

THE MINISTRY OF EVIL.

– *PSA. 130.* –

THE life of every human being has its lights and shadows, its seasons of joy and its depths of sorrow. These make up the warp and woof of experience, and the web of character that flows from the active loom of life will be fine and beautiful, or coarse and homely, according to the skill and carefulness with which the individual appropriates and weaves into it the threads of experience. In every life, under the present reign of sin and evil, the somber shades predominate; and to such an extent that the Scriptures aptly describe humanity in its present condition as a "groaning creation." Nor is the Christian exempt from these conditions that are upon the whole world; for "we also groan within ourselves, waiting for deliverance." – Rom. 8:22,23.

But while we are waiting for the deliverance, the daily experiences of life have a most important mission to us, and the manner in which we receive and use them should be a matter of deepest concern to us; for, according to the use we make of them, each day's prosperity or adversity and trial bears to us a blessing or a curse. Those experiences which we are accustomed to regard as prosperous often have in them subtle dangers. If wealth increase or friends multiply, how almost imperceptibly the heart finds its satisfaction in earthly things; but, on the other hand, when the keen edge of sorrow and disappointment are felt, when riches fail, and friends forsake, and enemies take up a reproach against us, the natural temptation is to despondency and despair.

Just here is an important part of the great battle of the Christian's life. He must fight the natural tendencies of the old nature and confidently claim and anticipate the victory in the strength of the great Captain of his salvation. He must not succumb to the flattering and deceptive influences of prosperity, nor faint under the burdens of adversity. He must not allow the trials of life to sour and harden his

disposition, to make him morose, or surly, or bitter, or unkind. Nor may he allow pride or ostentation or self-righteousness to grow and feed upon the temporal good things which the Lord's providence has granted him to test his faithfulness as a steward.

Sorrows indeed may, and often will, come in like a flood, but the Lord is our helper in all these things. The soul that has never known the discipline of sorrow and trouble has never yet learned the preciousness of the Lord's love and helpfulness. It is in seasons of overwhelming sorrow, when we draw near to the Lord, that he draws specially near to us. So the Psalmist found it, when, in deep affliction, he cried to the Lord and reasoned of his righteousness, saying, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications." Feeling his own shortcomings, and longing for full deliverance from every imperfection, and prophesying the bountiful provisions of the divine plan of salvation through Christ, he adds, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities [imputing them to us], O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared [reverenced]"

How blessed are such assurances when the soul is painfully conscious of its infirmities and of its inability to measure up to the perfect law of righteousness. When the heart is true and loyal, God does not mark our infirmities in a record against us. They are not imputed to us, but are freely forgiven through Christ in whose merit we trust and whose righteousness is our glorious dress, – arrayed in which, we may come with humble boldness, even into the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

If God thus ignores the infirmities of our flesh and receives and communes with us as new creatures in Christ, his children should also so regard one another, considering not, and charging not against each other, the infirmities of the flesh, which all humbly confess and by the grace of God strive daily to overcome. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The case is different, however, when the infirmities of the

flesh are cultivated, indulged and justified that the errors may be continued. Then, indeed, they are charged against us, and if we do not speedily "judge ourselves," the Lord will judge and chasten us. – 1 Cor. 11:31,32.

"I wait for the Lord," the Psalmist continues, "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." How necessary is this patient *waiting* for the Lord! In the midst of cares, perplexities, difficulties and infirmities we may remember that all the jarring discords of life are working together for good to them that love the Lord, to the called according to his purpose. But for the consummation of this purpose of God toward us we must "*wait*," and, while waiting patiently, endure hardness as good soldiers. "Trust in the Lord, and *wait patiently* [R1760 : page 20] for him, and he will bring it to pass." Time is an important element in all God's plans: we are not, therefore, to be disappointed when the test of endurance is applied while the blessings we crave tarry long. God took time to frame the world and to fit it for human habitation; time (6000 years) to give the world its necessary experience with evil; time (4000 years) to prepare for the advent of Christ as the world's Redeemer; time (2000 years) for the preparation of the Church to share in his glorious reign; and time must be allowed for the shaping and adjusting of the individual affairs of all his people. God has not forgotten when the answers to our prayers seem to tarry long. He who heeds the sparrow's fall and numbers the very hairs of our heads is not indifferent to the faintest call or the smallest necessity of his humblest child.

O, how blessed is the realization of such care over us.

"MORE THAN THEY THAT WAIT FOR THE MORNING."

"My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that wait for the Morning, – I say *more* than they that wait for the Morning."

The "brethren," are not in darkness respecting the dawn of the Millennial Morning, because taught there [R1760 : page 21] of by the Comforter (See 1 Thes. 5:4), and because to their eyes of faith the Day Star (the Day-bringer – Christ) has already appeared, and they rejoice in the inspired testimony that although "weeping may endure for the night [of sin's predominance] joy cometh in the Morning" of the great day of the Lord. And as the dawn of the new day, "the day of Christ," becomes more and more distinct, many besides the "brethren" can and do see signs that "the night is far spent and the day is at hand;" and by and by, notwithstanding the dark clouds and terrible storm of trouble that will temporarily hide the signs of morning from them, all the world – even the still sleeping nominal church – will awake to the fact that "The morn at last is breaking."

But many of those who are now watching for the Morning from the standpoint of Socialism, Nationalism, etc., are not waiting for the Lord – in fact, they do not know the Lord, his character and his Kingdom having been so sadly misrepresented by those who claimed to be his mouthpieces. They rejoice in the Morning, because it ushers in the golden age of human equality, general education, decreased toil, and increased privileges, comforts and luxuries. "God is not in all their thoughts," when they look for the Morning. Looking from a more or less selfish standpoint, and unguided by the divine revelation – for no man knoweth the mind of God save he who has the spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:11,12) – they fail to see the real object and chief characteristic of the coming age of blessing, and are merely championing the interests of the masses as against the present special advantages of the wealthy. They see not the greatest blessings of the dawning day; – that with earthly comforts and privileges it will bring the great blessing of a trial for everlasting life; – that it will be the world's Judgment Day, to determine who, under those favorable conditions, will develop characters in harmony with God's character.

But with the "brethren" it is different. While they appreciate the coming earthly blessings none the less, but the more intelligently, the

Lord, his character and the work which will be accomplished for men by the great Physician – as Prophet, Priest and King – these more weighty and more valuable considerations outweigh by far the earthly favors which will attend his Kingdom's rule. Yes, the "brethren" wait for the Lord himself, longing to see the King in his beauty – the fairest among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely. Yes, truly *our* souls "wait for the Lord *more* than they that wait for the Morning."

Then let all the Israel of God hope in the Lord (verses 7,8), for with the Lord there is mercy; mercy not only in dealing with our infirmities, but also in shielding from overwhelming trials and in granting grace to help in every time of need, – to those who abide in the Vine by faith and obedience. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."
