

CASTING OUR BURDEN ON THE LORD.

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There is no class of men who excite a deeper interest in every loyal son of the South than our gallant soldiers, who have exposed themselves to the manifold hazards of the battle field and of the camp, in defence of our honor, our liberties and our lives. There are none who in seclusion and sickness—in the lonely hours of confinement and sorrow—in wounds and in weariness more need the consolations and hopes of the Gospel of peace.

I would lead such directly to the Savior. I would point them to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. I would commend them to Him who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich—who though he was the Lord of glory, yet became a man of sorrows—who hath borne our griefs and carried our sicknesses, and who invites us to cast our burden upon Him and says that He will sustain us—that He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.

If we wish to know the worth of true faith, and experience all its consolations, we should not content ourselves with barren tributes to the power of God, but at the time that we feel the burthen pressing upon us, confide in Him. We should receive every affliction as a challenge to try His faithfulness, as an invitation to trust His Love; and the more cheerless our prospect on earth believe that the brighter is our inheritance in Heaven.

True godliness, does not require us to deny that we are afflicted when God has laid His heavy hand upon us; nor does it require us to be insensible to pain. When we become christians, we do not cease to be men. The feelings of natural affection are not quenched but purified and regulated by faith. We are therefore, at liberty, like David, to number our afflictions; not that we may murmur against our Sovereign Judge or sink into despair, but that we may be reminded like David,

of the only sure consolation, and directed like him to the only true Refuge.

Among the first things, for the afflicted to consider is, *the disposition of mind which is connected with Divine relief.* It is not enough that we bear a burden; we must cast our burden upon the Lord. The temper befitting the burdened soul is *humble, meek, submissive and confiding.* God ever looks to the man that is humble and contrite, and that trembles at His word. The mere fact that we are miserable does not entitle us to the promised blessing; nor will suffering alone, constitute any claim to the provisions of God's goodness. This is a common error into which superficial readers of the promises are prone to fall and therefore, it is one against which it is especially important to guard. When we read in the Bible, that God's compassions fail not—that He does not willingly afflict the sons of men—that He delighteth not in the death of the sinner—we may be insensibly led to suppose that the circumstance that we are subjects of compassion—children of sorrow and withal wretched offenders—of itself—gives us some sort of claim to His blessing. But such an impression, will prove most delusive. The fact that we are miserable, only proves that we are guilty. It is far from being an evidence that hereafter we shall be happy. If misery alone were the object and measure of the Divine benevolence, then would the lost spirits in Hell be the principal recipients of the Almighty's bounty; for of all his creatures, they are the most completely miserable. It is evident then, that something more is necessary to share in God's promises, than simply to be miserable; that something must be done as well as endured; that we must not only have a burden, but cast it upon the Lord. There is not a word of comfort for those who are conscious of misery and are trying to bear it in their own strength—who are too proud or too unbelieving to cast their burden on the Lord—who trust in an arm of flesh rather than in the mighty God of Jacob—who betake themselves to the polluting cup of sensual pleasure to assuage their sorrows by stupefying their souls, or turn to a false philosophy for consolation rather than to

God their Maker, who giveth songs in the night. But, they who put their trust in the Lord for deliverance in humble submission to His Sovereign will, and in fervent gratitude for His gracious help, shall be sustained.

For we are *forbidden to assign any limit to the promised deliverance or to specify any channel through which the blessing is to flow.* All that is required is, that we shall cast our burden on the Lord. The miserable man is to be conceived of as bending under a heavy load, but what that burden—from whom derived—of what composed—is wholly immaterial. It may be the recent loss of a large estate—the treachery of a trusted friend—the death of a beloved child, whose expanding beauties filled your heart with natural gladness, and whose opening virtues warranted the hope of future excellence—a child that you had been fondly rearing up to be an ornament and a pillar in the house of God—perhaps such an one has been snatched away suddenly, when your hopes were highest and your love warmest, and perhaps the paleness of the heart's agony, is still upon your brow and the tears of parental sorrow still bedew your cheek—O! I cannot say to such, weep no more—I cannot say that you have not been bitterly tried and that you have not bitter trials now: but this I can say, cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.

It may be that you mourn what you imagine to be the darkening prospects of the community in which your lot has fallen, or the more extensive aboundings of iniquity in the land, the horrible desecrations of God's holy Sabbaths, the prevailing ignorance of Divine truth, the apparent apathy of good men, the increase of drunkenness, profaneness, dishonesty and debauchery—whatever be the source of your trouble or the nature of your burden, you are invited to cast it on the Lord.

But perhaps sorrows of a more personal kind are yours. The heart knoweth his own bitterness. Every man shall bear his own burden. Perhaps you are drooping under some strong temptation, and are to some extent acquainted with the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of your own heart; and are afraid that you will be

left to yourself, and fall into some scandalous sin. Be not high-minded but fear, watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip.*

Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Let us therefore, fear lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. These passages, in strict accordance with the uniform tenor of the word of God, show that we must diligently use the means of grace if we would escape the damnation of *Hell and attain the inheritance* of the saints in light. While it is the height of presumption, to look for Salvation while destitute of the fruits of the Spirit, yet we need not be alarmed by the slavish dread of eternal death, while giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure, and putting our trust in the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

Accordingly the deliverance, which we are taught to expect with most confidence, and to desire, with most earnestness, is not deliverance from any temporal evil, but from the intolerable burden of sin. Ask with reference to this object and ye shall receive. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth and he that seeketh findeth and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. For this gracious assurance; we have no less authority than that of Christ himself. If then our burden of sin be not taken off, it is because we will not. This is the solution of the mystery which the Master himself gives: Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life. This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. Our sin, which ought to drive us to Christ, is the very thing that keeps us from him. Thus

* Hebrews 2: 1; Heb. 3; 12: 13 and 4: 1.

He testifies of Himself: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The whole need not a Physician but they that are sick. No one who has passed through this bitter struggle, will be disposed to glory over another who may be even now involved in it. The strong man armed, will not leave his house without a furious contest. Satan will not surrender the victim of his wiles and the partner of his woes, without a desperate effort to retain him; and bitter is the pang and horrible the agony endured by the penitent when he exclaims,

“Oh! that my load of sin were gone.

Oh! that I could at last submit,

At Jesus feet to lay me down;

To lay my soul at Jesus feet.”

But *there is, in the Gospel, encouragement for those most deeply dejected and a hope full of immortality for the most despondent.* Let us therefore consider the certainty of Divine relief. We by no means affirm that the burden whatever it may be, shall be taken away, but that the soul shall be strengthened to bear it. The needful succour shall be administered and it shall be adapted to the burden. If the thing complained of be sin, it has been atoned for and it shall be remitted. For him bath God exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. But what if the burden be necessary either for our good or for His glory? What if it be sent to humble us—to bend our proud necks to his yoke? What if it be an indispensable part of our spiritual discipline? What if it be needed to make us meet for the inheritance of the Saints in light? What though He remove it not, yet shall He give us grace to bear it. Affliction is not always an evidence of the Divine displeasure, for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye then be without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. There was once a servant of God who had been distinguished by extraordinary marks of favor, and by revelations of peculiar glory. He had been caught up to the third Heavens whether in the body he knew not, and whether

out of the body he knew not, but there he was admitted to visions of God, and he beheld things that ought not to be spoken or that human tongue was incompetent to express. And yet after all this, God sent a messenger of Satan to buffet him. What is the explanation of this seeming mystery? Why did the favored Apostle find this apparent inconsistency in the Divine dealings toward him? We have the answer in his own words. "Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations." These opposite experiences of the same man at different times, were not merely consistent but related and dependent. It was *because* he had been so exalted that he must be depressed; because he had been so highly favored that he must be so deeply afflicted. And when he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him, did it depart? Was the burden removed—the thorn extracted—Satan's messenger dismissed? No! the appropriate answer is my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

The instance which we have just contemplated, of a servant of God, in some respects highly exalted, in others unusually afflicted, is by no means an exception or departure from the common course of His providential dispensations. Doubtless when afflicted, not less than when exalted, the Apostle accomplished the will of his Divine Master.

We may therefore gather from his experience and example that it is possible to glorify God in suffering. This is perhaps the most difficult service which man can render to God, and it is one which our mortal condition often makes it our duty to yield. It is comparatively easy to perform many *active duties*, because they are such as *reputation, interest and natural affection* dictate. Nothing is plainer than that we are bound to provide for the support and comfort of those dependent upon us; for the man that fails to do this is said to have denied the faith and to be worse than an infidel. We are likewise required to honor our father and mother, and he who can treat

* 2d Cor., 12: 7: 10.

with ingratitude those from whom he has derived his earthly being, is justly regarded as a monster and a miscreant. The Christian religion also renders the obligation of speaking the truth to our neighbor and of the strictest honesty in our pecuniary transactions imperative and universal. But we find men scrupulous in the performance of these duties, from no higher or better principles than the world acknowledges, and although they are necessary to the character of a christian, they do not alone constitute it, though no one who neglects them can be a christian, yet all who observe them are not christians. These ought ye to have done and not left the others undone. Give unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's and unto God the things which are God's. But it is the peculiar privilege of the people of God to bear what He sends upon them with religious resignation—to suffer joyfully the spoiling of their goods for His name's sake; and nothing—but His grace can enable them to do it. When the people of God are cut off from active service—when by some painful dispensation affecting their *health*, their *fortune* or their *families*, they are so disabled as no longer to be capable of performing those duties which habit had rendered familiar and the blessing of God delightful, they are too apt to conclude that they can be useful no more. But they may as truly glorify God when stretched upon a bed of sickness as when employed in active duty; and there is perhaps no more pleasing spectacle which God beholds on earth than that of a good man patiently resigned to His will when it appoints the loss of all things and humbly trusting in His mercy, when all His waves and His billows are going over him. They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever.*

* Ps. 125: 1 and 2.

THE REFUGE.

JESUS, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
Whi'e the billows near me roll,
While the tempest still is high;
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide,
Oh receive my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on thee;
Leave, O leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me:
All my trust on thee is stayed,
All my help from thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of thy wing.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
Boundless love in thee I find;
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is thy name,
I am all unrighteousness;
Vile and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.

Plenteous grace with thee is found,
Grace to pardon all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound,
Make and keep me pure within:
Thou of life the fountain art,
Freely let me take of thee;
Spring thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.

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