

turn to "dwell" and "no more be pulled up out of their land." These promises are even now in the process of fulfillment.

National restoration and rehabilitation for Israel is to be followed by national salvation. **"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his day Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is his name whereby he shall be called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."** Jeremiah 23:5-6; "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications: and **they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,** and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son . . ." Zechariah 12:9-10; **"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate:** and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, **until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."** Luke 13:35. "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery . . . that **blindness in part is happened to Israel, until** the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so **all Israel shall be saved:** as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant with them, when I shall take away their sins." Romans 11:25-27. For further information and inspiration read Ezekiel 36 and 37.

Here national Israel is given the hope of salvation through "a righteous Branch . . . THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS . . . me whom they have pierced . . . he that cometh in the name of the Lord . . . the Deliverer . . ." titles which rightfully belong to One alone, the Lord Jesus Christ. The promise "all Israel shall be saved," forecasts a national turning to and acceptance of Christ. So this rejected people, cut off from God by an act of divine judgment, will one day be grafted into fellowship and right relationship with Him Whom they have grieved, even by the grace of the Lord and Saviour.

The day of Israel's restoration as a nation has dawned and the work of rehabilitation is now going on. The day of salvation will as surely come.

(To be continued)

THE VALUE OF HARD PLACES

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Trials are valuable in revealing to us ourselves and showing us our insufficiencies and failures. They are God's great blasting processes in the work of spiritual excavation, which must precede the higher work of building up the life and character. We never know what graces and qualities we possess until the test comes, and then the faith and courage that glowed with such a flame in the moment of enthusiasm and inspiration finds its true level, and the soul is thrown back in its nothingness and helplessness upon Christ alone, to find in Him its all in all.

This was the meaning of Job's trials, to bring him to the end of self. This was the purpose of Job's afflictions, to slay his self-righteous confidence. This was the blessing which came from Peter's fall, that it broke his pride and self-sufficiency and sent him forth to lean upon his Lord and find his strength outside himself, in Christ alone. This is why the Lord still tries **you**, to convince you thoroughly that your estimate of your own

strength is utterly false and exaggerated, and to bring you to that place where it will be truly, **"Not I, but Christ liveth in me."**

Trials help us, next, to know the resources of God. It is only in difficult circumstances that we know His all-sufficiency. Israel must first stand still, and next, behold the salvation of God. So He tells them that the reason He led them through the wilderness, and exposed them to a situation where there were no natural supplies of any kind, was to teach them that He was adequate for every need and that **"man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."** He can become real to us, only up to the measure of our actual needs; and every difficult situation is just a vessel for Him to fill, and an occasion for Him to show Himself in His infinite wisdom, power and grace. The Apostle tells us that he was exposed to every sort of difficulty in order that the power of Christ might rest upon him according to his needs; another vessel for God to fill, and another therefore, he welcomed each new situation as occasion for Him to say, **"My grace is sufficient for thee."**

Beloved, are we thus proving and finding Him equal to all the conditions of our lives, and glorying in being able to tell the world that our God shall supply all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus?

Trials teach us faith. Trial is the fruitful soil of trust. Difficulties are the divine incentives which demand and develop our confidence in the divine faithfulness and love. The eagle can teach her young to fly only by tearing up her nest and hurling them out in mid-air where, thrown upon their own resources, they must either fly or fall. Then it is that they must learn the undeveloped power in their little pinions, and as they strike out upon the air in desperate struggles, they find the secret of a new life, and gradually learn to beat their way through the pathless firmament and fly upon the wings of the wind and in the face of the sun.

So God teaches His children to use the wings of faith by stirring up their nests, taking away their props, and flinging them often into an abyss of helplessness, where they must either sink or learn to trust and throw themselves upon the seeming void, to find that God is there beneath them, like the supporting wing which the eagle stretches forth beneath her faint and struggling brood.

It is so easy for us to lean upon the things that we can see, and feel that it is an entirely new experience for us to stand alone and walk with the unseen God as Peter walked on the sea. But it is the lesson we must learn if we are ever to dwell in the eternal realm, and faith shall be our only sense, and God shall be our all in all. Very gently does He suit the test to our feeble strength and lead us on as we are able for more and more. Are we thus trusting Him in life's hard places and growing stronger as we endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ?

Trials teach us to pray, and constrain us to be much alone with God. They drove Jacob to his knees at the fords of Jabbok. They taught David to find "the secret place of the most High." They made the life of Paul one ceaseless dependence upon the presence of his Lord, and they have inspired as well as sustained the divine communion which most of us have learned to prove as the supreme resource and solution of our lives. It is very humbling that it should be true that God must press His children to His breast by suffering and need; but it is, alas, too often the case that ease and

comfort lead us to at least a partial independence of Him; and our most spiritual seasons and times that have brought God most near to us have been the times of which we could say, "Thou hast known my soul in adversities."

Trials teach us to love; and when God wants to soften and refine our spirit and answer our prayers for a baptism of patience and love, He has to let the discipline of ill-treatment, injustice, and often the severest wrong compel us to go to Him for the charity that "beareth all things," and "endureth all things." Of course, we find out first that we have not the love adequate for the test, and as the Holy Spirit convicts us, He leads us to the source of strength; then as we gradually learn the humbling lesson, He leads us on from day to day in deeper testing and sweeter refining until we can thank Him for the fire that has brought us more of His Spirit's grace and His own overcoming love.

Our Supreme Resource

Trials teach us patience. It is a thorough school to learn to endure; and patience is the crowning grace of the Christian life. When it has its perfect work, then we become "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Often, therefore, the latest and the crowning lesson of the spiritual life is in the school of suffering.

Trials teach us courage. They take away the fear of suffering, the dread of pain, and enable us to put on his strength and courage, and rise above the power of fear until we welcome the conflict and stand with scars of conflict and victory as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

They make us patterns and object lessons for the help of others and for the glory of God, showing to the world what Christ can do for His children, and what Christ-lives can accomplish where others fail. God wants us to be a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and men, showing to them, in our example, that Christ can keep in every situation, and that the power of His grace is practical, supernatural, and adapted to every human life.

They fit us to help, by the lessons we have learned in our own experience. The callous and immature heart is little qualified to comfort, counsel, and bless a suffering world. God has to **burn in us** first what we are to give out to our fellows, and in the painful ordeal of a real experience, it qualifies us to comfort, to strengthen and encourage the souls to whom we can say, "I have been there, and I can tell you from the depth of my own experience **that my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.'**"

Trials make Christ real, just as real as the trouble is. They are the heavenly stamps by which God's messages and communications of grace and blessing are embossed and made to stand out in relief from our loves. The picture is first cut, and then burned into the card by the heavy stamp and the glowing flame, and then it becomes what we call relief work; and everybody can see it and feel it.

So God cuts and burns His messages into human lives until Christ becomes to us as real as the tears we have shed, the fears under which we have trembled, the sorrows that were ready to overwhelm us, and the difficulties which rose like mountains before us, so that the sweetest memories of our lives are the hard places which have become stepping-stones and monuments of divine and heavenly things.

They win for us eternal crowns, become occasions for victory and reward, a record and

(Continued on Page 8)