

"LIGHT AFFLICTIONS" HERE – "GLORY TO FOLLOW"

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our body." – 2 Corinthians 4:8-10.

THE Apostle Paul is here addressing the Church at Corinth, and in the larger sense addressing the entire Church of the Gospel Age. He is apparently describing to some extent the experiences of himself and those who were with him in his missionary labors. He traveled from place to place, but not as our pilgrim brethren now do; for sometimes he spent an entire year, sometimes more than a year, in one city. Nevertheless, he was a traveler, going about where other missionaries of the Lord had not gone, addressing the Jews and whoever else might give evidence of having a hearing ear. On these tours he took with him assistants. We are therefore to consider that his words here referred not only to the Apostles (for he was the only Apostle of the company), but also to the others with him; and that this Epistle, as are all the inspired writings, was designed by the Lord for the instruction and benefit of all the saints throughout the Christian Dispensation.

The Apostle's assistants were general ministers of the Lord, as are all God's children in proportion as they do a work of ministry. His words would seemingly be addressed, then, to all who are engaged in the Lord's service. In this Epistle he points out that there are differences in the services rendered – "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" – and also differences in the experiences of the various members of the Body of Christ. He says that some of them had been the objects of persecution and that others had shared in those persecutions by suffering with those so

persecuted, indicating that the Lord recognizes and appreciates this association with those in distress, if there be such association.

This thought is brought out also in St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. (Chapter 10:32-34.) If those not so actively engaged in the service are faithfully doing all that their hands find to do, the Lord is as appreciative of it as He is of those who because of greater ability or physical strength or opportunities are able to accomplish more – each doing to the extent of his opportunity the work of the Lord.

The Apostle said of himself and his companions, and of all those laboring faithfully in the service of the Master, "We are troubled on every side." There are many troubles that are common to the whole human family – lack of employment, sickness, death, poverty, etc. There are multitudinous troubles which come to the world; and of course the Apostle and his companions were subject to these difficulties like other men. To many these trials of life bring distress. But while St. Paul and those with him had their ailments and difficulties, their persecutions and trials, they also had the knowledge of the Truth and the Lord's sustaining grace; and they were enlisted in the army of the King of kings. They were not distressed by their troubles, but were trusting in the Lord's precious promises that these should all work out for their good.

"AS HE WAS, SO ARE WE, IN THIS WORLD"

And so we are not to allow the troubles of life to distress us as they distress other people. We have something that others do not have – the Lord's assurance that everything in our lives shall be a bearer of blessing to us if we are faithful. This enables us to rejoice in tribulation, if we really believe this promise of our Father's Word. There are other troubles that come to the Lord's people, but do not come to the world. The world is more or less in opposition to those who are engaged in publicly preaching the Truth and to those who are associated **[R5671 : page 120]** with them. There is

a battle on between right and wrong, light and darkness. The world, being attached to their darkness, feel an enmity toward the light, a hatred of it; and they are often disposed to give special trouble to those who are the Lord's representatives in a particular capacity.

Occasionally we find worldly persons who are of good heart and kind intention and who are desirous of helping on a good work; but these are exceptions. Our strongest opposition, however, comes generally, as did that of the Master, from those who are our brethren, though many of them are only nominally so. Then we have the Adversary particularly against us. It is true that the whole world have the oppositions of the Adversary, but he is especially active against those engaged in the public service of the Lord. Satan seems to bring before these special temptations, and it is not surprising that they should be the particular objects of his rage and of his wiles. But those who are thus engaged in God's service have special blessings at His hands, and extra fortifications. So while we may be sure that those in the public ministry have more troubles from the Adversary, they are also given more grace to cope with them.

OUR DEATH THE GATEWAY TO LIFE

"We are perplexed, but not in despair," says St. Paul. The Apostle and his company were not the only ones who have been at a loss to know just what to do. The whole world have been perplexed, and are particularly so today. The general anxious uncertainty of our day results in a large measure, it would seem, from the nerve-racking experiences of the present time. If people knew the right thing to do in respect to their business, their homes and their affairs in general, they would not be so full of doubt and bewilderment. But no one is wise enough to get along without some perplexity; and present conditions in the world are causing much distress and also anxious foreboding for the near future. Those who are engaged in the work of the Lord have some

perplexity. But the anxiety or uncertainty of the Lord's people should never go to the length of despair. Those who are of the world, getting out of work and being in various difficulties, become very despondent. Frequently we hear of suicides. Things look very dark to people who take their own life.

It may yet be true of the Lord's people that things [R5671 : page 121] will look very dark; but they are not in despair, and will not be in despair whatever may come; for the Lord has said that He will never leave us nor forsake us. This gracious promise should give us a hope sure and steadfast. Our anchor of hope should hold. Our position, therefore, is very different from that of the world, who have no particular hope. The world have no solid anchor, no precious promises to hold them fast. We know that if the worst comes to the worst, if we should even die of starvation, our hope lies beyond the Veil, beyond death. Therefore God's saints of today look upon death as the gateway by which to enter into fulness of life, into a realization of all our hopes and joys. If, therefore, there is despair, it would prove that our anchorage has been cut loose. Whoever would find that he is in despair would find that he is letting go his faith, and should immediately seek counsel from the Word of God and from others strong in faith, and should go to the Lord in frequent and earnest prayer, assured that if faith is restored despair will go.

"I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE"

"We are persecuted, but not forsaken." There are persecutions of certain kinds that come to those in the world. Sometimes their neighbors have a grudge against them, and they thus are more or less persecuted. But they have no effective means of dealing with such a matter and nothing to comfort them. Sometimes they give as good as they get. But in the case of one of the Lord's children it is very different. When we feel that justice calls for retaliation, then we should remember that it is not ours to retaliate, to return evil

for evil. The Lord has told us that we should leave all matters relating to justice in His hands. "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." He does say that we are to run away from persecutions; therefore we are not to condemn those who run away as following a wrong course. We are told by the Master, "If they persecute you in one city, flee to another." So if a child of God is persecuted in one neighborhood and he can get away to another neighborhood, it would be better to go.

But though persecuted for righteousness' sake, the Lord's people are not forsaken. The world and those possessing the world's spirit may harass and buffet them, but the Lord does not forsake them. When persecutions come to us, however, we are to inquire, "Are these oppositions and persecutions coming to me on account of my loyalty to the Lord, or is it that there is something in my disposition which causes them?" If the latter is the case, we should diligently endeavor to rectify our fault. If, on the other hand, we find by careful scrutiny of ourselves and our conduct that we have been doing our best, our very best, and that the persecutions are coming to us on this account, then we are to rejoice in the persecution.

We are "cast down, but not destroyed." This expression shows that while the Apostle and his companions did not suffer despair, did not feel forsaken, they sometimes felt a heaviness of spirit. This heaviness of spirit, or feeling of loneliness and depression, is natural at times to all mankind under the adverse conditions prevailing in the world. The weight of this casting down may be accentuated to some extent by the condition of the physical health. Those who are weak or in pain physically are apt to feel any mental pressure or trouble. This is all to be fought against in the Christian; for we know that our afflictions and disabilities are something outside and not of the Lord, except in the sense that He permits them for our development, for our future work in the Kingdom. We are therefore to be of good courage. If the Lord permits us to

have trouble, we are to exercise fortitude, to patiently endure, and not to allow it to destroy our faith or our happiness or our loyalty of spirit to Him to whom we have vowed allegiance.

We are to put up with whatever our Father permits, in sweetness of temper, and to say to ourselves, "This may be a good lesson to me. Perhaps these cast-down feelings, this feeling of desolation, may help me to sympathize more with others." The poet has truly said:

"Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary."

So let us see to it that we do not allow this feeling of depression to conquer us and to destroy our faith and energy; but rather, looking to the Lord for assisting grace, and claiming His precious promises, we are to rise above the difficulty and press bravely onward.

OUR "COVENANT BY SACRIFICE"

We are "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." The Apostle thus declares that the Lord's people, in proportion as they are faithful in His service, have a likeness to the Lord in their service, in their death. Our Lord's experience in the narrow way was three and a half years of dying. He was daily laying down His life – surrendering His life. He was an Example to us of how we should surrender our lives. He laid down His life, not in the service of the world, but of the Lord's professed people. While the merit of His sacrificed life was to be used of the Lord for the life of the world, yet He laid it down in the direct service of His Jewish brethren.

The Hebrew people were the people of God. Our Lord spent His life especially with those who were truly desirous of pleasing God and knowing His will, whether found amongst the rich and

influential or amongst the poor and lowly. Jesus welcomed publicans and sinners, and gave His life for them. He knew that among this humble class He would find the greater proportion of true wheat. He was laying down His life during all the three and a half years of His earthly ministry, and merely completed this work at Calvary.

And so it is with all of the Lord's true people. They have made "a covenant by sacrifice." They have consecrated, dedicated their lives to the Lord and His service; and as Jesus their Master laid down His life in doing good, in proclaiming the Truth then due, so they are to lay down their lives in the same manner, whether the time of their ministry be three and a half years or twenty years or whatever it may be – until the Father's good time shall come for their deliverance. They will be in full harmony with the Lord and will gladly have fellowship in the sufferings of their great Head – and properly so; for they are prospective members of His Body. Thus all of these members are continually bearing about in the body the dying of their Lord. They are dying daily as He died, "laying down their lives."

"THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY"

This is all the work of the New Creature. The old creature is merely compelled to follow in the way of the New Creature, and this setting aside of the will of the flesh is the basic feature of our dying. When our dying has been completed, our lives faithfully laid down, it will bring us to that condition where we shall hear the Master's "Well done!"

St. Paul also says that "the life of Jesus" is to be "made manifest in our body." We understand him here to be referring to the human body. The New Creature **[R5672 : page 122]** owns this body. With the people of the world there are not two personalities, but merely the one creature. This duality of personality is applicable only to those who have been begotten of the Holy Spirit.

The old body is suffering; but the New Creature rejoices, glad to be in the service – gives thanks to God day by day respecting its tribulations, knowing that these are working out "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Thus the life of Jesus is manifested through us to the world, and to the brethren. The world cannot understand. They say, "If I were in your place, in such a trial, I would be miserable. But you are rejoicing!" So they cannot understand. But we have a newness of life that the world cannot appreciate. All who can appreciate this should daily grow in grace and knowledge. We should show forth more and more of the Lord's life in our characters and in our bodies. Thus we shall be manifesting more and still more of the Lord's Spirit, doing more of the Lord's work, becoming more like Jesus – all of which will prepare us for the glory beyond, when the New Creature shall be completed, when all the perfections and glories of the new nature will be ours.

