

Our Contributors.

A Love Message to the Sorrowing.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.

This world is full of unhappy people; and in too many cases this misery is of their own making. Discontent is a disease of the heart, and is not dependent on external conditions. Some of the most miserable people I am acquainted with are surrounded with external prosperities; and some of my most sunny-souled friends have not much property except Jesus Christ and a good conscience in possession, and heaven in reversion. A change of condition would be of small avail to thousands of unhappy people; what they need is a change of heart. The inward "Marah" must be sweetened.

But it is not the willfully unhappy that I have in mind when bringing this love-message, but those whose sorrows are not of their own causing—sorrows that come upon them by the permissive providence of God. If such words as "chasten" and "afflict" and "correct" mean anything in the Bible, they certainly mean that our Heavenly Father does sometimes send troubles upon his own beloved children. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten"—"whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth"; these are just as plain statements as words can make them. The Psalmist faced this tremendous truth when he said, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because thou didst it." How that fact alters the case! It is a blessed discovery we make when we discover God's hand in any experience of joy, or any experience of sorrow. God did it. Hold that truth right before your eyes, my suffering friend, until you can read it through your tears; and you will learn two things. First, you will learn that there was a divine purpose in your affliction, and there was no haphazard blunder in the stroke. How God's dealings with you were wise and kind you may not comprehend, any more than your child comprehends the inner works of a clock when it reads the figure "eight" on the clock's face and starts off for school. The mysteries of providence we are not able to unravel, and if we attempt it, the silencing answer comes back, "Be still and know that I am God!"

The other thing for you to learn is that the God who "did it" is not a blind tyrant, but a wise, tender, loving Father. That is the precious discovery; for we can bear almost anything if we are sure that love is behind it. Love never wrongs us. Love never robs us; never tortures us; never lays on us a needless load. The wondrous love that "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," can be trusted under the heaviest blow or beneath the darkest cloud. You may say that you are terribly puzzled about your Father's dealings with you; but that difficulty arises from the narrow and finite character of our minds. Here we only "know in part"—only a fragment of God's purposes—and then we go off and question the whole. We judge God childishly—finding fault with the woven tapestries of his providence before they are finished in his loom. Remember also that you are on the under-

side, the dark side, of the overhanging cloud of sorrow. While you may be weeping for a departed husband or a beloved child, he may be up on the heavenly side of that cloud and be gazing on its overpowering brightness. Wrestle with that puzzle as hard as you will, you must be content to know only in part, and the rest of it you "will know hereafter."

I am often impressed by the different ways in which different persons are affected by sorrows. Some seem to have no rallying power after a great affliction; the wound never heals. On the other hand, trials that consume some persons only kindle others into greater exertions. "This financial gale has carried away all your spars and swept your decks," I once wrote to an eminent Christian merchant after his bankruptcy, "but you have got enough grace stowed away in your hold to make you rich to all eternity." That brave servant of Christ repaired damages, resumed business, rallied his friends, and "at evening time it was light."

The afflictions which are sent of God or permitted by him are never intended for his children's destruction, but for their discipline. The Shepherd casts his flock into deep waters to wash them, not to drown them. "You will kill that bush if you put that knife into it so deep," said a gentleman to his gardener. "No, sir; I do this every year to keep it from running all to leaves; pruning brings the fruit." We pastors often find God's faithful ones bleeding under the knife, but afterward they yield the peaceable and precious fruits of righteousness and triumphant trust. Affliction is the costly school in which great graces are graduated.

How is it that a genuine Christian recuperates after stricken down by a severe adversity or a sharp affliction? Simply because his graces survive the shock. For one thing, his *faith* is not destroyed. When a ship is drifting toward a rocky coast, and cannot be kept off shore by her sails, she still has her anchor left; but if the cable snaps she is swept hopelessly on the rocks. So when your hold on God is gone. The most fatal wreck that can overtake you in times of sorrow is the wreck of faith. But if in the darkest hour you can trust God, though he slay, and firmly believe that he "chastens you for your profit," you are anchored to the very throne of love, and will come off conqueror. *Hope* also is another grace that survives. Some Christians never shine so brightly as in the midnight of sorrow. One might have thought that it was all over with Joseph when he was sent to prison, or with John when he was exiled to Patmos, or with John Bunyan when he was locked up in Bedford jail. But they were all put in the place where they could be most useful.

And that reminds me to say that your sorrows may be turned to the benefit of others. An eminent minister who was under a peculiarly severe trial said to me, "If I could not study and preach and work to the utmost, I should go crazy." Active occupation is both a tonic and soothing sedative to a troubled

spirit. Turn your sorrows outward into currents of sympathy and deeds of kindness to others, and they will become a stream of blessings. Working is better than weeping; and if you work on till the last morning breaks, you will read in that clear light the meaning of many of your sorrows.

A SERIOUS NEGLECT.

C. H. WETHEREBE.

It is strange that Christian people, with any considerable knowledge of the truths of the Bible, will continue to demand new proofs of the certainty that God answers prayers. The very fact that the Bible gives numerous instances in which it is shown that a neglect to ask wisdom of God in relation to certain matters resulted disastrously to the neglecters, is sufficient evidence that God surely does answer prayer. In many instances the Bible shows the special difference between one seeking to have God's wisdom and help in his undertakings, and one's independence in such seeking and obtaining. We see an example in the days of Joshua. In the ninth chapter of the book of Joshua is an account of a shrewd scheme which the Gideonites perpetrated upon the Israelites. That people, having heard what Joshua and his men did to the inhabitants of Jericho and Ai, were in great fear lest they also would meet a like fate, hence they devised a very adroit plan by which they succeeded in so deceiving Joshua and his princes as to secure a covenant, granting the Gideonites a perpetual protection against all enemies of the Israelites. Joshua and his men soon discovered that they had been craftily caught, but it was then too late to remedy the matter. What was the reason that Joshua and his princes were thus entrapped? Here it is: "And the men took of their provision, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." Those few words mean that Joshua, instead of asking counsel of the Lord as to what should be said and done when the Gideonites made their proposition, used his own wisdom, in connection with that of his princes, and hence a bad covenant was made. If Joshua had consulted God, asking Him to guide him wisely. He would have revealed the plot to Joshua, and then he would have exterminated the Gideonites, as God wanted him to do. One wonders that Joshua, so generally true to God, should have thus neglected to pray for safe guidance. I presume that he never forgot that serious mistake. Its results long plagued him and his people. One lesson is, we are not competent to fulfill all duty without God's wisdom and power. Another lesson is, take plenty of time to get God's mind before doing business for him.

ONE-THIRD.—As measured by counties and States, one-third of all the territory of the United States is now under the legal prohibition of the liquor traffic. From this it would seem that, after all, a good many people persist in believing that prohibition does not prohibit. Of course, no law will enforce itself; hence it still remains for the friends of prohibition to see to it vigorously that the prohibitory law is rigidly enforced. In this matter it is especially true that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," and success.

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