

Hindrances That Help

Rev. Frank G. Browne, D.D.

"But I would ye should understand brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12).

The things that happened unto Paul were, in brief, antagonism, arrest, imprisonment. It is interesting to notice how he regarded those things. It would not be unreasonable to expect him to complain of the suffering he endured, the rigor and injustice of his imprisonment, the irksomeness of restraint, uncertainty and foreboding as to the issue of his case, impatience to break away and to be abroad again in the prosecution of his great work. What did he say? How did he carry himself? He looked at his difficulties, but he was not intimidated or dismayed thereby. He saw how they could be turned to his advantage, and instead of despairing, he turned them. In a word, he made of his hindrances a help, and so he said: "The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel".

Though a prisoner, Paul continued to preach. His situation was not of his own choosing. Restraint was not congenial to his ardent nature and ill adapted to the promotion of his work as an Apostle. His mission as a herald of the Gospel seemed to require for him the largest liberty. Many men in Paul's place would have said: "We accept the situation." They would have succumbed to opposition. They would have imagined that because they themselves were tied up, the truth for which they stood was also tethered. Paul had a different way of looking at the adverse things that befell him, and so he said: "I indeed suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds", but with exultation he added: "The Word of God is not bound". He realized that though the feet of the herald might be fettered, his message would escape all restraint, take immortal wing and find its way to the uttermost parts of the earth.

To this period of arrest we owe a number of Paul's matchless Epistles. Here we can see at once that what seemed hindrance was in reality furtherance. When the Apostle could not visit the Churches he had founded, he commenced to write to them. The chain that held him started his pen. The Church of all ages will profit by his imprisonment, for it compelled him to commit the great doctrines of redemption to permanent form. The friends of Luther were dismayed when he suddenly disappeared. They thought that he had perished, and that the great movement of the Reformation would turn back on itself in confusion and disaster. But all the time he was in safe-keeping in Wartburg castle, and during enforced leisure he achieved one of the greatest triumphs of his life—he translated the Holy Scriptures into the language of the common people.

Paul's example was a wonder to the Godless. He says: "My bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places". The Revised Version says that his bonds in Christ were manifest throughout the whole Praetorian guard. The Praetorian guard was the flower of the Roman army. Their camp was near the palace of the emperor, and between camp and court there was daily intercourse. Paul saw much of these troops. Many of them

—one by one—were detailed to have the oversight of him. He wore a chain by which he was bound to his vigilant guard. He found an audience in that guard, and preached to him with the directness and fidelity with which Christ preached to Nicodemus. Thus, the Apostle won many to Christ. No wonder we read of "saints in Caesar's household". The work and example of Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, accounts for it all.

The manner in which Paul dealt with the formidable difficulties he encountered inspired the courage and zeal of his brethren. "Many of the brethren, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear" The community of Christians in Rome at that date must have watched with anxiety the fortunes of their leader. Their faith would falter and their courage fail, if they saw him timorous and hesitant in danger or weak and querulous in trouble. On the other hand, they caught inspiration from the fortitude with which he wore his prisoner's chain and maintained his fidelity to his Lord.

The report of the advantage he had taken of his hindrances afforded unspeakable comfort to his friends at a distance. For this purpose he wrote the Epistle to the Philippians. Epaphroditus was the bearer of the Letter. What Paul had not the time or space to pen, Epaphroditus could tell them, and their hearts would be thrilled. All this would happen just from the way Paul wore his prisoner's chain. Instead of weeping over it, or shamefacedly trying to conceal it, he made it the badge of his loyalty to Jesus Christ. Instead of swooning away in the face of hindrances, he whipped them into line with the sublime purpose of his life and his work.

Have you, like the glorious Apostle, learned to take advantage of your disadvantages, to make your hindrances your help?

—American Holiness Journal.

ADVICE TO MINISTERS . . .

Pray every night, and shave every morning. Keep your conscience clean; also your linen. "Let your light so shine," and also shine your shoes.

Press your advantages, your opportunities, and your trousers.

Brush the cobwebs from your brain and the dandruff from your collar.

"Be filled with the Spirit," but not with spirits.

A delinquent debt in a parish is like an addled egg in an omelet.

Be "poor in spirit," but not poor in vocabulary.

You cannot put fire into your sermons unless there is fire in your own heart.

It is better to lose a good fight than to win a bad one.

Call in the homes of people if you would have them call in the house of God.

Never allow temporal trivialities to displace eternal verities.

The approval of God is more to be desired than the patronage of a rich, but unscrupulous, pew-holder.

Always be content with what you have, but never with what you are.—Advance.

"A holy life would not be so rare or so difficult a thing if our devotions were not so short and hurried."

Go Deeper—How Deep?

By Rev. Seth C. Rees

"For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I. Cor. 2:10).

One of the most common things in the religious world is for men and women to become so grossly involved in this old world and its affairs in both thought and deed as to lose their interest in things eternal. Men give themselves so wholly to stocks, bonds, farms, merchandise, or politics as to lose the grace of God out of their heart. Women give themselves so wholly to society, fashion, and dress that they neglect worship.

A Christian man became so involved in mining that he drifted, and when his business began to fail, he had a troubled dream. In it a voice said, "Go deeper." He took it to mean that he should go deeper in His Christian experience, and so he gave himself to much prayer, finding great riches in his soul. Then again the voice said, "Go deeper." He said to his foreman, "We will sink a new shaft and go deeper." His foreman laughed at him, but he felt that God was leading him, so he went ahead. Instead of coal he found an abundance of iron. From the verge of bankruptcy, he leaped to the rank of a millionaire. In the spiritual realm God's message to the church today is, "Go deeper."

All of God's veins of wealth lie deeper than worldly wisdom and human philosophy. How difficult it is for us to give up our own philosophy. We may never have studied philosophy, but we have one of our own. Even if we are so ignorant that we do not know the meaning of the word, when we attempt to approach God, we have our own little system of philosophy. Paul said that the Greeks seek after wisdom, but that it was all foolishness with God. The deep things referred to here are not the speculations of human philosophy or the indications of human science.

A preacher went to Scotland and preached a very metaphysical sermon. Some one remarked to a Scottish lady, "How deep that sermon was!" She answered, "Nay, nay, just drumly" (that is, muddy).

So a lot of the deep teaching, so-called, which we have had in this country, even in the holiness ranks, is not deep, but muddy. Lots of preaching is more muddy than deep. Do not conclude, when you hear something you cannot understand, that it is necessarily because it is so deep or so wonderful. It is only muddy. The truth is so simple that a child can understand it. The human philosophy of one generation is often superseded by the philosophy of the next, but God's truth is as unchanged and as unchangeable as His nature. It will stand forever.

We must go deeper than the physical senses. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." There are things far deeper than the things we can see or hear. Much of the teaching of this materialistic age would try to hold us to the realm of sense and feeling, but we must go far deeper than we can see or even feel. All true science teaches us that there are things much greater than the material world. The unseen Force that controls and holds the world in its orbit must be greater than the world itself.

(Continued on Page 8)