Printed Pamphlets

The Walk with God

Genesis 5:24

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how entirely it lifts the soul above and outside all mere human actings or notions; the Lord be praised for His reserve! If it had been possible for man to have made the foundation of God unstable, verily he would have applied himself with energy to accomplish it; but this is outside his reach, "the *firm* foundation of God."

May every timid, tried heart take courage by this comforting word, and turn away their eyes from all the confusion and vain babblings of men, who as to the truth have *missed the mark*.

The other word to which we would call attention, is also filled with the deepest comfort and consolation; if "nevertheless the firm foundation of God stands," has its own soothing voice in the almost disintegrated state of the assembly; so "notwithstanding the Lord stood with me," is a word of very real cheer to every faithful and loyal heart, who may be in their measure, deserted and abandoned for Christ and His truth's sake.

It was Paul's especial lot, (and shall I say glory?) that in firm upholding and maintenance of the truth, he was abandoned, was left alone: "all forsook me." What a trial of his loyalty and faith! Such must ever be looked for in the times here described by the Holy Ghost; and indeed, we might truthfully say, that as to our *service,* at all times we must be contented and ready to go on in it *alone with God,* most deeply thankful for any true-hearted, real fellowship, but so cast on God as to go on all the same if it be not accorded to us -- alone, and yet not alone. But the apostle's position was of course special and peculiar. He was abandoned by the mass of Christians, as well as deserted by his companions in service; he names specially Demas, whose case was evidently felt by the apostle; the love of the age had carried him away in its rising tide -- alas, how many Demas's there are! It is also worthy of note that it is in no way even implied that Demas had ceased to be a Christian, but he had no heart to share with the suffering apostle, the sorrows, trials, afflictions and reproach connected with the gospel. It is well to remember that this is the day of the afflictions of the glad tidings, and those who will share them must be prepared to suffer evil, even as the apostle himself, who endured it *unto bonds*.

But the circumstances in which the apostle found he was in here for the truth's sake, only served to bring out fully what a reserve there was for him in the Lord Himself, and hence he tells us that in that dark and lonely moment, "The Lord *stood* with me and *strengthened* me," &c.; observe the beautiful moral order of these words, not "strengthened me and stood with me," but "stood with me and strengthened me"; and there is a reality conveyed by this order that is very blessed, for it puts first and in the foreground, the fact of the Lord's *company* and *presence* with His faithful servant in the moment of his desertion by all. Oh, what a reality is the company of the blessed Lord! and precious and blessed as that is at all times, how doubly so, when all men forsook him! What a commendation of His beloved servant's fidelity to His master's interests! What a solace to his heart at such a moment!

"The Lord stood with me." Verily, this was enough; alone, and yet not alone; and indeed, we might say never so little alone as in this moment. It has been said by another, and most truly too, that the great effect or result of the Lord's presence with us is, that our greatest joys and sorrows are both alike forgotten in His; He is above all, supreme for time and eternity.

This company of the Master accorded to His servant, was not an isolated case, indeed, we are assured on the contrary, that the faithful, suffering apostle enjoyed it and knew it continually; but the mind recurs at once to Acts 23:11, and 27:23-25, where most blessed instances of a similar kind are recorded; in the former we read, "The night following, the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul"; in the latter, the apostle himself assures the affrighted company on the ship in these comforting words,

> For there stood by me this night an angel of God whose I am and whom I serve saying, Fear not, Paul; . . . Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me.

And here I might say, that allowing all the speciality that is connected with the beloved apostle of the Gentiles and his mission, still assuredly the presence of the Lord, the cheer of His company, is the portion of all His faithful servants till traveling days are done. May we know it so as to prize it, is the earnest desire of the heart.

The words which have supplied us with our present meditation, are just those calculated by grace to steady the heart at the present moment; wherever the eye rests, nothing can be seen to afford any brightness or cheer as far as this scene is concerned; disruption and corruption abound on every side; the restless foe, the watchful enemy would profit by these consequences of his own work, to seduce, or at least dishearten: he would insinuate, indeed he has with some succeeded, that all is gone, all corporate testimony is over, that we have come to, what? Well, very like "atoms at last"! It is to be feared that this wile of the devil has found *willing victims* in some cases; it is painfully instructive to see how readily we can be allured or persuaded into *what we should like*. There is but little hope for all such; but there are others, a different class entirely, timid, yet real hearts; to all such I am persuaded God's reserves will be a stay and cheer. May He abundantly bless His own words to such. "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands." "Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me."

May hearts true to Him, find their resources in His reserves, in these dark days, as they wait in patience to see His face and hear His voice.

The Walk with God

Genesis 5:24

The first thing needful, in order to walk with God, is to have the conscience perfectly at rest; the blood of Christ alone can secure this to us. If the conscience is not at rest, having no sense of being so perfectly purged that it is fit for the presence

of God, there is no liberty in respect to it; and all things are regarded in the light of its felt need, and as yet, unsatisfied demands. A conscience enlightened by the word of life will not rest, and cannot rest, short of full and uncondemning quietness in the presence of God, where He dwells. How blessedly perfect, then, must that work be, which, on the one hand, has so perfectly glorified God, down to the very lowest depths of humiliation and judgment, where the eternal Son of the Father, who humbled Himself to become a man, went and lay for us, and has, on the other hand, so divinely and completely settled the question of sin, in its guilt and power, as regards our consciences, that the believer in him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, is both relieved and delivered in regard to his conscience and blessed up to the full height of that glory where Christ is, in whose once marred, but most blessed face, the whole glory of God now shines.

My hearers, have you got such a conscience before God? -- until you have, it is vain to speak of other things.

Allow me to show you, as far as I am able, and with God's help, how this blessed redemption-work of the Lord Jesus thus acts upon the conscience. As born of the first Adam, every man by nature is lost and guilty; the first, or "lost," is the common estate of all men alike as born into this world. The other "guilty," relates to conduct or acts; and hence, each man has his own guilt, or sins, to account for to God. Now, this twofold pressure on the conscience, is blessedly met by the death of Christ. Scripture declares that "the worshipers *once purged* should have had no more conscience of sins" (Heb. 10:2). Observe carefully the expression, "conscience of sins;" what does it mean? Why, simply, that there is nothing between me and God; that God has no controversy with me in respect of sins; they are, for me, completely put away, and my conscience is perfectly purged. Now, mark, *consciousness of sin,* which means that I know I have an evil nature in me, is a different thing altogether from "no more conscience of *sins*." Knowing that I have an evil nature in me, need not, and ought not, to give me a bad conscience. Yielding to that evil nature, indulging it, or giving way to it, will surely soil my conscience, and make it bad *practically,* so that I cannot stand against the wiles of the devil.

But I can well suppose some one of my hearers to whom all this is quite new (and it is for such I speak), earnestly asking this question, "How can I ever get that liberty from this evil nature, which I am conscious is in me, and under the dominion of which, I fear, I really am at this moment?" Well, there are few questions more important; and if the answer is not known in the soul, its history is the monotonous circle of self, self, self: the blessed fact is, that not only are the sins of the believer all put away, that his conscience may be perfectly purged, so that there should be nothing between him and God; but his old man, has been crucified with Christ on the cross; and God does not regard the believer now as in that old man at all, but in Christ risen from the dead, in whose death that old man was judged and condemned:

> Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6). For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3).

Now I quite admit there is a difference in the way in which these truths reach the conscience, and I will endeavor to point it out here.

With respect to my first, namely, the question of my sins, believing on the Son of God, I have the testimony of God in the word, to my conscience, that all my sins are forgiven, never to be remembered any more. This is not in any sense *feeling* or *experience*. No doubt such will flow from it, and the more so in proportion as faith is simple; but in no sense do I believe because I experience or feel it; but, on the contrary, I feel it as I believe it. The pillows of my faith are the atoning death of the Son of God on the one side, and the blessed witness of the Holy Ghost on the other. "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us . . . their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:15, 17).

There are three great objects on which the eye of faith rests.

1st. The cross, and the garden with its new sepulcher, hewn out of the rock, wherein the blessed One was laid, and out of which He was raised and glorified.

2nd. The Father's throne in the heavens, on which He who bore my sins is now seated -- soon to be on His own throne.

And 3rd. The blessed witness of the Holy Ghost, the record, the testimony of the living God, which endureth for ever.

With regard to the other truth, namely, how we are delivered from the dominion of sin; experience has every place, that is, it has to be learned by experience; and this process leads to discovering these three things: --

1st. That in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwells no good thing.

2nd. That there is in us a *new nature* as well as (yet quite distinct from) the old.

3rd. That, notwithstanding this, the old is too strong for us, and deliverance from it is looked for outside of self altogether, and from another: this issues in, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord"; it is the song of the prisoner bird, now liberated -- it is its first note as it flies; it is not its highest nor its every note; it is the starting-post of the soul, not its goal or prize. Perhaps many souls have recently found this new liberty and life -- if so, the Lord be praised; but do not, dear friends, allow yourselves to suppose for a moment that it is anything more than the normal state of a Christian. It is not, I suppose, to be wondered at that those who considered it a necessary thing to be tied and bound with the chain of their sins for so many years, should regard their newly found liberty (if they have found it) as something wonderfully beyond what any one else had ever known -- and the highest and greatest good.

There is one further point, and when I have touched on

it, I feel I shall have cleared the way for my subject.

Have you ever looked at two scriptures to which I shall now allude, namely, Rom. 6:9-11,

> Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now what does that mean? Why, simply this, that faith accepts this wondrous fact, that our old man is crucified with Christ, and the believer accordingly reckons himself to be dead. The Lord give us thus simply by faith to keep our reckonings with God.

The other scripture is 2 Cor. 4:10: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

What does this mean? Why this, simply, that Paul constantly applied the cross, the dying of Jesus, to himself, so as to keep in the silence of death, sin, that was in him. Oh, how one's soul ought to adore in the presence of such wondrous liberty and power, secured through the precious death of Him who was God over all blessed for evermore. This, then, is the realization of faith, as the other is the recognition of faith. The Lord give us to be established in these things, that we may be free to hear.

That we may hear His voice we must be in possession of both liberty and rest. If you have not repose, you cannot give him an audience. I do not mean to deny for a moment that there is a *previous* exercise connected with the silencing of nature, the fading of other sounds which were wont to fill the ear of the soul; but this is the setting aside of what intrudes, in order that the disengaged ear may be turned without distraction to Him instead of a morbid heart that wastes a weary, restless life away by feeding on itself.

There is a repose in one who hears well, that is very blessed to witness -- there was something of it at least in Mary, when she sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word. Her very attitude was restful; she sat and heard.

I do not deny the *activity* of life, either in its earnestness to obtain, or its readiness to surrender; but I contend it ought to be *restful* activity -- an activity which is kept alive and sustained by an object outside itself.

> "As ground, when parched with summer heat,
> Gladly drinks in the welcome shower
> So would we, listening at His feet,
> Receive His words, and feel His power."

I shall here note one or two results of hearing in this spirit.

First, there is abstractedness of soul. Other sounds which otherwise might influence, now fail to interest. The ear is turned to catch every note of the voice of the charmer; and, oh, what a voice that is! His enemies, even, declared that never man spake like Him.

The bride (when the day of union has not as yet dawned, and whose affection is restless) is spell-bound as she listens in the twilight, and announces with rapture "the voice of my beloved," . . . "my beloved spake" -- her whole soul turns to hear what the bridegroom of her heart had to say.

Next to abstraction is *absorption,* entire occupation of soul; the ear, not only bent to hear, but filled with the sound of His voice; and that, too, not as one who is apart from me, but One to whom I am united.

The eye of the soul is exercised as well as the ear: the voice of the object delights and engages the ear; the Person Himself delights the eye, the vision of the soul. It is a wonderful thing to know that the heavens are opened to the faith of a believer now, and Jesus in glory, pointed out by the indwelling Holy Ghost, to the one who looks up with steadfast gaze. Oh it is everything to have the eye on the object! What distinguishes Christianity from what went before it is an object *outside* of us, and power in us, Jesus in the glory of God, and the Holy Ghost, who dwells in us.

If the eye of the soul is turned in, the object is not seen. Failure will necessitate, but self-judgment will clear the way out of it; so that the object may again fill the eye, self-judgment will hinder self-occupation, and promote earnestness and purpose of heart. Self-judgment is not an act once for all performed, but a continuous habit of soul. Oh, what a blessed sight for faith, that transcendent Person, that glorified Man, that mighty Savior! Well may we pray,

> "O fix our earnest *gaze*
> So wholly, Lord, on Thee."

Let me again impress upon you the fact that we do not behold the Savior in glory, as apart from Him, but as those who are united to Him, one with Him. How very blessed to know I am one with my object! I shall only touch upon one or two consequences of beholding.

First, as we behold we are transformed into the same image (2 Cor. 3:18); that is, as we are occupied with Christ, where He is, we become like Him; the moral features of Him who is our object, are transferred to those who, by the Spirit, behold Him in glory. Stephen is a beautiful instance of this; he acted like Christ in the midst of the most trying circumstances. (See Acts 7.)

Next, we find that the object in heaven forms the affections suited to itself. Herein lies the difference between Christian affection and heart-longing, and that which is found in the Song of Songs; in the latter, the bride does not possess the profound repose and sweetness of affection that flow from a relationship already formed, known and fully appreciated. Previous to the day of union, the relationship sought for was the consequence of the state of the heart, but now that the day has dawned, the state of the heart, the affections, are the consequence of the relationship. The same is observable in the Psalms; yearning, panting after God, are all to be found there; and the earnestness might well put us to shame: but the relationship, as well as the object of faith, and the power to enjoy the one and behold the other, are wanting. In the Song of Songs, the bride is not united to the Bridegroom; and in the Psalms, the remnant, whose experience is so blessedly depicted in various scenes and circumstances, is as yet outside