

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION
May 12, 1893
Nashville, Tennessee

Sermon delivered before the Southern Baptist Convention, evening session, May 12, 1893, Nashville, Tennessee, by Dr. Wm. E. Hatcher, of Virginia.

Text: "Experience worketh hope" (Rom. 5:4).

He said that in order to better understand the text he would read a part of the chapter. This he did and said:

"This takes us into the great workshop of the Nazarene, when we can proceed from point to point and examine the grand achievements and developments of the Christian religion. Here we see the machinery of grace uncovered to our view; we can watch it in full blast. We are taken from point to point. We see souls as rescued from death brought in and put through those process of cleansing and fitted for fellowship with the Father.

"Our text is a study of one operative. Her name is Experience and her product is Hope. I am to speak of the value of experimental hope.

"We begin with this remarkable experience presented in the text and which is said to play a high part and is high born. It comes of good family; it comes of imperial stock; its mother is Patience, its grandmother Tribulation and its father God of Grace.

"It is a mystery to many that Tribulation should find a place in this family. She was to our minds a tyrant, carrying death in her way, but our King saw her good qualities and brought her in to be a nurse in the household of Faith.

"She works well and submissively. Her task is to produce in the souls the process of endurance and the result is Patience.

"We ought not to be ashamed of an experience that belongs to a good family.

"We love our mother, but our rugged old grandmother, likely enough she has cracked our heads, but 'we must do her reverence'.

"The sign of a good Christian is that he glories in his grandmother, Tribulation.

"We must understand that not all experience is alike.

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"There is one whose grandmother/Tribulation and whose mother is Unbelief and is no kin to the experience which brings hope.

"So true is it that they who in this world are without God are without hope. I do not say that all who are without the gospel are without hope.

"This unbelieving age has little hope, and death to the unbeliever is always despair.

"A struggle to hide from real woe is human pleasure.

"I know it is the fashion to sneer at the epicurean, but I do not think we should do so. His theory was that he could get more out of life by lounging through the saloon than by taking upon his shoulders the cares of the world. Out of his gay surroundings he saw a grim spectre and with a philosophy that was full of pathos he said: 'Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.' Was there ever a sadder undertone than these concluding words? A life without hope is a life without God.

"I have an unspeakable respect for those old men who without the light of the Bible did noble deeds. They had their hope, but these hopes could never stand.

"Old Cato loved his country so well that he was willing to die for his liberty, yet when he saw Caesar and his army, the only hope died within him and he fell upon his sword.

"Who can tell of that unspeakable despair and blackness of those whose experience has in it no element of the faith of God.

"If this experience is high born, we may say it is strong and mighty. If it has within its veins the blood of kings it has in its muscles the strength of warriors.

"There are two Christian experiences. There is the experience at the beginning, the initial experience of a religious life. There is no Christian religion without experience.

"Conviction of sin is an experience, repentance is an experience, love of the Saviour is an experience, and these together constitute an experience so great and so deep that I do not believe it possible for any Christian to lose a remembrance of it.

"The initial experiences of a Christian is not his stock in trade. It is a very good experience to start with, but it is a poor one to live with, and those whose experience at the beginning is bigger than it has been since have good grounds to doubt that it is not the right kind.

"We must meet Tribulation in the way and struggle with her. She must make us walk with nails in our shoes; she must spread in our paths things worth having, but keep them just without our reach; give them to us and then snatch them away, and out of this struggle between Faith and Tribulation we get the new experience. It's the experience we get in actual warfare.

"A boy entering college has bright sensational hopes of passing successfully all the examinations that lie in his future pathway, but after he has toiled and studied, this initial hope is supplanted by a hope founded on experiences.

"When I see a young convert shouting down the isle it thrills me, and I do not know how it will end, but when I see an old Christian, a battled scarred soldier of the cross, who has been battered by experience, I know he has hope born of the struggles he has gone through with; I know he has an experience about which there can be no doubt. Is not a shrewd calculation on chance, not an idiotic dependence upon luck; it is a faith which hangs on the promises of God.

"This experience has productive power; it does things and brings things to pass.

"There are also two hopes, or at least two very strangely marked phases of the same hope. There is hope at the beginning. It brings justification, it brings peace of God, such views and mercy of God that overwhelms the world. It raises great expectations, and if the beginner has all these things he rejoices that he will see God.

"But the hope spoken of in the text is different from that. I am afraid the second hope does not compare in point of brilliancy with that of the beginner.

"All that we are told about this second hope is that it is the product of experience, it does not make us ashamed. This is rather tame and juiceless saying about this hope.

"This hope's mother is Experience, her grandmother is Patience, and her great grandmother Tribulation. A hope born of such illustrious parentage is worth talking about.

"Then it maketh us not ashamed. I do not know what to say about this hope. If there is anything I hate it is slang, but sometimes the users of slang do hit upon terms so cogent, and I do not know how to better

interpret into the language of the times than to say that this is a hope which never goes back on us. That other hope does, but this second hope, will never deceive us. There is great difference between the objective hope, full of sensation, and the subjective and inherent hope, a hope that becomes a part of our character and which can never be taken from us.

"I will talk about the process of grace by which all these things are brought about. Jesus is a great worker. He is the head of a great establishment. He is the soul of a mighty corporation, leader of a great monopoly. He never admits of a rival. Every angel is his messenger, every force on earth is subservient to Him. The very devils are taken out of the pit and chained upon the highways to work and help His children on to glory.

"Take this experimental hope and try it in all relations of life.

"Old Abraham tried it as he climbed up Mount Moriah to offer his sacrifice in obedience to God's command, but I think old Abraham descending the mount is a more impressive picture. Have you ever thought what pay he got out of that experience? I imagine I hear him say: 'Why did you do this?' 'How could you stand the test?' If you could do this you certainly could do greater things.'

"I think it is discouraging to review the history of the Christian religion when I think of the trials that have been gone through with, and I still feel that our Master is a man of sorrows and there is plenty to make a pessimist of an unbeliever.

"On the other hand, there is much to encourage and much to comfort and strengthen. The gospel has put its mark upon the laws, upon literature, upon art, that all would not have to be destroyed to get the gospel out. Wealth and science have brought their offerings to the feet of the Master. Experience of gospel gives hope. If it has accomplished this much

in the past, what may it not do in the future?"