his feet in the tracks of the great prophets of old. As in the captive land of Israel, they were in Babylon thinking about that great power. Thinking about the splendor of the material things. That ancient empire with its palaces and its temple. It just was overpowering to their imagination. And it was necessary for a prophet to gaze forward through the years of trial and sorrow. To leave these certain assurances, that these earthly splendors - that these things were withering grass.

Fading flowers. The scattered Christians in Asia must have had their imagination impressed by the vastness of the power, of the great empire around them. Their religion was so cheap and this was a bold thing that Peter was talking about the prophets, as they looked at the facts fearlessly, in other words - they dug beneath the surface. And Peter borrowed from nature as the prophets did. And talked about the weaknesses and the sad moments. And gave expression to the passing character. Even the character of human power.

So, what did Peter have in mind? He had in mind a striking contrast and it reaches its climax in the text that we have chosen this morning.

Friend, if you are traveling on this journey of life - if we are to call out the needed sunshine when the day is cloudy, if we are to find the required strength, when our hearts are weak, if we are to find purposes when everything else is unsure, if we are to be of help to others in their day of struggle, we must fix our hearts upon this great contrast. And experience will insist upon it. There is a contrast that is real - that is fleeting. And here is a contrast between the passing and the permanent. Between the withering grass and the enduring word.

This is a pathetic image, withering grass, fading flower, and it illustrates the passing character. And this, he says, is the glory of man.

The glory of man, what an expression. This challenges our attention. We feel, do we not, that we are face to face with a great phrase. And this goes without thinking and without saying. That here is something that is commonplace. Maybe it may be without

explanation. If we are to get into what Peter is writing here - to these Christians, we must take this image and try to dissect it - the glory of man. Just what is that glory.

I. WHAT IS THE GLORY OF MAN

When we think about the glory of man, we think about some of the things that man looks too.

1 - One thing, is the great sea - the ocean. Have you ever been down to the Atlantic Ocean and watched the angry wind and the changing agonies of the sea. When the gloom changes gradually in form and in color - and sweeps the Northeast by an increasing gale. And then we see the sunset of all of its brilliance. And we look at the clouds with its unseen city. All a glow with fire. And we see the heavy waves coming in. Just like gold. And when we study the sea, we study the sky, we study the clouds, and the water together. We harmonize these, and we find that here is great awe. Here is something of immortality. It awakens in us, and we exclaim - this is glorious! This is glorious. Yes, in nature, there are glories.

2 - There are other glories like that of nations. A trip to Amsterdam to visit the beautiful flower market. As one walks through and watches the business men transact business for little carloads of flowers - fresh cut. To be shipped to all parts of the world. And to see the colors of the tulips - and you say, how glorious. And then you go off to a place like Athens, and you see there, the marks left by the forefathers. You see the things that the Greek had planted. And you visit the temples that are crumbled. You go and visit the ruins of the theatre. You look at the landscape and the mountains out of the sea nearby. And you go and visit some of

the tombs - the cathedrals. And you go and look and see where the seat of government was. And all of the great art and work there. And there comes to your mind, well here is man's genius. And you look upon all of this, and in a moment you say, this is glorious. (This is glorious). And it has inspiring power.

The daily events in life are also glorious as we try to find out the glory of man. When a man comes in and sits by his fireside. He comes away from the cares of the day, and the frets and the worries and the perplexities. And it is like the poet, Browning, he feels somehow that here the common things that have helped him - above all of the ordinary things of everyday life. When he has pushed his work aside and he sighs with gratitude and he says, (this is glorious).

In the narrow circle of life, the homely things that happen to us. The self-sacrificing, self-denying, sympathy which blooms so beautiful and looks for no self advertisement. Waking to true beauty and at its very heights. We say, as we bow our heads, this is glorious. This is what glory is.

And then we think about the great power of the human heart to be sensitive, to have thought. To find harmony with all of the parts of life. This is great power. This is one of the highest powers that we know about. It touches on the mysteries of life. (This is glorious).

II. SOME THINGS MEN GLORY IN

There are a lot of things that we declare are glorious. Now what are some of the things that we glory in.

First, science. In the far wide reaching activity - the thrills of life. There is for instance this glory, in our relationship in nature. How marvelous it has been when we think of the field of science. Men for ages enjoyed the wonderful power of the sunshine and the sunlight. In this age, they are able by means of the solar system to know certain things about the sun and energy.

Also, space has been conquered. Time has almost been reduced to obedience. We understand time, we try to obey time. And man tries to use it as a useful servant. All of the discoveries in science, are among the glories of men. This is one thing that man glories in.

Second, the glory of man is also found in the inventions and the developing arts. We are not foolish if we view these as God's gifts. The beauty of art, the mind has only to rest for a minute, and we realize the blessing. So many inventions today have come on the scene. And we glory in these things.

Thirdly, death ends all of these things. We need to find that the things that we glory in - will one day find an end. That these glories will not depend upon the vast system of things. Which we call nature. Or guides us into a place by the course of a thousand worlds. There is one who has sustained the (beating of the pulse) Who regulates the heart and the (will of man). Whose will is all powerful and that which is good. The abundance of his everlasting love has called his intelligent creatures

into being. And the answer is God. No gift, however beautiful, this glory transcends the final aim. Unless he, in the heart, of the creature reigns supreme. No, as life's journey goes on - no matter what be the benefits and blessings - that are richly offered to us, we travel toward eternity. We find that there is no real aim without God.

So we contend that the glory of man may take many or any of these forms that we have talked about. They may seem to satisfy the cravings of a man. But there is death that comes. And death brings an end to things. There is one that cannot be doubted or unquestionable. Certainly we must die.

Now if death be the close of mortal probation, if the journey of life finds its close in the grave, it is obvious that part of man which however trained survives, why death is an awful tragedy.

It is this case that Peter is writing about the glory of man. It is plain is it not - however splendid be the gifts of civilization, however fruitful and useful the discoveries of science, the inventions of mechanical things. However our admiration of this modern world. However beautiful, however touching and excellent, it must fade from our sight and sink below our horizon when we come to die.

We may have had great success ourselves or been witnessed to them in others. So abundant in possessions and opportunities. But in serious moments, and when the hurry of life will allow us to be thoughtful, and we close our eyes to the fact - that with all of our many blessings, and all of our discoveries, the main condition and the

journey of life, have not changed.

There is still the mystery of bodily pain, there is still the darker mystery of moral evil. Still the disappointing hopes and broken hearts. And still, that master, death.

If we are to make anything ourselves, in a real sense, it must be something more than that which death can touch. It must be something more than the glory of man.

Now this is a gloomy thought. If we had to stop here. The voice of a hopeless pessimism. The clouds are heavy on the scene - the wind is in the South West. The storm is raging. The waves are rising, in fury. It is true. But we are mistaken. The wind is falling. It sinks almost to silence. And again, we begin to sing, so slow among the grasses of our feet. With the rising gale and the storm and the breakers. And the clouds. Much that we have about us is passive.

But as well as the passing, there is also the permanent. The glory of man is as the flower of the grass. Yes,

Man in his utmost and glory is still ~~whithering, fading, and dying.~~ All his glory is as a flower.

Job 14:2 - man comes forth like a flower and is cut down. He fleeth as a shadow.

And continueth not.

III. SOMETHING OF LASTING GLORY

Now, let us say a word as the flower wilts, and the grass. The Word of God abideth forever. The Word of the Lord - what do we mean by the Word of the Lord. When we speak of the (word of a man), we mean his very thought. Clothed in an appropriate garb. Passed on from mind to mind. When we speak the Word, of the Lord, we mean the very thought of the living God, sent forth to reach the mind. To dwell in the heart. To become a part of the life. It comes from the infant. It is eternal. By it man knows God. And this is life eternal. This is a permanent possession. A lasting heritage.

The Word of the Lord, the moral law, (abideth forever). (Right is right). And (wrong is wrong). By an absolute decree. Though all appearances are against it, appearances are one thing and reality is quite another. (Right in the long run must prevail). (Wickedness shall not go unpunished). It is ever true that to put God first, to refuse to make any object other than Him, the final object of worship. To consecrate the gift of time of life. To respect property. To respect the neighbor's good name. To pay heed to The (Ten Commandments). These abide forever. These come from the very heart and nature of God. And they can be made a part of our very being. They will not fail us. All things pass and change.

The Word of the Lord, abideth forever. This faith which calls us in the divine revelation. Now you can call it the Gospel of Christ, you can call it the message of the church. You can call it the truth of the New Testament. Call it what you will,

but remember that the body is an unchanging truth. And it is in regard to God's nature. Hold the faith.

Now I am aware there have been some who have treated the Bible, the Word of God with criticism - the Bible is unapproachable. Because it abides forever. It charms all literature. It is the witness to the glory and the righteousness. And yet resists all evil. Now there are those who tell us in the higher criticism of this, enlightened age, that we can solve the old beliefs about the Bible. And that much of it is used just to illustrate history. And this makes short work of the Holy Scriptures.

They do so by saying, Genesis leaves us with only a myth. For the greatest of the prophets, they say, there are at least 16 Isaiah's. And the Gospels, especially the 4th Gospel, it empties of all its value as it is not an infallible record.

*Despised & torn in pieces - By Infidels decried -
The Thunderbolts of Hatred - The Haughty Cynic's pride -
all these have railed against it - In this & other lands -
yet dynasties have fallen - and still the Bible stands!*

It is a sad day when it happened in England as well as in America. In Christianity when there were those who set forth to prove that this was not the final word of God.

But we may take courage. The unbelieving criticism may arrive, but the world goes wondering after the beast. And the novelty is dismissed. And the old book lives on.

It lives on because it has in it the life and the thought of the unchanging God.

The Bible is good for Doctrine, reproof, correction and consolation.

Another thing about this glory that is going to be lasting, is it is bound up in the church. The word of the Lord is what the church teaches and abides in. Now the church may have had its ups and downs in history, because she has on the human side as well as the divine side, she has had family quarrels. She has been hindered in her divine mission. She has made great mistakes. She has had sorrowful defeats. But she has had triumphant victories. Like her Lord, she has been in the midst of suffering. But after her Good Friday, there will be her Easter Day.

She has been used in all phases of changing civilization. She has been used in all varieties, human character, human circumstances, and the church has been at home with the high born. She has made friends among the lowly. She has been soothing to the pain of the stricken on the sick bed. And she has brought hope and consolation to the open grave. And entered into the joys of the marriage. But above all of this, the living voice, of the living God, has been heard in her. The mystery of the Gospel, the songs of praise, the words of prayer, and the voice of her teaching.

Now other kingdoms may rise and flourish, but there is a promise that this church will go on. She has in her the presence of him. Who liveth and was dead, and is alive forever more.

The word of the Lord - now we know that there is today in this world, a lot of sensationalism. But we have some blessed memories about the holy teachings and the holy lives. That will abide forever. God's word has something that has come down to us

from a loving mother. From a wise father. From a dear friend. Now some people may neglect it for a time. But we have this assurance that it does not return to God void. It accomplishes the work that it has been given to do.

This word brings perfect peace to the mind. It blesses us - even unto this day. The most, I think the most spiritual, the most divine work ever penned - and Word that you will ever read in your life, are these words. "In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

The word of the Lord, Jesus Christ abideth forever. The same in authority. He has the kingly power to bring the pardon, the strength the life, to support in death. He is the joy of his people for eternity. He yields as he ever was. Blessed be God. As he ever will be - the way, the truth, and the light to all who come unto him.

Even though we live in an age that is sensational - and we find it in literature, art, and even in religion. Now we are thankful for the great revivals that have come.

We know today there are people who are trying experiments, in religion, rather than living in the power of religion.

Surely, if ever there was a time that needed it - this time does. That we should insist upon keeping our eyes upon the reality, and not be carried away by the appearance and by the passing. Tremendous pressures are being put upon people today, in various

cults to find help. But we must withdraw ourselves from these passing scenes.

If we are going to move away from the whithering grass and the fading flower, we must keep ever before us, this great contrast.

I believe that what I am saying to you is right today. We find in our midst, a lot of people, who are neither very good - nor are they very bad. But on a whole they are trying to balance between the two. We find a lot of people who are trying to live the double standard of life. It is for us as Christians, in proportions as we are loyal to our Lord, to help others, and to be careful ourselves. To strike a real balance. Because there are few people today but what they are holding on to things that are passing.

Jesus took his place in his day, in his generation, with simplicity and with naturalness. Jesus never allowed himself to be what some religious leaders and teachers have become today. Jesus was never wild. He was never fanatical. Or unbalanced. He was never unrestrained. He had at times, to deal with multitudes of people. Other times, he sat quietly with individuals. And he appeared to do his work on earth by just being careful, painstaking, and he knew the old truths. And he added freshness and vigor to them. And in a startling, wonderful way, he lived. And I am sure as Jesus lived in this permanent power, which has final force over all of the known forces of this sad world, whatever else is passing - he had the lasting force.

And with it he could change darkness into brightness. Sorrow into joy. Black

clouds into sunshine.

W a 2 tan without a speck
sun " " Blot
moon " " Paleness
light " " Darkness
Glow " " Dimness

This word of the Lord can break the hardest heart, unlock the closed-fastened conscience. It can make the most humble life fruitful and happy. It can give life brightness. It can take the darkness from the grave.

Perfect & Pure Gold - untainted by an error -
The W is closed. There is no more to be added!

It is not passing, it is not time -- it is lasting. And it is this great joy. This word was designed before the foundation of the world. It was disclosed in Jesus to the world. It was declared through the church. For the world.

This word is not like the tide, ebb and flow - it never changes. The Word of God is good news, and it lasts forever. And there is one way to render, to perishing creatures, solid and incorruptable life - that is to receive the word of God. This preserves. Moffett calls it the living, lasting Word of God.

How to make the W successful in making converts -

There is a story in the Christian Victory Magazine - and it tells about an English diamond merchant, who was packing gems. He was sending to a trader in India. Each was wrapped separately with great care. Coming to the last and the costliest, and outer wrapping - the soft India paper tore. It was torn from an old Bible. The first three chapters of the Gospel of John. A Hindu to whom this precious stone was sent, while unwrapping it, had his attention turned to the sacred pages. The scripture proved infinitely more precious to him than the diamond, which it covered. He soon discovered that it was a message from the Book of Life. He tarried at the words - God so loved the world that he gave his own begotten son, that

whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Then he began to ask others what these words meant. Why have I never known this before, he asked.

Coleridge reading the story of the Prodigal Son - his heart moved - his throat full of sobe: said "It finds me, it finds me - This Divine Book is a mould that fits my heart!"

Surely this, whosoever, means me. This salvation is for me. In simple faith, he accepted the words. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, he was born again.

When European missionaries reached that town later, expecting to find no Christians, they found a large group of Indian Christians gathered about this man.

*W is like the needle to the North Pole - it points to heaven
The W is a camp unto your feet & light unto your path!*

The great contrast. We may all share in it.