

## **STRENGTH AND PEACE**

**"The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." – Psa. 29:11**

AS WE look back over the years that have passed since first we learned to "know the joyful sound" of the true Gospel and consecrated ourselves fully to the Lord, we view with sorrow the imperfections of even our best efforts; and as looking forward we see the difficulties that seem to obstruct our onward course, we shall greatly need to reinforce our waning courage with the special promises of Divine grace to help in every time of need. Among others, we have the blessed assurance that "The Lord will give strength unto his people"; "Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." – Psa. 50:15.

As soldiers under our great Captain, we have enlisted in no uncertain struggle, unless our own faint-heartedness or unfaithfulness should make it so. We are fully supplied with the whole armor of God, which will amply protect us against the fiery darts of the Adversary, if only we accept it and carefully buckle it on. We have with us the constant presence of our Captain, so long as we are closely following his leading. Above the din of battle his inspiring voice may be heard saying, "Fear not, little flock; for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom"; "Be of good cheer; I have overcome!" (Luke 12:32; John 16:33.) If we are weak and incline to faint-heartedness, we have only to remember the blessed promise, "The Lord will give strength unto his people"; and by our faithfulness we shall glorify God, who will deliver us from all our foes, both seen and unseen.

Like all others, the Lord's people need fortitude and patience, else they might soon become discouraged in the conflict with the world, the flesh, and the Adversary. They need strength; they need encouragement. In the text under consideration, the

word *strength* means, in large measure, *courage*. The Lord will give *courage* to his people. He encourages us in a variety of ways; he encourages us through each other, as we build one another up in the most holy faith.

## **MILK FOR BABES – STRONG MEAT FOR THOSE MORE DEVELOPED**

We, nevertheless, look to the individual, innate strength and to its importance. "Be of good courage, and he will strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord." (Psa. 31:24.) We are assured that we shall be strengthened in the "*inner man*" through the Spirit of the Lord. None have this particular kind of strength, that of the "inner man," except those who have become New Creatures in Christ, to whom "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." (2 Cor. 5:17.) With this particular Spirit-begotten class all of the Lord's dealings are intended to develop character.

"Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby," and become strong. (1 Pet. 2:2.) This milk of the Word the Lord gives at first to his children, that the new nature may grow thereby and become able to digest stronger food and thus develop in character-likeness to our Lord. To all his own he has provided nourishment – *milk* for babes, *strong meat* for those more developed. (Heb. 5:12-14.) And any who would be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might (courageous) will avail himself of the Divine provision.

Our *faith*, however, is the basis of both our *strength* and our *peace*. No matter how fiercely the storms of life may assail us, we must never let go of our *anchor* and **[R4818 : page 150]** allow ourselves to drift; but always remember that "The foundation of God standeth sure"; that "His truth is our shield and buckler"; that "What he has promised he is able also to perform," notwithstanding our human imperfections and frailties; that, covering these, we have the imputed righteousness of Christ, our Surety and Advocate; that "The Father himself loveth us," and that "He knoweth our frame and

remembereth that we are dust," and so has compassion for the sons of his love and is very pitiful and of tender mercy. (2 Tim. 2:19; Psa. 91:4; Rom. 4:21; John 16:27; Psa. 103:14.) Indeed, "What more *could* he say than to us he hath said" to assure our faith and to steady and strengthen our hearts to patient endurance in the midst of the trials and conflicts in the narrow way of sacrifice?

With abounding compassion and tenderness our Lord, on the last night of his earthly life, bestowed upon his beloved disciples his parting blessing, his legacy of *peace*. It was the richest legacy he had to bequeath, and was of priceless value. It was the promise of that tranquility of soul, that rest and ease of mind which he himself possessed – the *peace of God*. It was the same peace which the Father has always enjoyed, even in the midst of all the commotion which the permission of evil has brought about; but it was not derived from the same source. In Jehovah, this peace is self-centered, because he realizes *in himself* omnipotence and Infinite wisdom; while the peace of Christ was centered, not in *himself*, but in *God*, through faith in *his* wisdom, power and grace. So also, if we would have the *peace of God*, the peace of Christ ("my peace"), it must, like his, be centered in God, by faith.

The peace promised is not the short-lived peace of the world, which is sometimes enjoyed for a little season; but "my peace," the peace of God which Christ himself by faith enjoyed, who, "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor" (2 Cor. 8:9); who lost friend after friend, and in his last hour was forsaken by all of the few that remained – the peace that endured through loss, persecution, scorn and contempt, and even amidst the agonies of the cross. This peace is something which none [**R4818 : page 151**] of the vicissitudes of this life can destroy and which no enemy can wrest from us.

### **"MARVEL NOT IF THE WORLD HATE YOU"**

"There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." (Isa. 48:22.)  
"The wicked are like the troubled sea, continually casting up mire and

dirt." Their hearts are not in accord with peace and righteousness, but are filled with selfishness. The wicked are self-seeking and grasping; filled with anger if they cannot always get what they want; with malice if they see some one enjoying what they cannot have. All of these things indicate a lack of peace.

To the extent that any of the Lord's people have any of these evil propensities they cannot have the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" – which passeth all description. It is a rest of heart by faith. In this peace lies a satisfaction for all the various qualities of the mind; in proportion as the mind develops the ambition of pleasing the Lord, of communicating to others the knowledge of the Truth and the blessed opportunity of salvation, it becomes our ambition to do good, instead of evil. So ambition, being turned into a right line, the peace of God, which none can comprehend save those who possess it, comes to the mind and heart.

It is not an outward peace, however, for the Lord's people, individually and collectively, have most distressing experiences. The Church has always been persecuted, as Jesus forewarned us: "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you"; "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." – I John 3:13; John 15:19.

### **"IN THE WORLD YE SHALL HAVE TRIBULATION"**

The peace promised is not such as the world can always recognize and appreciate, for the possessor of it, like the Lord and the Apostles and Prophets, may have a stormy pathway. *They* did not have peace *outwardly*. They were beset, harassed on every hand; they were persecuted and obliged to flee from place to place; some of the saints of old were stoned to death; some were sawn asunder. Yet the peace of God, abounding in their hearts, enabled them to endure all these trials joyfully. Indeed, that it must be so with all the faithful until all the purposes of God in the permission of evil are accomplished, we

are distinctly forewarned, but with the assurance that through all the storms of life this peace shall abide – "In the world ye shall have *tribulation*," but "in me ye shall have *peace*." – John 16:33.

This promise, that God will give peace to his people, seems to apply only to a peace of heart. Our Lord and the Apostles possessed it to such an extent that they enjoyed themselves much more than did their enemies. While Paul and Silas were in prison they sang praises to God, instead of berating the governments and threatening what would be done to them; instead of butting their heads against the bars and saying, "God does not care for us; we will go about our own business, hereafter." So with us. In proportion as we see matters from the Divine viewpoint and appreciate the precious promises and let them inspire our hearts, we shall rejoice in those promises, and our hearts will be blessed. Even if we have trials and difficulties that we are not able to surmount, if these are working out for us the fruits and graces of the Spirit, we may rejoice and give thanks for these evidences of God's love.

### **"MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU"**

We see that the peace of God is compatible with great commotion and with sorrow and pain of various kinds; for it is not dependent upon outward circumstances, but upon a proper balancing of the mind and the condition of a perfect heart. Such peace – the peace of God – was enjoyed by our Lord Jesus in the midst of all the turmoil and confusion of his eventful earthly life. And this brings us to the consideration of our Lord's last legacy to his disciples, when he was about to leave the world, as expressed in his own words: "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth [in stinted measure or in perishable quality], give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" – John 14:27.

The promise in our text – "The Lord will bless his people with peace" – evidently belongs to this Age, when all creation groans and travails in pain. (Rom. 8:22.) When the Millennial Age shall have been

ushered in, there will be prevailing conditions of peace and thus he will give peace to all people.

Let us, then, have for our watchword, "LOYALTY" to God and to the principles of righteousness; and let each of us write upon his heart the gracious promise – "The Lord will give *strength* unto his people." Let us be faithfully "his people," and let us earnestly desire and faithfully use the *strength* promised. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it"; "He is faithful that promised." – I Thess. 5:24; Heb. 10:23.

So then, if you lack the strength or the peace promised, the fault is *yours*, not *God's*. Either you have not the interests of his service closely enough at heart, or else you do not make use of the strength he provides. "The Lord will give *strength unto his people* (his trusting, faithful servants, those who are using to his praise the talents consecrated to their Master, however many or few those talents may be); the Lord will bless his people with peace."

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