

The Ministry of Consolation.

#1. “A Word in season” (Isa. 1. 4). pp. 28, 29

One of the most enviable gifts that we can possess when seeking to minister to those in distress or sorrow is the ability to speak a word “in season” to him that is weary. There are many weary hearts that cry out for comfort, yet how many are rebuffed and chilled simply because the word of comfort has not been spoken “in season”. The word in season cannot be learned by rote, neither can it be acquired by any artificial means. Words that reach the heart must come from the heart.

In Isa. 1. 4 we may learn the precious secret.

1. The Tongue.

“The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learner, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.”

The gift of tongues surely never included a more precious gift than this. It is most important for us to observe that the word rendered “learned” in the A.V. should be “learner”. Of all the people most unfit to speak to sorrowing ones is the “learned” one as such. Isaiah uses the word so rendered, four times. “Disciples” (viii. 16); “Taught of” (liv. 13); and “learned” (1. 4) (twice).

The learner, the one who has passed through the school of experience, is alone fitted to minister comfort to the weary. How is the tongue of the learner obtained?

2. The Ear.

“He waketh morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learner” (Isa. 1. 4).

Here is the blessed secret. The tongue is influenced by the ear. This is so in the physical world. There are many who are dumb solely because they are deaf. They do not know that they can make an articulate sound, therefore they never speak. It is the same in the spiritual world. Many a believer is dumb in testimony, in prayer, in proclamation, because he is deaf. To have the tongue of the learner we need the wakened ear. The wakened ear means more than merely “hearing”, for “to hearken” in the Scriptures includes *obedience*. So, in Isa. 1. 5, the opened ear is associated with meek subjection.

“The Lord God hath opened mine ear and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.”

3. The Face.

The tongue can only speak as the ear is opened, and the opened ear cannot be disassociated from suffering and reproach:--

“I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting” (Isa. 1. 6).

The words reveal the Saviour here. He was and is the One Who pre-eminently has the tongue of the learner. As the great High Priest He is able to succour the tempted and tried, because He has suffered, being tempted, Himself; He does give a “word in season” to the weary. In Matt. xi. we have those memorable words:--

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

The context is instructive. The cities wherein the Lord had done many mighty works repented not. Humanly speaking His ministry had been most discouraging. Yet:--

“AT THAT TIME Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight” (Matt. xi. 25).

Here is the glorious illustration of Isa. 1. He Who was so meek and lowly that He could look up under these circumstances and say, “Even so”, He was the One Who could say “Learn of Me”. He could speak a word “in season” for He was not rebellious. He had the tongue because He had the ear and the heart.

Shall we not learn this lesson, and in our pilgrimage be better fitted to pour in the oil and wine of comfort, speaking a word in season to the weary ones whom we meet, and learning not only *what* but *how* to speak the word that shall minister true consolation?

**#3. “Together, with them” (I Thess. iv. 17).
pp. 47, 48**

The view which the enlightened believer upon conversion receives of the carnal nature often produces in certain minds an unscriptural repudiation of homely and domestic affections. To such their Lord is “an austere man”, and holiness is synonymous with mortification. To such the possibility of a practical working combination of holiness and natural affection does not seem possible. The Apostle when foretelling the apostate times of the end could place side by side, “unholy, without natural affection” (II Tim. iii.) and could enjoin young widows to re-marry (I Tim. v. 14).

To that man of God there was nothing carnal in the full appreciation of God’s Fatherly care, and while being thoroughly conversant with the joys of independence in the midst of privation, he could nevertheless write of creature comforts, that God had given them “richly to enjoy”.

There are many, who, by the workings of this selfsame austerity, are deprived of the “comfort of the Scripture” with reference to “that blessed hope”. Waiving for the moment the dispensational position of I Thess. iv., and seeking from it the comfort for which it was primarily written, we would draw attention to one feature which has gripped our own hearts, and turned the tears of sorrow into those of joy. The austere view, touched upon above, tends to rule out the God-given natural affection that should find a sanctified place in the hope of the believer. True it is that our hope is to meet the Lord, be with Him and be like Him, whether the meeting take place on earth, in the air, or far above all.

Some there are who have become persuaded that the meeting once again of loved ones however is not to be uttered in the same breath. Yet, we feel sure that many whose lips with all sincerity give utterance to these self-effacing words, will often feel their hearts crying out for the assurance that the hope of meeting their Lord need not banish into the background the hope of meeting their loved ones too.

It is here where the consolation of the Scripture is fuller and kinder than the conceptions of man. The Divine order we find in I Thess. iv. 17 is “together with them to meet the Lord”. There will be no furtive glances, no aching hearts, when we enter into the presence of the Saviour. All we have loved and lost in the faith shall meet again, and TOGETHER WITH THEM (and not otherwise) shall we MEET THE LORD, and ever in unbroken unity be with Him.

“Wherefore comfort one another *with these words*” (verse 18).

#4. “Fret Not Thyself” (Psa. xxxvii.). pp. 140, 141

The English word “fret” comes from the Anglo-Saxon *fretan* = to gnaw. The Hebrew word used here means to burn, to kindle (Gen. xlv. 18, Num. xi. 33). The LXX translates the Hebrew by *parazēloō*. This word is also used in the Greek translation of Deut. xxxii. 21, I Kings xiv. 22, and Psa. lxxviii. 58, and in the N.T. in Rom. x. 19, xi. 11 & 14. It is therefore very evident that the command “Fret not thyself” in Psa. xxxvii. must not be rendered by the English idea of to fret, to be peevish, to mourn, or to grieve.

One has only to look at the context of the command in Psa. xxxvii. to see that the word contains the thought of envy and jealousy. It is not the fretting because of the wickedness of men, but fretting because of their prosperity. It is not the overburdened mourner that is addressed, but the believer, tempted by the temporal successes of the ungodly, to leave the pilgrim pathway. In verse 7 this thought finds expression:--

“Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.”

This kind of fretting leads to evil. Verse 8 shows this by immediately following with:-

“Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in anyway TO DO EVIL.”

This fretting is the result of forgetting, and of shortness of vision. David assures us that those successful wicked men

“shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb” (verse 2).

Later, in verses 35 and 36, he enlarges upon this saying:--

“I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.”

Instead of envying the wicked and their successes, the Psalmist urges the more excellent way of trust in the Lord.

“Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the DESIRES OF THINE HEART. Roll thy way upon the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall BRING IT TO PASS Be silent to the Lord, and wait patiently for Him” (verses 4-7).

What words are here! How they breathe the very atmosphere of quiet confidence and simple trust! “Delight thyself”; how much better this than “*fretting* thyself”! “Roll thy way” instead of bearing the burden alone. “Be silent”; “wait patiently”; what holy calm!

Peace with God is unalterable. The *enjoyment* of that peace is another thing. Phil. iv. 5-7 is a far-off echo of Psa. xxxvii.:--

“Be anxious for nothing, in everything by prayer with thanksgiving AND THE PEACE OF GOD”

Fret no thyself.

#5. The Ram caught in a Thicket (Gen. xxii. 13). pp. 158, 159

Not a few of the readers of *The Berean Expositor* are passing through seasons of trial owing to the growing problems in the industrial and commercial world. For their encouragement we draw attention to a well-known passage, which in a time of difficulty came with new force.

Gen. xxii. must ever remain pre-eminently prophetic of the great act of Calvary, yet this does not prevent its light and blessing radiating into the lesser corners of our private lives. Scripture itself gives us the argument:--

“He that spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not WITH HIM also freely give us all things?” (Rom. viii. 32).

We are told that Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ (John viii. 56), and if, as we may reasonably suppose, he understood in some degree the prophetic import of the trial through which he passed, that would by no means lessen the personal and practical effects of the provision of the Lord in the “ram caught by his horns in a thicket”. Indeed, Abraham does not name the place “Jehovah-Jireh” until after he had seen the ram and had offered it instead of Isaac his son.

Some of our everyday trials and experiences, resulting, as they may do, from the chaotic state of finance and commerce, may nevertheless be permitted in order that the Lord may be able to say “Now I know that thou fearest God” (Gen. xxii. 12). In such hours and places of trial look out for the ram caught by his horns in a thicket. The ram was “behind” Abraham, and unobserved until the critical moment had come, but all the same it was seen at that moment, and gratefully accepted as a provision of love.

While we therefore in stedfast faith would “lift up our eyes, and see the place afar off” (Gen. xxii. 4), let us, by the same undoubting faith, lift up our eyes to see what providence the Lord may send to deliver us at the time of crisis. “In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen” (Gen. xxii. 14), not while we are “afar off”. We may have to stretch forth the hand and take the knife, before the ram caught by his horns is revealed to us.

It is rather suggestive that in the preceding chapter we have a parallel with the ram caught in the thicket. Hagar took her son also:--

“And wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. And the water was spent in the bottle” (Gen. xxi. 14, 15).

Hagar felt that the end had come. She cast the child under one of the shrubs and went about a bowshot away, for she said, “Let me not see the death of the child” (verse 16).

Then came the voice from heaven; not recognizing faith as in the case of Abraham, but remembering the promise made to Abraham, viz.:-

”Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad WHERE HE IS” (Gen. xxi. 17).

The lad was Ishmael; *Where he is* was under a shrub dying of thirst. “I will make him a great nation” (verse 18) was the promise.

“And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water” (Gen. xxi. 19).

It does not say that God made a well; He simply opened the woman’s eyes.

Are there rams caught by the horns in every thicket? Are there wells of water in every desert? It appears so. Maybe instead of praying for deliverances we should seek the ever opened eye.

#6. “The End.” **pp. 170, 171**

Psalm lxxiii. reveals the fact that it is necessary to look from the right standpoint, especially when the providential and dispensational dealings of God are concerned. Asaph saw the proud and the wicked, and observed that they often flourished, and were at ease, whereas the righteous were plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning. He said, “I was envious at the foolish”. Then something happens to clear his vision, something adjusts his focus. He shall see the same wicked, but no longer with envious eyes. He now can see the slippery place whereon their feet stand, he sees how quickly desolation falls upon their prosperity. Where once he envied the ill-gotten wealth, or unchastened ease of the proud, he now says:-

“There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee” (verse 25).

Verse 17 contains the secret of the change in Asaph:-

“Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end.”

Not only may we there understand the end of the wicked, but *the end* in its fuller and vaster meaning. The word translated “end” is also rendered “the *latter* days” (Numb. xxiv. 14; Deut. iv. 20, etc.), and “*latter* end” (Deut. viii. 16, etc.). Psa. xxxvii. brings the “end” of the wicked and the righteous together for comparison:-

“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off” (verses 37, 38).

It appears from these passages that the truer view does rest upon the present transitory phase with its varied and unequal experiences. A little more or less of pleasure, sorrow, ease, or distress, is more than counterbalanced by the end.

It is also of great help, not only to think of the vast purpose and end that God has in view, but also to consider the narrower circle of our own pilgrimage and to echo the prayer of Psa. xxxix. 4:--

“Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.”

The answer to this prayer immediately follows:--

“Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreath: and mine age as nothing before Thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity” (Psa. xxxix. 5).

When we were tracing the theme of Ecclesiastes we were led to the conclusion that life is a purposeless puzzle apart from resurrection (*The Berean Expositor*, Volume X, pp. 122-127). The dominion of sin and death involves all in the bondage of corruption, and were it not that there is “hope” in the “end” life would be unbearable. It is in this spirit that the apostle wrote I Cor. x. 13:--

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will WITH the temptation MAKE THE END, that ye may be able to bear it.”

So in II Cor. iv. 17 he can call his afflictions “light” as he views the “exceeding weight” of glory; he can speak of them as “but for a moment” when he knows the weight of glory to be “age-lasting”.

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen” (I Cor. xv. 19, 20).

James bids us not only to dwell upon the “patience of Job”, but also the “end of the Lord”. He tells us that temptations have a perfecting work, and with Heb. xii. directs us to the “afterwards”.

“Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord there is HOPE in thine END” (Jer. xxxi. 16, 17).

**#7. “Jesus wept” (John xi. 35).
p. 191**

It would not be possible for the Lord to avoid tears, and at the same time to enter into the experiences of those who are flesh and blood, for the pilgrim's path leads through the valley of Baca (Heb. v. 7). There is blessed consolation however for the weeper in the words:--

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm xxx. 5).

This is our stay as with tears we press on; the tears are but for the night. A day is coming when “God shall wipe away all tears” (Rev. xxi. 4).

Service cannot be faithfully carried on without tears. “Serving the Lord with many tears” (Acts xx. 19 and 31), expressed the active devotion of the great apostle. “Much love” cannot be expressed without the price of tears (Luke vii. 36-50); but whether the strenuous devotion of a Paul, or the quieter devotion of the woman who was a sinner, it remains true that “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psalm cxxvi. 5). When therefore the tears will come, let us remember that they unite us with a holy fellowship. The Lord Himself, the sweet singer of Israel, Jeremiah the prophet, Paul the apostle, the woman who loved much, form a part of that goodly company, as do the great multitude whom no man could number, that pass through the tribulation and stand, overcomers, before the Lord (Rev. vii. 17).

Weeping is the portion of the believer while absent from the Lord (John xvi. 20), but in the presence of the Lord there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm xxx. 5).

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#8. “What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee” (Psa. lvi. 3). pp. 79, 80

The above words were uttered by David in the midst of daily conflict (vv. 1, 2). Trust in the Lord, is very closely related to trust in His Word. Immediately after David says “I will trust in THEE”, he adds, “In God I will praise His WORD” and balances it with “In God I have put my trust” (verse 4). Trust in the Lord and His Word dispels fear, even before deliverance itself comes. This was David’s experience as may be seen from verses 10 and 11:--

“In God will I praise His Word; in the Lord will I praise His Word. In God have I put my trust; I WILL NOT BE AFRAID what man can do unto me.”

We commence with “what time *I am afraid*”, we end with “*I will not be afraid*”. There is also a direct effect upon the cause of David’s fear, as well as upon David himself:--

“When I cry, then shall mine enemies turn back” (verse 9).

The very cry for help becomes a weapon of defence. Trust begets trust, even as fear begets fear. David’s confidence grows stronger as prayer leads him to the Most High (verse 2). He looks at what God has done in the past, and makes an *Ebenezer* of it, a starting point for future deliverances:--

“For Thou hast delivered my soul from death; wilt not Thou deliver my feet from falling that I may walk before God in the light of the living?” (verse 13).

The “soul” is greater than the “feet”, and “death” is more than “falling”. He Who delivered from death and translated into *life* will surely continually deliver from falling that we may walk in the *light*.

Psa. lvi. should be read through, noting the progress of thought. David’s deliverer is called “God”, “The Most High”, “The Lord”. There are many things that occur around us that send the chill of fear into our hearts, but let us take courage and say with the Psalmist:--

“What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.”

#9. An Aspect of Answered Prayer. pp. 158, 159

What constitutes answer to prayer? To be able to comprehend the subject sufficiently so as to give a full answer seems to be beyond our present attainment, but it may be helpful to consider one of the many aspects of the question. The examples we give tend to show that many times the answer to our prayer is close at hand, and that in supplying our need God has no necessity to work a miracle, but only to open our eyes that we may see. The case of Hagar comes to mind in this connection.

“The water was spent in the bottle she lift up her voice and wept God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is and God OPENED HER EYES, and she saw a well of water” (Gen. xxi. 15-19).

There is nothing to lead us to believe that the well of water miraculously provided, it was there all time, and the child was dying of thirst not because of the lack of water, but because of the lack of vision.

In Gen. xxii. the great test of Abraham’s faith is recorded. Once more we do not gather from the narrative that the ram caught by its horns dropped down from heaven at the critical moment, rather do we understand that it was there *all the time*, but that Abraham did not see it until the necessity arose:--

“And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and *looked*, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day. In the mount of the Lord *it shall be seen*” (Gen. xxii. 13, 14).

In both cases there is a personal act of faith accompanying the vision:--

“And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water: and she WENT and FILLED the bottle.”

“And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked and Abraham WENT and TOOK the ram.”

The incident recorded in II Kings vi. will doubtless come to the mind of the reader. The servant of Elisha when he saw the great host encompassing the city cried:--

“Alas, my master! how shall we do?” (verse 15).

Elisha stilled his fears, not by saying that God would send deliverance, but by simply praying:--

“Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, THAT HE MAY SEE. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (verse 17).

Our greatest need is not for the miraculous provision of water in the wilderness, not for deliverance, not for chariots of fire, *but eyes to see*.

In Christ is our all. We do not need to pray so much for this or for that, but for the opened eye of faith that perceives that already in Him we are filled to the full:--

“And Jesus stood still, and called unto them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto Him, Lord, THAT OUR EYES MAY BE OPENED” (Matt. xx. 32, 33).

#10. “The Mould of Doctrine” (Rom. vi. 17). pp. 163, 164

The closing words of the book of Judges seem to epitomize the ideal latent or expressed in the heart of man.

“In those days there was NO KING in Israel, and every man did that which was right IN HIS OWN EYES” (Judges xxi. 25).

Iniquity according to Isa. liii. is synonymous with “turning every one to his own way”. Human nature rebels against the idea of being “run into a mould”, and this resentment is by no means confined to the unsaved and the ungodly. The schisms that have rent the church, the differences that ruin the unity of the Spirit, may be trace back to this source. It is true that no one of us has the right to endeavour to make other believers little copies of ourselves, that is the baneful travesty of the truth, and lends some colour of equity to the resentment expressed by Christendom. Nevertheless, it is the purpose of God that we should be “run into a mould”, the mould however being that of the image of His Son:--

“For Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. viii. 29).

As a means to that end is the doctrine of the Scriptures:--

“But thanks be to God, that—Whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient out of the heart unto the mould of teaching into which ye were delivered” (Rom. vi. 17, Rotherham).

A footnote adds “As if to be fashioned thereby”. The A.V. of this verse makes it appear that the doctrine had been delivered *to us*, the margin, agreeing with Rotherham, shows that we have been delivered into the mould of the doctrine instead. Do we come to the Word of God that it may mould us? It will lead us into close conformity to the walk (I John ii. 6), meekness (I Pet. ii. 21-23), death (Phil. iii. 10), resurrection (Rom. vi. 5, 6), and coming glory (Phil. iii. 20, 21) of Christ into Whose image we must one day be conformed.

Consequent upon this must come a growing likeness to each other. Phil. iii., which speaks of the wondrous conformity of the believer to the death and the glory of the Son

of God, is preceded by Phil. ii., which emphasizes a “like mindedness, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind”. In Rom. xv. 5, 6 also we read:--

“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

While, therefore, we must rightly oppose any attempt on the part of man to mould us to his liking, or to make us all faulty repetitions of equally faulty patterns, let us not be misled by our zeal and turn aside from the great and glorious goal that God has placed before Him, that we shall one day be conformed to the image of His Son. May the whole Word of God, the great and glorious image of Christ, the lesser reflections of that image in the lives of those, such as Paul, who followed the Lord, the experiences of daily life through which we pass, may they all be blessed by God to us in fashioning and moulding us after “the image of the heavenly”.

#11. A Testimony to a Simple Faith. pp. 189, 190

It was an agreeable surprise to receive the following simple testimony from one who is, we believe, officially connected with one of our great national museums, and we pass it on that others may take heart both from the lesson itself and from the fact that in spite of the apostasy of these days, even in high places the Lord has His own who have not bowed the knee to the modern Baal of higher criticism.

The conversation had turned to the subject of Governments and Kings, the chaotic state of Europe, and the position of the child of God. This led to the following comment on the book of Daniel.

You remember that in the prophecy of Daniel there is recorded the two parallel incidents, the casting of the three Hebrews into the burning furnace, and the casting of Daniel into the den of lions. The first act was that of a despot. Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarch. Of him Daniel said:--

“Whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.”

The second act was that of a limited monarch Presidents of the kingdom, governors, princes, counselors, and captains are seen consulting together and advising King Darius to establish the decree that they had formulated. This decree, once signed and sealed, could not be altered, even by the King himself.

Now observe this fact for your help and encouragement. The most autocratic Sovereign that has ruled over the Gentiles *could not put to death* Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, and the other King, even though he wished to do so,

could not save Daniel from the den of lions. In both cases deliverance came from God independently of man. It would appear that while from one standpoint one form of government may be better than another, from another standpoint they are all much the same.

Whether we are called upon to live under the tyranny of absolute monarchy, or the equal tyranny of extreme democracy, both alike are under the control of God, and until He permits no harm can reach us, we are equally safe under the King or President.”

The conversation took a turn, as the result of this thought, in the direction of trust in the Lord, when the following suggestion was put forward which we pass on:--

When the Lord appeared to Solomon with the words, “Ask what I shall give thee”, it will be remembered that Solomon chose wisdom and knowledge. It so pleased the Lord that Solomon should have asked this, and not for riches, wealth, honour, etc., that He said:--

“Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth and honour such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.”

At Solomon’s death Israel came to Rehoboam, and said:--

“Thy father (Solomon) made our yoke grievous; now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father.”

This makes it appear that Solomon’s riches grew out of the servitude and burden of the people. We read in I Kings x. 14 that :--

“The weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold.”

Ominous number! connected by prophecy with the mark of the beast! Had Solomon trusted God to fulfil His promise, instead of exacting such as tribute from the people, he might have received 777 talents and have saved his kingdom.

The testimony is simple, but we feel that we should all be the better if the two lessons drawn from Daniel and Solomon were taken to heart:--

“Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Isa. ii. 12).

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#12. “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” (Psa. cvii. 2). pp. 10 - 13

Standing at the head of the fifth book of the Psalms, this Psalm voices the theme of that book which embraces Psalms cvii.-cl. Those who are called upon to “say so” are those who are called the redeemed of the Lord, and who have been redeemed from the hand of the enemy. The reference to the gathering of this redeemed people from the lands of the east and west, north and south, clearly looks to that day when Israel’s dispersion shall be over and the ransomed of the Lord shall have returned to their rest and their inheritance.

There is much in the Psalm, however, that applies to the redeemed of all dispensations, and it is with the desire that the redeemed of the Lord may be encouraged to “say so” that we draw attention to the experiences detailed in the body of the Psalm. The necessity for redemption is brought before us in four tableaux, each leading on to the extreme condition of the lost, and the gracious intervention when all hope in self had failed.

Let us see the four pictures together, and observe their parallels and contrasts.

Psa. cvii. 4-32.

FIRST PICTURE.—Wanderers in wilderness (verses 4 and 5).

SECOND PICTURE.—Rebels against the word (verses 10-12).

THIRD PICTURE.—Fools because of transgression (verses 17 and 18).

FOURTH PICTURE.—Those that go down to the sea in ships (verses 23-27).

The first picture sums up mankind in the one word “lost”. The “solitary” way of verse 4 means a trackless, pathless desert. The Hebrew word occurs in the A.V. as the proper noun *Jeshimon* in six passages (*see* Numb. xxi. 20, etc.). There, no “city to dwell in” is to be found. It is a picture of unrest and anxiety. Added to the bewilderment of the trackless desert and the comfortless character of its uninhabitable dreariness is “hunger and thirst”. Their condition is summed up in the words, “their soul fainted in them”. Thirst is often used in a figurative sense in association with a felt need for the presence of God:--

“O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is” (Psa. lxxiii. 1). *A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.*

“I stretch forth my hands unto Thee: my soul thirsteth after Thee, as a thirsty land” (Psa. cxliii. 6).

“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth after God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psa. xlii. 1, 2).

When in this extremity they cried unto the Lord. In each case, whether lost, rebels, fools, or mariners, the one expression occurs—"in their trouble". Over and over again does this word come to indicate the circumstances both of the redeemed and of the sinful. It is too large a subject to be dealt with just here. God, however, has revealed Himself as

"A very present help in trouble" (Psa. xlvii. 1).

and He is seen in the Psalm before us responding alike to lost and to fool, to rebel and mariner:--

"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble,
And He delivered them out of their distresses.
And He led them forth by a right way,
That they might go to a city of habitation" (verses 6 and 7).

It will be observed that in the first two cases "they *cried*" (verses 6, 13), but in the second two instances "they *cry*" (verses 19, 28). The Scriptures are written that we may take heart and profit by them. They are not merely records of the past; they are also promptings for the present:--

"Hear my cry FOR THOU HAST BEEN a shelter for me" (Psa. lxi. 1-3).

Unless we really use the Scriptures in this way, are they not to a large extent a dead letter, a tale that is told, and ourselves merely sentimental antiquarians? Now comes the refrain, that which the redeemed of the Lord are called upon to "say" (verse 2):--

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the children of men!
For He satisfieth the longing soul,
And filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Psa. cvii. 8, 9).

The "point" of each section of the Psalm is not discovered by searching the story, but by noticing the subject of thanksgiving. Who are the wanderers in the wilderness? Do they typify the sinner lost in his sin? We may incline to that view, but we shall be wrong. God, Who trieth the reins and knows what is in man, answers the real and actual need, and this shows us that the first picture of the series is not so much that of the sinner, but of the saint, the satisfaction of the longing soul being the substance of the Lord's answer.

When we look at the last tableau we shall see that the same is true of that case also. Instead of pilgrims seeking a city and fainting in the pathless wilderness we have sailors doing business in great waters. These are neither rebels nor fools, but set forth in type the traveler on the heavenly journey. The terrific storm that breaks over them melts their soul in trouble, they are at their wit's end. That is a place that does not appear in the Gazetteers of this world, yet every traveler across the sea of life must round this Cape "Wit's end" if he would enter the true Pacific:--

"Then they cry unto the lord in their trouble,
And He bringeth them out of their distresses,
He makes the storm a calm,
So that the waves thereof are still.
Then they are glad because they are quiet;
So He bringeth them unto their desired haven" (Psa. cvii. 28-30).

The central pair of pictures deal more definitely with types of sin. We have the “rebel” and the “fool”. The rebellion is against “the words of God”. The folly is by reason of transgression and iniquity. In the one case it leads to bondage:--

“Being bound in affliction and iron” (verse 10);

in the other it leads to death:--

“They draw near to the gates of death” (verse 18).

Here we have in picture form a faint presentation of the inner teaching of Rom. v.-viii., which deals with the dominion of sin and death:--

“He brake their bands in sunder” (Psa. cvii. 14).

“He sent His word, and healed them” (Psa. cvii. 20).

Strictly, this sentence reads in the present tense:--

“He sendeth His word and healeth them”,

in harmony with the change of tense from “they cried” to “they cry”.

The structure of this series must follow the internal indication of doctrine and is set out as follows:--

Psa. cvii.

A | 4-7. *Type.*—WILDERNESS.

Meaning.—The soul seeking fellowship.

Extremity.—Their soul fainteth. Then they cried.

Answer.—Soul satisfied.

B | 10-12. *Type.*—REBEL.

Meaning.—Bondage and dominion of sin.

Extremity.—None to help. Then they cried.

Answer.—Bands broken in sunder.

B | 17-20. *Type.*—FOOLS.

Meaning.—effect of transgression.—“death.”

Extremity.—Draw near to death. Then they cry.

Answer.—Healed and delivered.

A | 23-30. *Type.*—MARINERS.

Meaning.—The believer seeking home.

Extremity.—Wit’s end. Then they cry.

Answer.—Their desired haven.

In both sets A and B the alteration of “cried” and “cry” occur. Whether we be passively “lost” or actively “rebels”, whether we be actively “fools” or passively at our “wit’s end”, let us cry, and then when deliverance has come:--

“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.”

**#13. “I will be with him in trouble” (Psa. xci. 15).
pp. 33, 34**

Though the four divisions of Psa. cvii. differ widely in outward form, they are one in essence. Whether it be the wanderer in the trackless wilderness, the rebel in his bonds, the fool at the gate of death, or the mariner at wits end, the scripture places all these experiences under one term. All cry unto God “in their trouble”. The Hebrew word for trouble in Psa. cvii. is *tsar*. Not only does the word come in verses 6, 13, 19 and 28 where it is plainly seen in the A.V., but it comes also in verse 2 where it is translated “enemy”. Spurrell’s translation reads:--

“The redeemed of Jehovah shall utter it,
Whom He hath redeemed out of the power of misery.”

So long as there lies before us the pilgrim path, so long must we be prepared for “trouble”. It will minister to our comfort and our strength to learn somewhat of the teaching of scripture concerning this constant associate of our pilgrimage. We do not want to be numbered among those who carry a threefold burden, the burden that has passed, the burden that is present, and the burden that may never come. To counteract this tendency we take heed to the Lord’s words

“Sufficient *unto the day* is the evil thereof.”

At the same time to act as the ostrich and hide our eyes from the obvious will add to, rather than take away from, the trouble of our pathway.

In that wondrous Psalm xci., written in the first place to assure the younger generation of Israel that no harm should overtake them during all the 40 years wandering in the wilderness with their fathers, while they are promised:--

Protection under the shadow of the Almighty,
Deliverance from the snare and the pestilence,
Immunity from terror and death either by day or night,
Angels to take charge of their very steps,
Answers to their prayers;

yet in the selfsame Psalm it is assumed that trouble will be experienced, trouble beneath the shadow of the Almighty, trouble even with angels as guardians.

“He shall call upon Me,
and I will answer him:
I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him, and honour him.
With long life will I satisfy him,
And shew him my salvation” (Psa. xci. 15, 16).

Once only in this Psalm is the pronoun “I” emphatic. In verses 14-16 “I will” occurs six times, viz.:--

I will deliver; I will set on high; I will answer; I will deliver; I will satisfy.

In five occurrences (those given above) the pronoun is not emphasized. The Lord has seen fit to lift one item of blessing out from all the rest; one that we might have been inclined to pass by as we contemplated the grander issues of deliverance and exaltation.

“I will be with him in TROUBLE” (verse 15).

If we are assured that throughout the days of our pilgrimage trouble will ever keep step with us, let us remember the blessed fellowship emphasized here:--

“I will be with him in trouble” (Psa. xci. 15).
“When thou passeth through the waters
I will be with thee;
And through the rivers
They shall not overflow thee” (Isa. xliii. 2).

Let this be for our consolation, that where trouble meets us, there most emphatically we may hope to find the personal presence of the Lord.

**#14. “Be not *far* from me, for trouble is *near*” (Psa. xxii. 11).
“God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help *in trouble*” (Psa. xlvi. 1).
pp. 77, 78**

There are some portions of the A.V. that are so beautiful, so apt, so endeared by long association and fierce trial that no amount of scholarship or learning will supplant them. The verse quoted from Psa. xlvi. is surely one of them. Rotherham’s version reads:--

“God for us is a refuge and strength, a help in distresses soon found.”

This supplies us with one or two facts which we may learn for our profit without suggesting that such a rendering will ever take the place of that of the A.V. The words “very present” are literally “much found”. The Hebrew word occurs in Psa. xxxvii. 36:--

“Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea I sought him, but he could not *be found*.”

In I Chron. xxix. 17 we read:--

“Thy people, *which are present* here, to offer willingly” (margin, ‘*or found*’).

Among the many suggestive renderings of this word we note two, viz.:--

“The men of Israel smote all that *came to hand*” (Judges xx. 48).
“The hill *is not enough* for us” (Josh. xvii. 16).

Not only is God *a very present* help in trouble, He is “enough”, and (thankful are we to record it) He will ever “come to hand”. The historic setting of this Psalm is the period of Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem, and is probably one of the songs of Hezekiah. Isaiah speaking of the invasion uses the figure of an overflowing river:--

“The Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory; and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks” (Isa. viii. 7).

It is in answer to this that the Psalmist says:--

“Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea! Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof” (Psa. xlvi. 2, 3).

The same ground of assurance that is found in Isa. viii. is found in the Psalm.

“Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought: speak the word, and it shall not stand; for GOD IS WITH US” (Heb. *Immanu EL*) (Isa. viii. 10).

So in Psalm xlvi. 7 and 11:--

“The Lord of hosts is WITH US” (*Immanu*).

When the news of the great earthquake that shattered Yokohama and other towns of Japan reached England, it was naturally spoken of during the meal time, and after the meal was finished, the little girl whose Bible lessons have already been spoken of in the pages asked whether earthquakes ever visited England. She seemed somewhat scared by all that had been said in her presence. Instead of quieting her fears by saying, “Now don’t be alarmed, earthquakes do not come to England”, we said, “Lovey” (her name at home) “bring the Bible and find Psa. xlvi. and read verses 1-3”. Then as her childish treble voiced the words of strong consolation:--

“Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed though the mountains shake”

We found it possible to say to her:--

“Even supposing an earthquake *did* come and God should be pleased to allow this house of ours to be destroyed and we in it. What then?” “Therefore we will not fear.”

We should face facts, and we can dare to do so with the word in hand and heart. The secret of our strength is found in the word “The Lord of hosts is *with us*”. “Immanuel, God with us.”

“He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. xiii. 5, 6).

The Ministry of Consolation.

#15. “Mary also sat at His Feet” (Luke x. 39). pp. 62, 63

There are some temperaments that more readily sympathize with Martha than with Mary. There is also a false notion entertained by some concerning the part played by Mary. It is assumed that Mary left her sister to see to all the necessary work consequent upon the Lord’s coming to their house, and under a guise of superior spirituality took the easier course. This is manifestly untrue. In the first place we have the Lord’s own commendation:--

“Mary hath chosen that good parts, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke x. 42).

Secondly, the Scripture says that Martha was “cumbered about much serving” (verse 40). The word “cumber” means “to tear asunder” and so “distract”. Then again it is not “with serving” but “with *much* serving”. It is enjoined upon the saints “to be given to hospitality”, but we are apt to overdo the material side at the expense of the spiritual unless we take heed. The Lord for whose entertainment Martha was distracted with much serving could take two loaves and a few fishes and feed 5,000 people; surely therefore there was no call for this distraction.

Thirdly, we do Mary a great injustice if we omit from our reckoning the little word “also”. The scripture does not say that “Mary sat at the Master’s feet” but

“Martha *received* Him Mary’s *also sat* at His feet.”

The word “received” includes the thought of providing necessary hospitality. The word “also” suggests that Mary had not been negligent in her duties. What was necessary on her part had been performed, but nothing superfluous, nothing lavish, nothing to distract, to tear as it were asunder, was undertaken. The blessed opportunity must be seized, and so after having done all that was necessary, “Mary *also sat*”. The Lord said to Martha:--

“Thou art anxious and troubled concerning many things” (verse 41).

and according to the Vatican MSS, He continued:--

“But of few things, or of one, is there need?”

Before concluding, we wonder whether our readers will suffer a personal word here? On some occasions when at Bible Meetings it has been necessary to provide tea, there are some who absent themselves from the actual meeting in order to prepare the meal or to clear away afterwards. It is possible that some do not “also” sit at the Master’s feet. Let all seek to emulate Mary. Those who by temperament are the busy Marthas, let them

remember that “much serving” is cumbering and is not needful. Let those who are too apt to do all the “sitting” remember that of Mary it is written, “Mary *also* sat”, then all will share “that good part” which received the blessing of the Lord.

#16. A Cure for Insomnia (Psalms iii. & iv.). pp. 94, 95

Do you know what it is for the cares and perplexities of this life to intrude into the hours of rest, and drive sleep from tired eyes and aching head? Insomnia may not always take its rise from broken nerves or deranged stomach. There is sometimes a spiritual cause.

Psalms iii. and iv. deals with a period in David’s life that was one of sore distress. Absalom, his son, had risen in rebellion against his own father, and David who in earlier years had been hunted by Saul is now obliged to flee from his own flesh and blood. A cause there for anxiety and lack of sleep! Psalm iii. speaks of the increase of those that trouble him, that many had risen up against him, many sought to break down his faith by saying:--

“There is no help for him in God” (verse 2).

“Selah” seems to stand at the end of a line and say, “You hear that? well now look at this”. What does the Selah introduce? Let us look at it again.

“There is no help for him in God.”

SELAH.

“But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me I cried He heard” (verse 3).

Again another Selah. What follows this time?

“I laid me down and slept. I awaked; for the Lord sustained me” (verse 5).

David slept, and slept safely, for he awaked conscious that the Lord had indeed been his shield.

In Psalm iv. we seem to advance in confidence. Then not only does David sleep, but he sleeps in peace and he falls asleep at once (verse 8). The adverb translated “both” is rendered “at once” in Isa. xlii. 14, and is so rendered here by many expositors. In spite of all the natural causes for anxiety and wakefulness David could say:--

“No sooner do I lie down, than I fall asleep at once, and not into a sleep made hideous by awful thoughts and cares, but sleep in peace, for the Lord alone is the One that maketh me to dwell in safety, in Jerusalem or in the wilderness.”

It would appear that David's friends were not much more helpful than his enemies. The enemies said:--

"There is no help for him in God" (Psalm iii. 2).

while his friends said:--

"Who will show us any good?" (Psalm iv. 6).

and once again David turns to the Lord:--

"Lord, lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us" (Psalm iv. 6).

The secret of David's peaceful sleep is just the fact of the Lord's presence. The light of His countenance was more gladdening than the day of harvest (verse 7). To suffer hunger in a wilderness, to be a fugitive instead of a monarch did not seem "good", but as in the case of Joseph in his prison, "the Lord was with him". So with David. He had the light of God's countenance, all else mattered little:--

"I will lay me down in peace, and sleep at once: for Thou, Lord, alone maketh me dwell in safety" (Psalm iv. 8).

**#17. "If the foundations be destroyed,
what can the righteous do?" (Psa. xi. 3).
pp. 109, 110**

The Companion Bible points out that the foundations here refer not so much to buildings as to "the settled order of truth or institutions". In Isa. xix. 10 the word is translated "purposes".

It is not our intention here to discuss the evident prophetic character of the Psalms, but there are few who have received the illumination of Scripture who do not realize that the foundations *are* being destroyed at this present time. There is also no scriptural warrant to make us expect that these foundations will ever be restored before the Lord Himself comes.

"What can the righteous do?"

It is exceedingly difficult not to attempt to do something. One will feel stirred to great activity in witness, another will seek to form a league or a crusade. All these things may be perfectly right, yet on the other hand they may be wrong. The Psalmist seems to supply the first great answer to his question, "What can the righteous do?" in the very next verse. What does he say?:--

"The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in the heavens" (verse 4).

It is evident that something is implied between verses 3 and 4. It is as though the Psalmist said, What can the righteous do? Well, before he “does” anything let him remember this. First his utmost “doing” is vain, except the Lord deign to own it. Secondly, the crumbling foundations *here* do not by any means indicate that the foundations of the Lord’s throne are crumbling. Heaven is higher than earth. At the very time when this earth will be a seething cauldron, ruled by a man possessed by the devil, the throne of God will be surrounded by a sea as smooth as though made of glass. When therefore you feel that the time has come for you to “do” something in view of the breaking down of the very foundations of truth, of society, of order, just take your place in spirit for a moment *there* where the temple still stands unsullied and the throne unshaken.

In correspondence with the words, “What can the righteous do?” come the words of verse 5, “The Lord trieth the righteous”. The breaking up of the foundations is the work of the wicked (verse 6), but the Lord is overruling the work of the evil one to purge and to try His people.

Think twice and thrice therefore before plunging into anything that may, after all, prove but a snare of the wicked one. Our testimony will not be less decisive because we have weighed our plans in the balance of the sanctuary:--

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in His temple. The Lord’s throne is in heaven.”

#18. The factors of consolation.

p. 111

“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, console your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work” (II Thess. ii. 16, 17).

What is a ministry of consolation? Is it the repetition of pious platitudes? Is it sentimental? or does it rest upon the one foundation of all true ministry? and does it keep pace with all true doctrine and practice? Look at the verse quoted above. This consolation has its source in the Lord Jesus Christ and in God the Father. It flows not only from Divine omnipotence, but Divine love. This twofold source makes this consolation different from all other, it is “everlasting” or *aionian*. If its past reaches back through love to God, it looks forward to the future, for together with the *aionian* consolation is given “good hope through grace”.

This is an important factor in the ministry of consolation. The present darkness is illuminated by the hope of glory, the trouble that envelopes and threatens to overwhelm us is but for a time, it cannot reach beyond this present life into the next. The exhortation

of I Thess. iv. 18, “Wherefore console one another with these words”, has the hope of resurrection in view. Those who sorrowed did not sorrow as those who had “no hope”.

Because grace reigns we have good hope, and because we have such a hope we can even “boast in tribulations also”, for that hope maketh not ashamed. If this ministry of consolation points us backward to the love of God in Christ, and forward to the good hope through grace, has it nothing to say for the immediate present? Indeed it has:--

“Comfort (Console) your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work”
(II Thess. ii. 17).

It *stablishes*. Floods of sorrow cannot shift the feet from the great foundation. The winds of adversity may blow, but that house is built upon the rock. Moreover, this consolation is practical. It leads to “every good word and work”. The Godward side speaks of love and grace, the believer’s side speaks of hope and work. We may therefore speak of this ministry of consolation under three heads:--

THE PAST AND SOURCE.—The Lord, the Father, love and grace.
THE PRESENT AND RESULT.—Consoled hearts, stablished words and work.
THE FUTURE AND INCENTIVE.—The good hope.

We may see the same practical result of the doctrine of resurrection set out in I Cor. xv. 20, 58:

“But now is Christ risen from the dead therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”

[COLOR type added from BE.LX.53]

The Ministry of Consolation.

#19. The God of patience, consolation, and hope. pp. 94, 95

“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded Now the God of hope fill you with all joy” (Rom. xv. 5 and 13).

It is not our intention at the moment to show the relation of these titles with the practical and the dispensational teaching in which they are set. Our present purpose is simpler. In II Thess. ii. 16 we have an *aionian* consolation connected with good hope. Here, in Rom. xv., God is called the God of patience, consolation and hope. We have seen the close association of consolation and hope, here we see the link between them—patience, “the patience of hope”. What work is to faith, what labour is to love, that patience is to hope. Work perfects faith.

“Seest thou how faith wrought with his (Abraham’s) works, and by works was faith made perfect?” (James ii. 22).

Patience has a perfect work to perform. It is not sufficient to hold the teaching of the pre-millennial coming of the Lord. It is not sufficient to be a “Second Adventist”. Scripture speaks of those who “love” His appearing, who because they have this hope, “purify” themselves. So, to entertain the blessed hope scripturally we shall realize its calming influence in the midst of life’s alarms, we shall be saved from murmuring in the face of life’s disappointments, we shall be saved from despair when we face life’s frailties. As patience flows from hope, so consolation flows from both, and each re-act upon the other to their mutual strengthening:--

“Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James v. 8).

As we look at the context of Rom. xv. 5 there are two items that contribute further to our understanding of this ministry of consolation. In verse 5 we have the title, “the God of patience and consolation”, but in verse 4 that title is made very clear, for there we read:--

“That we through *the patience and consolation of the Scriptures* might have hope.”

This reference to the Scriptures prevents us from flying off into the realm of imagination or mere *experiences*, for God Himself here condescends to limit His titles and their scope to what is “written for our learning”.

The outcome of this patience and consolation of the Scriptures with which God Himself is so intimately related, is to be manifested in the unity of His believing people. There were two grounds for disunity in the church at Rome as chapter xiv. clearly

shows, but the *patience* of God was to regulate the inter-relation of Jewish and Gentile saints in order that they may

“Receive one another, even as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Rom. xv. 7).

#20. The Grace of Waiting Watching and Waiting. pp. 110, 111

The R.V. of Isa. lxiv. 4 speaks of God as One “Who worketh for him that waiteth for Him”, while Rotherham’s translation says:--

“Although from age-past times it was never heard, it was not perceived by the ear, neither did the eye ever see, that a God beside Thee could work for the man who waited for Him.”

The context speaks of the misery and desolation that had befallen Israel, and their hope is expressed in the words “Look down”, “Come down” (Isa. lxiii. 15, lxiv. 1). All that man can do is to wait. The peculiar character of God is brought forward, in that unlike anything that had been heard or seen He worketh for him that waiteth for Him.

Is there no word of peace and assurance here for the child of God in the present day? Is it no encouragement to believe that while he perforce must wait, God can work? So important is this attitude of waiting, that Isaiah elsewhere tells us that God waits until we are led to wait: “And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you blessed are all they that wait for Him” (Isa. xxx. 18). He waits that He may be gracious. We wait and are blessed.

Waiting without murmuring and without anxiety is the essence of the life of faith: “The vision is yet for an appointed time wait for it the just shall live by his faith” (Hab. ii. 3, 4). Moses must wait the appointed time, 80 years, before he is ready to lead Israel out of Egypt. Joseph must wait, and endure false charges and prison, until the appointed moment places him upon the throne. God Himself waits, that He may be gracious. The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah. The very creation itself is waiting the day of deliverance. Let us then with patience wait, knowing that in the silent years, while we must wait, God is working.

The verse quoted above from Isa. lxiv. is quoted in I Cor. ii. 9 but with a slight change of wording: “the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him.” “To wait” then in the scriptural sense is “to love”, or rather we wait confidently and uncomplainingly because we love. Here, instead of Israel’s restoration, we have that which God ordained before the ages unto our glory (I Cor. ii. 7-9).

To wait not only fulfils the idea of “faith” (Hab. ii.), and “love” (I Cor. ii.), but also “hope”. “But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it”

(Rom. viii. 25). It is a comforting thought that a quiet uncomplaining waiting for God may express in simple fashion the sublime grace of faith, hope, and love.

Waiting and waiting.

He who manifested the grace of waiting, and expressed by patience the truth of living by faith, found strength for *waiting* in the exercise of *watching*: “I will *watch* to see what He will say to me and the Lord answered *wait*” (Hab. ii. 1-4). To wait unintelligently may be mere inertia; to wait because one knows the will of the Lord may be the most active service: “When I meditate on Thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice” (Psa. lxxiii. 6, 7). “Watch therefore”, said the Lord to His disciples, and proceeded to tell of the servant who failing to watch failed to wait, and said, “My Lord delayeth His coming” (Matt. xxiv. 42-51).

Watching and waiting merge in experience:--

“I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning” (Psa. cxxx. 5, 6).

My soul *waiteth*, my soul *watcheth*, the two are constant companions. One of the characteristics of the Thessalonian believers was that they waited for the Son of God from heaven. This is found in the first chapter. In the last chapter, continuing the subject of the coming of the Lord commenced in chapter iv., we find waiting translated into terms of watching: “Let us watch and be sober” (I Thess. i. 10; v. 6).

“Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night” (Isa. xxi. 11, 12).

Let us watch and wait, for joy cometh in the morning.

**#21. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord,
and He shall sustain thee” (Psa. lv. 22).
pp. 157 - 159**

Here we have a very gracious word, which knows no bounds of dispensational distinction, but remains “present truth”, until the “former things pass away”. Let us pass it in review, and as we do so may the Spirit of all truth minister the rich fulness of Christ to our hearts and minds. What are you invited to do?

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord.”

There is something very vigorous about the word “cast”. It is used of the casting down of the fallen cherub (Ezek. xxviii. 17), of the casting of sins behind the Lord’s back (Isa. xxxviii. 17). We are not invited to share the burden with the Lord, He rather bids us get rid of it, not in part, but as a whole.

“*Thy burden.*”—If we would speak truth it is impossible to avoid being personal. Sin is so personal, aye, death is so personal too, with its forerunners, sorrow and vanity and vexation of spirit. The Lord does not speak of burdens generally, but of “thy” burden in particular. Now we will grant at once that “thy burden” is peculiar. It is connected so intimately with yourself. It concerns you private life, it is involved with your tears and your griefs, with your hopes and your disappointments; you feel that it is hardly the thing to cast *that* upon the Lord, yet *that* is what he says. “Cast **THY** burden upon the Lord.”

Then this word *burden* is rather a peculiar one. It is not the usual word for burden in the O.T. The margin shows that the word is “gift”, and the literal meaning is, “which He hath given thee, i.e., thy lot”. He therefore knows all about it, and has given it to thee, so that having tasted of its bitterness, and felt its sting, having realized its sorrow, you may be led to the Lord Himself to find your all in Him.

To contemplate the idea that the “burden” which we carry has been “allotted” by the Lord may cause us either to rebel or to bow according as the truth holds sway over our hearts. Look at a portion of the burden that the Psalmist was bearing:--

“The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart.”

“His words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords. Cast thy burden upon the Lord” (Psa. lv. 21, 22).

This surely is a grievous trial. Nothing seems so base as betrayal, yet as we think of that word we think of Judas, and we think of Christ, and all His gracious forbearance and longsuffering. Is there no echo of Psa. lv. 22 in the words of that betrayed One? When facing the rejection that had come, He said:--

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart”
(Matt. xi. 28-30).

What is the Lord's promise? "He shall sustain thee."

Sustain.—He shall "feed" thee as the word is translated in I Kings xvii. 4, "I have commanded the ravens to *feed* thee". He shall sustain, as the word is translated in I King xvii. 9, "I have commanded a widow to *sustain* thee". Elijah's allotted portion of trial was sustained by the Lord, Who was behind the ravens and the widow.

Yet more than feeding and nourishing the word means "contain" (I Kings vii. 26) as well as sustain, "comprehend" (Isa. xl. 12), and "make provision for" (I Kings iv. 7). The Lord Who appointed the wilderness wandering also "sustain" His people in it (Neh. ix. 21). The Lord Who suffered Jacob to be grieved at the loss of Joseph appointed also that Joseph should "nourish" his father in the hour of need (Gen. xlvii. 12).

As we think of Job, of Joseph, of Jacob, of Elijah, of Israel, the invitation of Psa. lv. becomes more insistent, more attractive, more real.

"Cast THY burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain THEE."

Further, is there not a real connection between this "thy" and "thee"? Can we hope for this sustaining apart from this casting? He Who bore our sins in His Own body on the tree can surely bear our burdens. You who have been made free from sin; can you not believe that He can make you free from care? "Care" or "anxiety" is the LXX translation of Psa. lv. 22, and brings Phil. iv. 6, 7 forward as a N.T. parallel and explanation. "Be careful for nothing" (care is the burden of the Psalm), "but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" (this is how the burden is "cast"), "and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding", this shall be the sustenance, the nourishment, the provision throughout the pathway of faith.

Peter's words, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (I Pet. v. 7) bring Psa. lv. 22 over bodily into the N.T., placing it in an epistle the theme of which is "suffering in view of glory", and which warns us, in spite of the peculiarity of our allotted portion, to:--

"Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you" (I Pet. iv. 12).

May the contemplation of these words mean the losing of burdens for many of the Lord's tried ones, for "*He is faithful that promised*".

The Ministry of Consolation.

#22. Sympathy.

pp. 59 - 61

The word sympathy does not occur in the A.V., but that is not to say that it does not occur in Scripture. Sympathy is a Greek word in English dress, and is composed of *sun* = “with”, and *pathein* = “to suffer”. The LXX uses the word in Job xxix. 25, and the version of Symmachus uses it in Job ii. 11. Before turning to the N.T. it will help us to take a note of these passages in Job:--

“Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place for they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him and to comfort him” (Job ii. 11).

Here is sympathy. They came not only to comfort, but to *share*—“to mourn with him”, sym-pathy—“suffer or feel together”. Further, they had the grace to keep their sympathy in its right place, they did not obtrude. They did not come blustering into Job’s grief, slap him on the back and cry, “Cheerio!” It has been said that the pessimist is he that is obliged to live with an optimist. These friends of Job seeing that his grief was great sympathized *with* him:--

“So they sat down with him upon ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him; for they saw that his grief was very great” (ii. 13).

Yet they failed; “miserable comforters are ye all” is Job’s protest (xvi. 2). Wherein did these worthy men fail? If we examine the utterances of these three friends we shall find the fly in the ointment of their sympathy was that they could not refrain from lecturing Job, from giving the benefit of their experience, from exasperating the *facts* of his sorrow with their *unfelt theories*. Eliphaz’s lecture is an expansion of the principle that no innocent man can perish, that he who sows evil must reap it. The beauty and the superficial truth of his speech is spoiled by the assumption that Job must have sinned in secret. This was but added gall to Job’s bitterness (iv. & v.). Job in his reply in vi. & vii. likens his friends to a dried up brook, and speaks feelingly upon their lack of sympathetic understanding:--

“Do ye reprove by fast’ning on my words,
When one in sheer despair (at random) speaks
Like to the wind?” (vi. 26)

Human nature is much the same in all ages.

“I then, all smarting with my wounds being cold,
To be so pestered with a popinjay,
Out of my grief and my impatience,
Answered neglectingly, I know not what;
He should, or he should not

* * * * *

And I beseech you let not his report
Come current for an accusation.
Betwixt my love and your high majesty” (King Henry IV).

Both the patient Jobs and the impatient Hotspurs of our acquaintance need *sympathetic* treatment if we would speak the word in season. Bildad and Zophar but follow Eliphaz in stirring up rebellion where they might have soothed and calmed. They brought their dead theories up against Job’s living experience and failed. Job himself in the days of his affluence had been a royal sympathizer.

“’Twas mine to choose their way, and sit as chief;
As king among his subjects so I dwelt;
And among mourners as a comforter” (Job xxix. 25).

Here the LXX uses the word *sympathy*. Turning to the N.T. we find *sumpatheo* in Heb. iv. 15; x. 34; and *sumpathes* in I Pet. iii.8. The great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, in all His greatness knows by experience the pilgrim pathway.

“For we have not an high priest who cannot sympathise with our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, apart from sin” (Heb. iv. 15).

Christ is the true sympathizer.

“For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. ii. 18).

Note how truly sympathetic this is. It does not say He is able to succour because He is Divine, because He is the Saviour, or even because He is High Priest, but because He Himself hath suffered being tempted. In Heb. x. 34, 35 we have sympathizers ranking with those who endured a great fight, and who lived by faith:--

“Ye became *companions* of them that were so used, for ye had *sympathy* with those in bonds.”

Some passed through active conflict for the truth, others “sympathized”, silently stood with them, outwardly perhaps escaping the suffering, inwardly sharing and supporting those who were afflicted.

Have you a dear one, one for whom you pray, who at present does not enjoy the fullness of blessing that you have received? Are your overtures resented, do you often feel sore wounded by their refusal to hear or consider? Have you ever stopped to review your own attitude? Are you riding rough shod? Are you giving all “doctrine” and little “practice”? Perhaps the one thing needful is a little sympathy. Where crude doctrine may repel, a loving word, a kindly thought, a sympathetic act, look, or silence may break the barrier. You may be a wife, a husband, a lover, a parent, a child. Go out of your way to seek to understand the point of view of the other. Put yourself in their shoes, view the truth and your own actions from their point of view. Let us remember the present office

of the Lord Jesus, and let His great sympathy be our inspiration. “Thy condescension hath made me great” (Psa. xviii. 35).

#23. Earthen vessels.
p. 79

One of the consolations of Scripture for the servant of God is the fact that the Lord Who uses us, knows us, and while sin is never excused, or slackness condoned, it is a consolation to read, “He knoweth our frame, He remebereth that we are dust”—a knowledge and a remembrance sometimes lacking among His people. It is for our help that Scripture draws our attention to the fact that “Elias was a man subject to like passions (or infirmities) as we are” (James v. 17). Elijah who confronted the king, who dared the whole priesthood of Baal, who prayed and with his prayer closed the heavens for three-and-a-half years, was nevertheless mortal, fallible, and feeble in himself. Scripture not only records his daring, but as faithfully records his flight and his despair.

Abraham for his faith received the enviable title, “The friend of God” (James ii. 23), yet who does not remember Abraham’s journey to Egypt, his equivocation concerning Sarah? These things are recorded alongside of that most marvelous act of faith and simple obedience, viz., the offering of Isaac (Gen. xxii.). David, the man after God’s own heart, the sweet singer of Israel, type of His greater Son, and victor of Goliath, has left for all time that confession of sin that we now call Psalm li; truly a man of like passions as we are!

(To be continued).

#23. (contd.). Earthen vessels.
p. 94

Paul, chosen vessel that he was, who could say with all good conscience, “for me to live is Christ”, was a man as we are. When not defending his “office” he is careful never to magnify himself. He had a treasure it is true, but that treasure was contained in an earthen vessel. He had received a commission higher than had ever been given to man, yet in the midst of its acknowledgment he says, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given” (Eph. iii. 8), and lest he should be exalted above measure, by reason of the abundance of revelations he had received, he had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him.

Neither Elijah, nor Abraham, nor David, nor Paul give the least warrant for trading upon our conscious weakness, nor for excusing our slightest fall, but they do, in the midst

of much frailty and weakness, give us heart to continue rejoicing that God has not only called Himself “The Holy One of ISRAEL”, but also, blessed be His name, “The God of JACOB”.

#24. Ourselves. pp. 94, 95

There are several passages in Paul’s second epistle to the Corinthians where he speaks very emphatically about *ourselves*. The first passage is introduced as a “ministry of consolation”, for God is called “The God of all comfort”, and Paul says that both his affliction and his consolation are for our benefits (II Cor. ii. 4-7).

“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death *in ourselves*, that we should not trust *in ourselves*; but in God which raiseth the dead” (II Cor. i. 8, 9).

Paul was brought very low, but the object was glorious, his trust in himself died, and he learned something of “the power of his resurrection”. What was true in the wide experience of his life, was true in the narrower experience of his ministry:--

“Not that we are sufficient *of ourselves* to think any thing as *of ourselves*; but our sufficiency is of God” (II Cor. iii. 5).

The passage goes on to show that the sphere of Paul’s ministry was in resurrection power, “spirit”, “life”, “glory”. Yet again in II Cor. iv. 5 he says:--

“We preach *not ourselves*, but Christ Jesus the Lord, *and ourselves* your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

To these same Corinthians the apostle had said:--

“Who then is Paul, but a minister by whom ye believed?” (I Cor. iii. 5).

“Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (I Cor. i. 13).

Once more, in II Cor. x. 12, he says:--

“For we dare not make *ourselves* of the number, or compare *ourselves* with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

Paul’s one standard of measurement was the will of God, all boastful comparisons he set aside, and so should we. Here are lessons for us that should help. Let us not trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead. Let us not think that we have any sufficiency of ourselves, but let us gladly acknowledge that our sufficiency is of God. Let us preach

Christ, as Lord, and ourselves as servants for Jesus' sake, and finally, let us be neither downcast nor elated by comparing ourselves with ourselves, but leaving all judgment until "that day" (I Cor. iv. 4, 5), let us seek closer conformity to the only standard that matters, the will and word of God.

#24. Sympathy. **pp. 156, 157**

We have looked at the subject of sympathy as exhibited to others. Shall we just look at the way in which a truly sympathetic nature must be developed. If we have grasped the meaning of the word we shall know that no amount of reading or study can give us this priceless Christ-like thing, for it means "suffering together".

Have we not felt at times how impossible it has been for a big healthy man, tanned by sun and wind, with never an ache or a pain, to have real sympathy with the delicate invalid, the sufferer from chronic headache, the one whose nerves are all on end, whose digestion makes life a burden. He may give kindly words, but however well intended we can sense the one fact that renders them of little value—he has never suffered. When we reach out to Christ for sympathy as we fall into this or that trial along the way, we know that His words will not be of the unfeeling variety, but that when we tell Him our griefs He *knows*. Well then, this has a bearing upon ourselves. If we seek a life all sunshine, all roses, with no clouds, no thorns, we are but seeking a life of self. We are avoiding the opportunity of helping our fellow-members in their time of trouble. Paul gives full expression to this secret process in II Cor. i. 3-5:--

"Blessed by God Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, BY THE COMFORT wherewith we ourselves are comforted OF GOD. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ."

Paul had been taught many things by revelation, but it was necessary that he should himself be in tribulation, and have an abounding share of the sufferings of Christ, before he could be the channel of the comfort of God. Paul could not minister comfort by passing on a mere recipe; the only comfort he found available was "The comfort wherewith he himself had been comforted of God". In the midst, therefore, of your tears, let this rainbow be seen. You stand by the sick bed or the open grave; you lie prostrate, and despair even of life, you know the bitterness of no employment. You may let these things embitter you, make you murmur and complain, or permit them to mellow you, and send you on the Christ-like ministry of soothing others with the balm you yourself received from God. Christ Himself has suffered being tempted, and because of this He can succour and sympathize. May we all therefore be blessedly exercised by our experiences, and reckon that we have been "graciously given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake".

There are also two points of view as to the length of this endurance. One may say, Oh to think that I must endure this for a whole lifetime, while another may say, Praise God, this suffering can only last a lifetime. To both the time is the same, but how different the point of view. One may say, Why am I thus afflicted and burdened? while another may say, What a privilege to be counted worthy to share any part of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, the church. Beloved readers, there can be no two thoughts as to which should be our attitude.

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

#25. The bowed soul, and the fixed heart (Psa. lvii. 6, 7). pp. 158, 159

It is a consolation beyond our powers of estimation that while we so harshly and sometimes so cruelly judge one another, the Lord remembereth our frame, and while sin is never treated less than sin (and no evil can ever be called otherwise by a Holy God), He condescends to use those who are of like infirmities with ourselves. A word in season is found in Psa. lvii. It is the coming together of two apparently opposed conditions:--

“My soul is bowed down My heart is fixed” (Psa. lvii. 6, 7).

Three times in this Psalm does the writer speak of his soul:--

“My *soul* trusteth in Thee” (verse 1).

“My *soul* is among lions” (verse 4).

“My *soul* is bowed down” (verse 6).

Here we may learn the necessary lesson, that trust in God does not mean exemption from trouble. What it does mean is triumph in spite of trouble. The Psalmist did not practice what is called “auto-suggestion”; he did not seek to strengthen himself by saying, “I am growing stronger every day”, for he knew a better way: “I will cry unto God most high; unto God that *performeth* for me” (verse 2), which *Spurrell* translates as “my accomplishing God”. At first sight, when the several occurrences of this word “perform” are considered, the true meaning underlying all is not readily apparent.

“The godly man *ceaseth*” (Psa. xii. 1).

“Doth His promise *fail*?” (Psa. lxxvii. 8).

“Let the wickedness of the wicked *come to an end*” (Psa. vii. 9).

“The Lord will *perfect*” (Psa. cxxxviii. 8).

“God that *performeth* for me” (Psa. lvii. 2).

The reader who remembers that the N.T. word “perfect” (*teleios*) indicates one who has gone unto the “end”, will see that the same idea is found in this word *gamar* = “to end”. Because the Psalmist trusted in God Who was able to bring all things through to their appointed end, he could, even while his soul was bowed down, truly say: “Oh God,

my heart is fixed.” By observing the words used in I Cor. x. 13 we shall see the same truth at work there. The A.V. speaks of a “way of escape”, but this is not “enduring” to “bearing”. The word occurs in Heb. xiii. 7 where it is translated “end” in the A.V. and “issue” in the R.V.:-

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation also make the end (or the issue), that ye may be able to bear it.”

While therefore, in common with our fellows, we may have to say many times, “My soul is bowed down”, let us remember that our trust is in God Who “perfect”, or brings to an issue, and so be enabled also to say, “My heart is fixed”.

The Ministry of Consolation.

No. 26.

The prepared heart.

In the preceding paper we just sought to minister a word of comfort by bringing together the two passages of Psa. lvii. 6, 7: “My soul is bowed down My heart is fixed.” The word “fix” is most frequently translated “prepare” or “establish” in the A.V., and is so translated in Psa. lvii. 6:—

“They have prepared a net for my steps” (Psa. lvii. 6).

“My heart is fixed (prepared), O God, My heart is fixed (prepared)” (Psa. lvii. 7).

Here is one “preparation” being met by another. The wicked may prepare their nets, but the believer trusts in God Who also prepares the heart of His people to meet, endure, and overcome:—

“Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble: Thou wilt prepare their heart that the man of the earth may no more oppress” (Psa. x. 17, 18).

“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is *fixed* (prepared), trusting in the Lord” (Psa. cxii. 7).

The unprepared heart spells failure, as Psa. lxxviii. shows :—

“A generation that set not their heart aright (prepared), and whose spirit was not steadfast with God” (verse 8).

What was the sequel? Failure. Failure even though there was outward preparation :—

“The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They kept not the covenant of God refused forgat provoked tempted” (verses 9—18).

They had arms, they carried bows, but their success depended upon their hearts and not their hands. There is a repetition of verse 8 in verse 37. A very solemn thought arises out of the presence of this same word in verse 20. The people who had not prepared their own heart, and were unfaithful in spirit found their condition recoil in unbelief upon their own heads, for they said: “Can He provide (*prepare*) flesh for His people?” What a blessing therefore is a heart prepared! Shall we not say :—

“O that my ways were *prepared* to keep Thy statutes” (Psa. cxix. 5).

“*Prepare* my steps in Thy Word” (Psa. cxix. 133),

and also remember that our feet should be shod :—

The Ministry of Consolation.

No. 27.

Dumbness.

There is a most important truth underlying the miracle recorded in Mark vii. 32—35. A man was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech. The Lord touched his ears and his tongue, and then looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said, *Ephphatha*, that is, “Be opened.” The special point to which we draw attention is that the Lord did not say “Be opened and be loosed,” but that the opening of the ears was very vitally connected with the loosening of the tongue.

It is a physical fact that there are many who are dumb, simply because they are deaf. They do not know that they can make a sound and therefore remain mute. This is a *spiritual* fact also. Ability to speak and the right words to speak are directly connected with hearing. Isaiah will illustrate this important teaching :—

“ The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary ”
(Isa. 1. 4).

Do you covet this gift? It is not so much the tongue of the learned, but of the *learner* that is intended here. An unconverted man may acquire the tongue of the learned, but it is grace alone that can loose the tongue and give it words in season to weary ones. How then may this gift be obtained? Let us read on in Isaiah :—

“ He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learner ” (Isa. 1. 4).

Here is the secret. The tongue of the learner follows the ear of the learner, and unless we continually hear God's Word, we shall find an impediment in our speech. The learner indicates a disciple, a follower, and includes the thought of obedience even to suffering. This, too, is the sequence of thought in Isa. 1. :—

“ The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back ” (Isa. 1. 5).

An opened ear, and a wakened ear, are both necessary if the tongue is to be used in the Lord's service.

Not only is dumbness closely associated with deafness, but in the spiritual sphere it is connected with unbelief. Zachariah was rendered dumb because he “ believed not ” the words sent by God. Some are dumb because of fear. Think of the blessed example of Daniel, who in spite of the prohibition of the King threw open his window and prayed as he had always done. Or think of Paul who asked the prayers of God's people, “ that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.”

There is a time, however, when it is right to be silent. Isa. liii. 7 comes to mind immediately. There the Lord Jesus, the faithful Witness, is depicted “ as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.” A desire to avoid giving occasion for the enemy to blaspheme may sometimes close our lips :—

“I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me” (Psa. xxxix. 1).

A recognition of the hand of God stays the murmuring lip:—

“I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it” (Psa. xxxix. 9).

Finally, perfect trust in the Lord may sometimes close both our ears and our mouths:—

“They also that seek after my life lay snares for me; and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not, and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth” (Psa. xxxviii. 12, 13).

Thus there are three phases of spiritual dumbness to be avoided, and three to be emulated. Let us write them down, the better to remember them.

Dumbness may arise from Spiritual deafness.
 Dumbness may be the result of Unbelief.
 Dumbness may be the outcome of . . . Fear.
 Dumbness, however, may arise from . . Perfect trust.
 Dumbness may be for the Glory of God.
 Dumbness may arise from Recognition of God's hand.

May grace be given so that we may know when to speak and when to keep silence, and ever to remember the close association that exists between the ear and the tongue.

Frail human nature sometimes breaks down, but it is the desire of the writer to act in harmony with the foregoing. Will readers therefore who may have been somewhat disappointed at our not dealing in these pages with opposing teaching, please accept this in explanation? When, however, the truth is at stake silence shall not be maintained.



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No. 28.

“The Rock more exalted than I” (Psa. lxi. 1, 2).

We have looked at Psa. lvii. and learned a blessed lesson in contemplating the connection between the “bowed” soul and the “prepared” heart, and also by observing the connection between the “prepared” *net* and the “prepared” *heart*. There is another feature that we must consider for our help, and that is the close connection established between this preparation of heart and its triumph with the thought of the Lord’s exaltation. Twice does the Psalmist sing:—

“Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Thy glory be above all the earth” (Psa. lvii. 5 and 11).

What is the secret of our confidence? How is it that with soul “bowed down,” “among lions,” and among men whose “tongue is a sharp sword,” how is it that such can hope to triumph? The answer is found in the double ascription of exaltation here given. It may be objected that there is no necessary connection here, and that it is unwise to draw conclusions. It is therefore encouraging to turn to Psa. cviii. for confirmation. The Psalm opens with a repetition of Psa. lvii. 7: “O God, my heart is fixed,” and goes on to the exaltation of the Lord in verse 5, saying: “Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and Thy glory above all the earth.” One of the reasons for emphasizing the exaltation of the Lord is found by comparing Psa. cviii. 12 with Psa. lxi. 2, as follows:—

“Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man” (Psa. cviii. 12).

“Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the Rock that is HIGHER (more exalted) than I” (Psa. lxi. 1, 2).

Here the exalted Rock is higher than man, and the lesson is evident. Let there be no doubt in the believer's heart as to the reception he will receive if he draws near the *exalted* One, for "Though the Lord be exalted, yet hath He respect unto the lowly" (Psa. cxxxviii. 6), and another connection with Psa. lvii. 2 is found in the words of Psa. cxxxviii. 8:—

"The Lord will PERFECT that which concerneth me" (Psa. cxxxviii. 8).

"God that PERFORMETH for me" (Psa. lvfi. 2),

where the words "perfect" and "perform" are the same. This exalted One is called Lord and God in the Psalms, and some may hesitate to say that in these passages the ascended Christ is in view. In Psa. lxxxix. 19–27 we read:—

"I have laid help upon ONE that is mighty, I have EXALTED ONE chosen out of the people Also I will make Him My Firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth."

This is prophetic of Christ, and in Psa. lxviii. 18 we read:—

"Thou hast ascended on high; Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

This passage we know (by the testimony of Eph. iv. 8) is prophetic of Christ. In Psa. lxvi. 7 these rebellious ones are exhorted, "Let not the rebellious *exalt* themselves," for the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. We may fittingly close this little word with another quotation from the same Psalm:—

"Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul. I cried unto Him with my mouth, and He was EXALTED with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. lxvi. 16–18).

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#29. “Written for our learning comfort of the Scriptures” (Rom. xv. 4). pp. 26, 27

In the three papers preceding this one, we have brought together teaching from the Psalms, which may be summarized as follows:--

The believer, though bowed down in soul, and surrounded by adversaries, may nevertheless be confident of victory, for he trusts in God Who “perfects” or brings all things to their appointed end, and so his heart is “prepared” and unmoved.

This attitude of heart is moreover very closely connected with the “exaltation” of the Lord, which foreshadows the ascension of Christ. The exalted Lord is by no means inaccessible, but on the contrary is One Who “hath respect unto the lowly”.

It seems fitting that we should not conclude these brief observations without drawing the reader’s attention to their N.T. fulfillment.

The “perfecting” God is seen at His blessed work in Hebrews, where “to go on unto perfection” (or the end) is a key passage. Hebrews, moreover, is vitally connected with the ascended Christ, His finished work being emphasized by the fact that He has “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”. He has “passed through the heavens” (Heb. iv. 14), and in Him we have One Who, having been touched with the feeling of our infirmities, bids us draw near to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need; and as One Who has been made high, yea “higher than the heavens” (Heb. vii. 26), He “ever liveth to make intercession for us”. This exalted One is, moreover, Head of the church, the one body, and as the ascended One He gave “gifts unto men” (Eph. iv. 8-11), which gifts in their turn are instrumental in leading on to the “perfect” man.

Whilst (if Eph. iii. 2-11 be true) the dispensation of the mystery cannot be a subject of revelation in the O.T., nevertheless the ministry of consolation is as wide as suffering saintship, and knows no dispensational boundaries.

There is far more of victory in the ascension of Christ than we have as yet perceived, and it is good in the midst of trouble to remember that One at the right hand of God, and also be able, in His triumph, to be “more than conquerors” (Rom. viii. 34-37).

“O magnify the Lord with Me, and let us exalt His Name together” (Psa. xxxiv. 3).

#30. Helpers together (II Cor. 1. 8-11).
pp. 27, 28

Never was there more need than at the present time to remember that among the blessings of redemption is a “sound mind”. Both among the orthodox and unorthodox we meet the extremist. In II Cor. i. 8-11 the apostle Paul mingles together the human and the divine in such a way that while the arm of flesh is absolutely set aside, the weaker saint is nevertheless gathered into a most glorious fellowship with “God that raiseth the dead”. Let us note the transition:--

1. *The utter end of human strength.*

“We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life” (verse 8).

2. *The utter failure was for a divine purpose.*

“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead” (verse 9).

3. *No deliverance can be expected from any source other than God, either in the present or the future.*

“Who delivered us from so great a death (*past*) and doth deliver (*present*); in whom we trust that He will yet deliver (*future*) us” (verse 10).

4. *The unexpected call into fellowship of those who, in themselves, are for ever set aside as strengthless.*

“Ye also helping together by prayer for us” (verse 11).

What a light this throws on the condescending grace of God! What a sermon it preaches upon the nature of prayer! What a stress it throws upon the place of fellowship! “Ye also helping together.”

Since the creation of man, and the divine statement: “It is not good I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen. ii. 18), this element of fellowship has remained.

The Psalmist seems to have had some knowledge of the truth of II Cor. i. for he says in Psalm cxviii. 7: “The Lord taketh my part *with them that help me*”, and Psalm liv. 4 expresses much the same thought: “Behold, God is my helper: the Lord is *with them that uphold my soul.*”

“With them that help me.” “With them that uphold my soul.” “Ye also helping together.” While the flesh can have no place, is it not a comfort to the weakest believer to realize the reality of the words: “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (I John i. 3)?

A parallel passage that but confirms this blessed association of the Saviour and the saint is Phil. i. 19:--

“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through *your* prayer (the saints helping together), and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (the Saviour). According to my earnest expectation” (the recipient).

Here once again we have this blessed chain that binds us all around the throne of God. Shall we not rise to such a call for fellowship?

#31. “Heights and Depths.” **pp. 61, 62**

It is beyond our knowledge to be able to say, without reserve, that the apostle Paul was the greatest servant of the Lord Jesus that ever lived, but we do know that he was one of the greatest. We learn much by the noble example he sets us in faith, in hope and in love and its labours. It is, however, written for our consolation that he suffered as we do, felt as we do, prayed as we do, and lived the daily round as we do. In the midst of a passage dealing with the delicate problem of church government, and immediately after giving a charge “before God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels”, Paul suddenly descends to earth and sends a little private advice concerning Timothy’s weak stomach (I Tim. v. 23); and then without ceremony or explanation he resumes his theme concerning church government. The incongruity is only superficial. Timothy, though possessed of spiritual gifts, was an “earthen vessel”, and Paul knew that physical disability often interferes with spiritual witness. If we were more spiritual and less shallow we should accept the fulness of truth that can sweep all things into the service of God, and sense no dissonance when reading of elect angels, church officers, Timothy’s infirmities, Paul’s prescription, and the day of judgment.

In the second epistle to Timothy, Paul’s martyrdom is in full view. During his life of service he had suffered as few men ever suffered, yet how refreshing it is to see the utter absence of “pose”. We have full, deep and utter consecration, but not one word of the heroic:--

“The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee”
(II Tim. iv. 13).

The man who was happy in the prospect of “being offered” (II Tim. iv. 6), and who could stand unashamed and unperturbed though all men forsook him (i. 12 and iv. 16), had too great a conception of truth to pander to the flesh and write:--

Do not think of bringing the cloak from Troas. What is a little cold to one in whose breast burns the holy fire of martyrdom?

This apparent “neglecting of the body” would have been the surest way of “satisfying the flesh”. Some children of God seem to go out of their way to look for martyrdom. It would be far better to avoid all pretensions and save oneself up for the eventuality of the real thing. In Acts xx. 24 Paul uttered those stirring words that found their fulfillment in II Tim. iv.:--

“None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.”

Yet, look at verse 13 of the same chapter in Acts:--

“And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, *mind*ing himself to go afoot.”

Here was no Stoic who could be “unmoved” simply because bereft of human feeling; here was one that gladly availed himself of a little spell of relief from the constant pressure of the lives of others. If we do not misread the passage, Paul was glad to “get away” for a time; it was a kind of safety-valve.

Let us take consolation from these homely, every-day facts revealed for our learning. Abraham lived many a day as humdrum as our own. He was not always “fighting”, “believing” or “offering”. Paul, with all his strenuous witness, lived the life of a man. However rapt his vision, he found time to eat and drink; however full of zeal, he must have slept, and when he shivered with cold he was too great to be above asking for a cloak. Let us leave the “pose” to others. Let us above all things seek reality, so that our walk shall be worthy in those quiet and unrecorded days as well as during the mountain-top experiences, when such a walk is comparatively easy.

The Ministry of Consolation.

#32. The beloved of the Lord---in sleep. pp. 19, 20

“The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him” so we read in Deut. xxxiii. 12. The theme is pursued in another passage, Psa. cxxvii. 1, 2:--

“Except the Lord build the house,
They labour in vain that build it;
Except the Lord keep the city,
The watchman waketh but in vain.
It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late,
To eat the bread of sorrows,
For so He giveth His beloved IN SLEEP.”

This seems to be the true import of the passage, as may be seen in *The Companion Bible*, and many commentaries, among them the *Oxford Gesenius*. Spurrell’s translation is: “Since He giveth unto His beloved *when* sleeping.” There is, of course, no word here against legitimate labour. There is no excusing the sluggard, and if burning the midnight oil sometimes is hereby condemned, then some of the articles in *The Berean Expositor* should never have been written.

The point of the passage is expressed in the opening verse. It is necessary, when a house is wanted, that there should be builders. Building is not condemned; the wrong is to leave the Lord out in the matter. It is the duty of all to watch that the keeping power of the Lord is unfelt or unwanted is wrong. The stress, therefore, must be placed upon the word “Except”. The three statements linked together by the words “in vain”:--

Except the Lord build the house, they labour IN VAIN.
Except the Lord keep the city, they watch IN VAIN.
To labour for the bread of sorrows is IN VAIN.

The Companion Bible gives five examples from the O.T. of those to whom the Lord gave “in sleep”:--

ADAM (Gen. ii. 21-24).

“And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam This is now bone of my bone she shall be called woman.”

No helpmeet was found for Adam in the whole range of creation, and to emphasize the graciousness of the gift, it was given to God’s beloved “in sleep”.

ABRAHAM (Gen. xv. 2, 3, 12, 18).

“And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt Thou give me to me Thou hast given no seed a deep sleep fell upon Abram unto Thy seed have I given this land.”

JACOB (Gen. xxviii. 3, 4, 11, 15, 20).

“And God Almighty bless thee and give thee the blessing of Abraham and lay down in that place to sleep Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on”

SAMUEL (I Sam. iii. 3, 4).

“And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep, that the Lord called Samuel.”

SOLOMON (II Sam. xii. 25 and I Kings iii. 5-16).

“And He called his name Jedidiah (The beloved of the Lord) because of the Lord.”

“In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.”

To these, examples from the N.T. could be added, such as the deliverance of Peter from prison (Acts xii.), the deliverance of Paul and all on board from the shipwreck (Acts xxvii.) and even the mighty resurrection of God’s Beloved Son from the power of the grave. Enough has been brought forward. Here is a corrective to that feverish haste and vain labour that attempts the impossible without the Lord.

“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord.”

#33. The beloved of the Lord. “The safe dwelling.” pp. 39, 40

No title of the Lord Jesus is more full than that which God used when He broke the silence of centuries at the waters of Jordan: “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased” (Matt. iii. 17). Perhaps no summary of blessing is so precious as that which concludes the will of the Father in Eph. i. 6, “accepted in the Beloved”, and there is certainly no title given to His people that is nearer to His heart than the one given to Israel in Deut. xxxiii. 12, “The beloved of the Lord”. A meditation upon some of the occurrences of this title will surely be a means of consolation to many if not all our readers.

In the ministry of consolation we do not attempt analysis, and are not too much concerned with dispensational distinctions, realizing that in the realm of love, such differences, if they exist, are not too evident:--

“The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders” (Deut. xxxiii. 12).

The special blessing attached to this title that we here consider is the provision for the beloved of the Lord of a safe *dwelling*, both during life’s pilgrimage, and when we shall reach the house of the Lord to dwell therein for ever.

The first blessing to be stated is really a prophecy of the future, and so full is this blessing that it is used to express the final state of all Israel's blessedness, when they shall at last enter into their inheritance:--

“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms Israel then shall *dwell in safety* alone who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!”
(Deut. xxxiii. 27-29).

There are several words used in the O.T. to convey the idea of *dwelling*. There is the “sojourning” of a stranger (Lev. xix. 34), but this is no sojourning of strangers. Here the word means to dwell in a tent or in a tabernacle. Its significance can be gathered by consulting Deut. xxxiii. 16: “The goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush.” This “dwelling” rendered the place “holy ground”, and we should realize its meaning better if we translated the blessing of Deut. xxxiii. 12: “The beloved of the Lord shall *tabernacle* in safety by Him.” So, when Israel were first brought into covenant relationship with the Lord, He said to Moses: “Make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell (*tabernacle*) among them” (Exod. xxv. 8). The beloved of the Lord therefore can take to themselves the words of the Psalm: “And I shall *dwell* in the house of the Lord for ever” (Psa. xxiii. 6).

Another cause of great joy is the statement that not only shall the beloved of the Lord dwell by Him, but that they shall “ *dwell in safety* ”. Among other features that this particular blessing sets forth are the following:--

1. IT MEANS THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED ON OUR BEHALF.—“Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments and do them: and ye shall dwell in the land in safety” (Lev. xxv. 18).
2. IT MEANS THAT THE PEACEABLE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS ENJOYED.—“And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety” (Lev. xxv. 19 and xxvi. 5, 6).
3. IT MEANS, IN DEUTERONOMY, THE CESSATION OF WAR.—“But when ye go over Jordan and He giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety” (Deut. xii. 10).
4. IT TYPIFIES THE REIGN OF THE PRINCE OF PEACE.—“And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon” (I Kings iv. 25).

The second blessing pronounced in Deut. xxxiii. 12 to the beloved of the Lord is: “And the Lord shall *cover* him all the day long.” The special thought here in this word “cover” is not the covering by atonement, nor the covering as a protection merely, but the covering that pertains to marriage. It gives us the word meaning “marriage canopy”, which should be substituted for the word “defence” in Isa. iv. 5 (In the remaining occurrences [Psa. xix. 5 and Joel ii. 16] “bridegroom” and “bride” are actually mentioned. In one case the “cover” is the “chamber” of the bridegroom and in the other the “closet” of the bride).

(To be concluded).

**#33. The beloved of the Lord.
“The safe dwelling.” (concluded).
pp. 57, 58**

While as members of the one body we rejoice in our own special nearness to the glorious Head, we may enter into this intimate covering which the Lord has promised to His beloved “all the day long”.

Thus the wilderness journey is amply provided for, both in this covering and in the third blessing mentioned, viz.: “And he shall dwell between His *shoulders*.” The shoulders of the High Priest carried the names of the twelve tribes before God (Exod. xxviii. 12). The shoulders, too, of the seeking shepherd carried the lost sheep back to the fold (Luke xv. 5).

Surely there is a message of cheer in these words for every one who, by grace, is numbered among God’s beloved. The beloved of the Lord is assured of a safe and certain dwelling when the tabernacle of God shall be with men. He is also most intimately associated by ties of love to His Lord, as intimately as bride with bridegroom or body with head, and he is assured of “traveling mercies” through the perils and trials of the wilderness, being borne upon the shoulders of the great High Priest and Shepherd of the sheep. May every reader be able to say out of a full heart, “*My Beloved is mine, and I am His*”.

**#34. The beloved of the Lord.
The election of God.
pp. 58 - 60**

Writing to the church of the Thessalonians, the apostle said:--

“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God” (I Thess. i. 4).

To some, this seems a strange statement. How could Paul or the Thessalonians really “know” their election of God? Surely that would be one of the secret things that belong to the Almighty. The book of life is not accessible to search as are the documents at Somerset House. Yet it is perfectly true, and the whole secret is wrapped up in the word “love”. It goes without saying that if “beloved”, then “elect”.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I John iv. 10).

The same is true with reference to the presence of our love toward God:--

“And we know that all things work together for good TO THEM that love God, TO THEM who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. viii. 28).

It stands for ever true, “He that loveth not knoweth not God” (I John iv. 8). The beloved of the Lord, however, are not left without evidence of their calling, and they lie thick around our text in I Thess. i.

How may the beloved of the Lord “know” their election? Well, how did the apostle “know” that they had “faith”? They manifested it in “the work of faith”. How was he sure of their “love”? They exercised themselves in “the labour of love”. How could he be certain as to their “hope”? They showed it by their “patience”. They did not merit the title “Beloved” because of their “labour of love”, but as God’s beloved it was incumbent that such a title should not remain empty.

The apostle, however, more fully explains himself in the verses that follow:--

“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. FOR

- (1) Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.
- (2) Ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.
- (3) For from you sounded out the word of the Lord.

For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and

- (1) How ye turned to God from idols.
- (2) To serve the living and true God, and
- (3) To wait for His Son from heaven” (I Thess. i. 4-10).

Here we have a twofold witness:--

- (1) Knowing YOUR election, followed by three references to the Word.
- (2) Showing OUR entering in, followed by three references to the Lord.

The three references to the Word have one feature in common which is expressed in the first clause—“not in word *only*.”

In the first case the gospel was not received in word only, “but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance”.

In the second case the reception of the Word is shown to be living and real, by the fact that they who received this Word “became followers of the apostles and of the Lord”, and “received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost”.

In the third case the sounding out of the Word of the Lord was something more than mere “sound”, for they who thus sounded out the Word were “ensamples to all that believe”, and in every place their faith to God-ward was spread abroad.

This faith “to God-ward” is next shown to have a threefold character. Faith to God-ward is manifested in their:--

- (1) Turning to God from idols.
- (2) Serving the living and true God.
- (3) Waiting for His Son from heaven.

This faith covers past, present and future phases of life. They had turned in the past—this was a “work of faith”; they were serving in the present—this was a “labour of love”; they had assurance for the future—this was their “patience of hope”.

Using the language of Peter in the same connection we can surely say to all who believe:--

“If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (II Pet. i. 8-10).

To the elect of God His gospel is a living, spiritual power, and on its truth they rest with assurance. As the elect of God they follow in the steps of the apostle and of his Lord, enduring with spiritual complacency and joy whatever afflictions their belief in the Word may entail.

The elect of God not only receive, not only suffer, not only follow, but they sound out the Word themselves that others may hear. As Peter says in a similar context:--

“Add to your faith give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (II Pet. i. 5-10).

To the beloved of the Lord there may come a settled conviction, a peace, an assurance, a joy, which tribulation cannot remove, and which trouble cannot shake.

Every *beloved* one is an *elect* one, chosen by the God of love for Himself:--

“The Lord did not set *His love* upon you, nor *choose* you, because ye were but because the Lord *loved* you” (Deut. vii. 7, 8).

He chose us because He loved us. He loved us because He chose us. Leave it there. Rejoice in it, take no credit to self, but “rest in His love”.

#35. One aspect of answered prayer.
pp. 81 – 83

While to suggest that in this brief note we should deal with the question of answered prayer would be so evidently unreasonable as to need no refutation, yet it may certainly be a real ministry of consolation to many to have their minds illuminated by the teaching of Scripture upon one of the many aspects of this vital theme.

Apart from higher spiritual aspirations to Christ likeness, fellowship, and conscious entry into His blessed victory, most prayer falls under one of the following categories: prayers for protection; prayers for provision; and, combining these two, prayers for the presence of Him Who is both Protector of and Provider for His people.

Protection.

Let us now read II Kings vi. 8-17. The king of Syria was at war with Israel, and because he had learned that Elisha kept the king of Israel posted as to the movements and intentions of his foe, he compassed the city, wherein Elisha was staying, with horses and chariots and a great host. When Elisha's servant beheld this huge encircling host he was naturally much afraid, saying:--

“Alas, my master! how shall we do?” (II Kings vi. 15).

Elisha's reply supplies the point of our message regarding answered prayer:--

“And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with him. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (II Kings vi. 16, 17).

The great truth for us at the moment is that answer to Elisha's prayer was not the sending of the horses and chariots of fire, but the opening of the eyes to see that they were there already. It is evident, therefore, and a matter of consolation to us all, that sometimes we need to pray that our eyes may be opened that we may see what has already been provided for our protection in Christ.

Provision.

Turn now to Gen. xxi. 9-19. Sarah views with dismay the mocking of Isaac by Ishmael, and prevails upon Abraham to dismiss Hagar, her handmaid, with her son. Let it be said to Abraham's credit that, though he now realized his error in the matter of Ishmael, he did not lightly set aside his responsibilities, and the dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael was very grievous in his sight. However, being assured that this was in line with the will of the Lord, he gave Hagar some bread and a bottle of water, and sent her and Ishmael away, and they wandered in the wilderness of Beer-Sheba. Although Abraham

had dug a well in this wilderness (verses 22-31), Hagar, apparently, had no knowledge of it:--

“And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat here down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him and lift up her voice and wept And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water . . .” (Gen. xxi. 15-19).

Once again, the need is met, not by the miraculous gushing forth of water in the wilderness, but by the opening of the eyes to see that which had already been provided.

Presence.

Refer now to Luke xxiv. 13-32. Two disciples are walking along the road in the direction of Emmaus, some sixty furlongs from Jerusalem. Their conversation was of the things that had occurred at Jerusalem, and the record is that they were sad. As they thus walked and talked, the risen Lord drew near, and went with them:--

“But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him” (Luke xxiv. 16).

Here was protection and provision in one—the risen Christ. Once again the provision is there already, needing but the opened eyes to see it:--

“And their eyes were opened and they knew Him Did not our hearts burn within us while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke xxiv. 31, 32).

To this might be added:--

“Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures” (Luke xxiv. 45).

Here we have brought together, opened *eyes*, opened *Scriptures*, and opened *understandings*.

Is it true God-honouring prayer to ask for that which is already ours in Christ? Should we not rather learn from these passages that we might often rightly pray, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold”, rather than pray for either provision or protection.

Beloved reader, if you are in Christ, you are more safely garrisoned than was Elisha. Pray for the opened eyes to see this. You are more fully provided for than Hagar. With you walks daily the Son of God; and if your eyes are holden it may be slowness of heart to believe that which is written, for had the two disciples really believed the Word of the Lord, they never could have said, “and beside all this, to-day is *the third day* since these things were done”.

(*cf.* BE-XIII, pp. 158, 159).

The Ministry of Consolation.

#36. Lift up your heads.

“My glory and the lifter up of mine head” (Psa. iii. 3).

pp. 79, 80

We often hear it said, especially with reference to someone in distress or trouble, that a “lift up” is needed. Christians will speak in the same way about a helpful meeting, as “quite an uplift”. Prayer, too, is spoken of as “lifting up the hands”, and in many other ways the expression does service. There are few of God’s children who do not at times feel the need of such an “uplift”, and for such this ministry of consolation is planned.

One of the titles of the Lord, invented by gratitude, is that found in Psa. iii.:--

“But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter up of mine head”
(Psa. iii. 3).

The writer of these words is David, and the occasion was “when he fled from Absalom his son”. And there can be few blows that strike more deeply than those aimed by one’s own children:--

“And the King kissed Absalom. And it came to pass after this Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel There came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom” (II Sam. xiv. 33 - xv. 14).

Absalom’s rebellion was not limited to Absalom himself, for the bulk of the nation rebelled with him. The word “increased” is *rabab*, and “many”, *rabim*. “Many” had risen against David, and “many” had adopted an attitude against him as against one who had lost favour with God. It was in this hour of deep distress that David uttered the words already quoted—“But Thou, O Lord, art a Shield for me.”

How many times the Psalmist speaks of the Lord as a Shield: “My defence (*shield*) is of God” (Psa. vii. 10). So sang David when suffering at the hands of Cush the Benjamite:--

“As for God, His way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: He is a Buckler (*Shield*) to all those that trust in Him” (Psa. xviii. 30).

So sang David in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.

Others beside David had learned to hide beneath this Shield, for to Abraham long before had come the words: “Fear not, Abram: I am thy Shield” (Gen. xv. 1).

In the record of David's flight from Jerusalem, we read:--

“And David went up by the ascent of the mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and went barefoot” (II Sam. xv. 30).

But in spite of appearances, and in spite of the most serious alarms, we learn from this Psalm that instead of a disturbed and anxious night, peace and calm assurance settled down upon David's troubled spirit. Under that Shield, he says: “I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.”

Here, then, is a title for us to remember in our own time of trial. He, the mighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, is “The lifter up of mine head”.

#37. Lift up your heads.
“Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills?” (Psa. cxxi. 1).
p. 140

The margin of the A.V. of Psa. cxxi. 1 suggests that the opening line be read as a question: “Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills?”

It is entirely foreign to the teaching of Scripture to suggest that our “help” comes from “the hills”. Indeed, Jeremiah has said: “Truly in vain is salvation hoped from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel” (Jer. iii. 23). We can understand, perhaps, the poor idolater saying of Israel: “Their gods are gods of the hills: therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they” (I Kings xx. 23), but he whose God is the Lord, the Creator, in Whose presence the hills “melted like wax” (Psa. xcvi. 5), at Whose touch the hills “smoke” (Psa. civ. 32), surely his eyes will not be “unto the hills”, but he will say: “From whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth” (Psa. cxxi. 1, 2).

When Isaiah would show the vanity of idolatry, he says:--

“Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt offering” (Isa. xl. 12-16).

Why should Israel look to the hills, “everlasting” though they may be called? The promises of the Lord will stand when mountain and hill have vanished: “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee” (Isa. liv. 10).

We are not likely to look to actual “hills”, but whenever we are subjected to trouble or testing, let us be on guard against that natural tendency to turn our eyes unto our bank balance, our friends, their influence, or the many lesser “helps” that may fail us in our hour of need. “Our help cometh from the Lord.” When this is established in our hearts, we shall find that His help does not set aside bank balances, friends, influence; in fact He uses all these, but if we would know stable peace, and walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, we must learn to see, behind all, the hand of our Father. *“Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills? (No) My help cometh from the Lord.”*

**#38. Lift up your heads.
“Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up
the light of Thy countenance upon us” (Psa. iv. 6).
pp. 199, 200**

When the many said of David in the time of Absalom’s rebellion: “There is no help for him in God”, his reply was: “Thou, O Lord art the lifter up of mine head” (Psa. iii. 2, 3).

In Psa. iv. we get the other side of the question. Instead of the statement that there was no help for David in God, the many now said: “Who will show us any good?” (Psa. iv. 6). This time David’s answer is: “Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us” (Psa. iv. 6).

He is the “Lifter up of mine head”—and this is an all-sufficient answer to the gibe that, for David, there was no help in God. “He will lift up the light of His countenance upon me”—and who shall then say, “Who will show us any good?”

There is no good outside His favour and His presence:--

“In His favour is life. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa. xxx. 5).

“In Thy presence is fullness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa. xvi. 11).

Psa. lxxx. is the psalm of the Lord’s countenance: It is divided into four parts, each indicated by the words, “Turn again” (“Return” in verse 14 being the same in the original).

PRAYER (1-3).

“Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

THE PEOPLE (4-6).

PRAYER (7).

“Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

THE VINE (8-13).

PRAYER (14).

“Return, we beseech Thee, O God of hosts, look down from heaven.”

THE VINE (16-18).

PRAYER (19).

“Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

It is not sufficient for us merely to plead for the restoration of the Lord’s favour. Not only is there prayer to God that He may “return”, but for ourselves that He may “turn us”.

With Him is no darkness, the light never leaves His countenance; but if our backs are turned to the sun we see only the shadow. If we are to know the secret of His presence we must learn this lesson. We must be ever “turned to Him” if we are to enjoy the light of His countenance.

One of the blessings consequent upon our being in the light of the Lord’s countenance is salvation from shame:--

“Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant: save my for Thy mercies’ sake. Let me not be ashamed, O Lord” (Psa. xxxi. 16, 17).

Paul’s words in the second epistle to Timothy are a splendid comment on this passage:--

“Nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know Whom I have believed” (II Tim. i. 12).

Another blessing derived from the same source is indicated in Psa. cxix. 135. If we observe the correspondence of the verses in this section (129-136), we shall read verse 130 with verse 135:--

“The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (130).

“Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant; and teach me Thy statutes” (135).

The study of the Word is not mere book-reading; its great illuminant is the presence of the Lord:--

“For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light” (Psa. xxxvi. 9).

But perhaps the chief reason for the blessedness of the Lord’s uplifted countenance is that it speaks of the mercy-seat, of sins forgiven and of acceptance in the Beloved; for it is the chief element in the priestly blessing of Numb. vi. 24-26:--

“The Lord bless thee and keep thee:

The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”

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The Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures.
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As one's experiences widen, the burden of sorrow as well as of sin becomes a reality, and the need for comfort as well as conciliation a needed ministry. Sickness, anxiety, and distress arising out of the state of the times call for a word in season. One after another, loved-one or fellow-worker is laid in the grave, and the battle becomes more lonely, and the day more drear. A doctrinal treatise is not necessarily "a word in season to him that is weary", but true lasting consolation can only come from that treasure-house of truth—the Scriptures:--

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scripture might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4).

The trial of Job will minister to the tried saint, and inspire patience and hope by seeing *the end of the Lord*. The trial of Abraham's faith and the glorious issue of his trust in the God that quickeneth the dead may be a special word for some in similar anxiety. Whatever the sorrow, patience to endure without murmuring, without rebellion, with undiminished faith will be a prime necessity, and comfort, sympathy and consolation will ever be the greatest need. These two are ministered most fully by the Word of God, "that we through PATIENCE and COMFORT of the Scriptures". These two mutually lead the sorrowing child of God to look beyond the cloud, beyond the grave, beyond earth's pilgrimage; they minister HOPE—"That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have HOPE".

"We sorrow", and here we share the common lot of Adam's race. "We sorrow not as those who have no hope", and here we at once have ministered to our grief the oil of patience and the wine of comfort, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words". Behind the written Word is the Living God of that Word. His Word ministers patience, comfort and hope. He Himself is the "GOD OF PATIENCE AND CONSOLATION THE GOD OF HOPE" (Rom. xv. 5-13). The Scriptures are the channel, God Himself the source. We seek to obey the exhortation, "Comfort one another with these words".