

Christ in the Bible

2 Corinthians

by A. B. Simpson

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Chapter 1

VICTORIOUS SUFFERING

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulations that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us so our consolation also abounds in Christ." 2 Cor.1:3-5.

The First Epistle to the Corinthians gives us a picture of the apostolic church, the second gives us the testimony of the apostle himself. It is intensely personal, and introduces us to the deepest experience of this man who stood nearest of all to the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. His testimony in the present passage has reference to suffering, victorious suffering, suffering so borne as to bring out of it not only triumph but boundless blessing to other lives as well as his own. This passage contains several important points:

I. Trial

The word used for trial in this passage and repeated several times is the same Greek word in every instance, although it is variously translated in our version by the several terms "tribulation," "trouble" and "suffering." The word "tribulation" first used is derived from a Latin root which literally means a flail, and it describes the crushing and humiliating blows which would be caused by such a fearful club as a flail applied to a bound and helpless human victim. The figure is not too strong to describe such sufferings as the apostle Paul tells us were his frequent, indeed, his almost constant lot. We need not go farther than his Epistle to the Corinthians to find a picture of suffering most tragic and unprecedented in human life. If we turn to 1 Corinthians 4: 9-13, we have an extraordinary array of dramatic and tragic afflictions:

"For I think that God has set forth us, the apostles, last, as it were, appointed to death, for we are made a spectacle unto the world and to the angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are honorable, but we are despised. Even unto the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and labor, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat. We are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day."

1. A Spectacle. The figure is exceedingly strong. The Roman emperors were accustomed at the close of the day, in the bloody amphitheater, to bring on as the last performance of the circus a battle unto the death. So Paul says that on the stage of Christian suffering "God has

set forth us, the apostles, last, as it were, appointed to death, and we are made a spectacle unto the world and to angels and to men." The Greek word for spectacle means a theater. Then he describes the various humiliations and afflictions appointed to him, ending with the vivid expression, "We are made as the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things unto this day."

If we turn to our present epistle we read in 2 Corinthians 2: 4, "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears." Again in the fourth chapter we find him thus describing his trials, even in the midst of victory: "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." We read on a little farther and we come to the sixth chapter, and read from the fourth to the tenth verses such phrases as these: "in afflictions," "in necessities," "in distresses," "in stripes," "in imprisonments," "in tumults," "in labors," "in watchings," "in fastings," "by honor and dishonor," "by evil report and good report," "as deceivers, and yet true," "as unknown, and yet well known," "as dying, and behold, we live," "as chastened and not killed," "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," "as poor, yet making many rich," "as having nothing, yet possessing all things."

2. Unrest. Again in the seventh chapter, verse 5, we find this great apostle confesses to a state of unusual unrest that many of us, no doubt, had supposed he was exempt from, and that such hours of weakness only belonged to Christians like us: "Our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears."

3. Sufferings. Once more we turn to 2 Corinthians 11:23-30, and the picture reaches its deepest coloring: "In stripes above measure, in deaths oft, of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep, in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory in the things which concern my infirmities."

It would seem as if this heroic soul possessed the sublime ambition to surpass all other men in his sufferings for his Master, and that the only glory he sought was to have the heaviest share of the cross of Jesus and the sorrows of His church.

4. Our Lot. But "as in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man," while his sufferings may have been preeminent, yet he was also the forerunner in that path of affliction which all the saints have trod. One of his earliest messages to the churches of Asia was "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God." Still it is indeed sadly true, as so finely expressed in the world's oldest poem, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble." "Although affliction comes not forth out of the dust, neither does trouble

spring out of the ground, yet man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward."

And yet how light our sorrows seem compared with his. After the catalogue we have just read, some of us must feel ashamed that we have ever murmured or complained. But trial is always hard, and sometimes the lightest afflictions are more difficult to bear than the greater ones. Let us recognize this fact at the very outset and go forth expecting trial, and we shall not be disappointed when it comes. If, on the contrary, we go forth expecting sunny skies and paths of roses, we shall indeed be ill-fitted to meet the realities of life and defeat and disappointment will face us at every turn. God has woven the strands of sorrow into the web of human life, and they are as necessary for our discipline and our usefulness as the golden threads of gladness.

II. Comfort

How beautiful and cheering is the picture here given of God as "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort." We cannot know Him in this blessed and benignant capacity if we do not have suffering and trial. We would never see the stars without the darkness, and we never know our Father's heart until our heart aches with sorrow. Nothing is more beautiful than some of the inspired pictures of the tenderness of God. Is an earthly father compassionate? "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." Is an earthly mother quick to feel the anguish of her children, and the best healer of a broken heart? "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem." Do father and mother sometimes fail us? "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." "Can a mother forsake her suckling child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you, says the Lord."

1. Human Comforters. God comforts us sometimes by human instruments: "God that comforted them that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus." (Cor. 7: 6) . There is a sweet ministry of human sympathy, and none of us can be indifferent to the love and fellowship of our friends in the hour of sorrow, nor should we be slow to "bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."

2. God Our Comforter. But the best of all consolations is the "comfort of the Holy Ghost." God has His own way of healing the broken heart and filling the soul with joy and peace when it is sinking with sorrow.

There are moments when the heavens seem to open and the heart of God touches our hearts with strange supernal rest, and even ecstatic exultation, and we wonder why we are thus visited and loved. Frequently it is in preparation for some severe blow that is about to strike us. God is forearming us by a special touch of His love. Sometimes again, when everything around us is fitted to depress and crush us, the heart is lifted up with strange joy and strength which surpasses all human explanation, and our first thought, perhaps, is: "Surely someone is praying for me just now, I feel so strengthened and comforted." And so it comes to pass, as we have already said, that in the severest trials we are often carried most triumphantly, while in those of less weight we sometimes become irritable and lose our victory.

But the special teaching of this passage is that the comfort is always commensurate with the tribulation. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ." As far as the pendulum swings downward in the stroke of agony, it rises in the rebound of consolation.

Our sufferings are the sufferings of Christ; our comfort is also His. We have a little glimpse of the source of His peace and joy in the picture of His earthly life. In that hour when His heart was crushed with the foreboding of the coming cross, we are told that He "rejoiced in spirit," and again, "for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame."

Beloved friend, it is your privilege to claim His joy in proportion to your weight of trial. If He is pleased to test you with unusual afflictions, just turn around and test Him with unusual behests upon His grace and sympathy, for the promise is, "As you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you also be of the consolation."

III. Service

"Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." The apostle tells us here that the very object of our peculiar experiences of suffering and trial is "that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." His sorrow is the school of Christ that disciplines him and equips him for the ministry of consolation.

Indeed, we shall often find that after we have passed through some special experience of trial, God will send to us someone who has been similarly afflicted and use us to lift them up and bear them through even as He has carried us. Sorrow, therefore, is not accidental, but part of the divine plan of love and education for us.

IV. A Special Emergency

He has spoken generally of trial and affliction, but now he comes to a particular experience. "We would not have you ignorant," he says, "of our trouble which came to us in Asia." And then he proceeds to describe in detail that great and mysterious blow that crushed him some time during his evangelistic campaign either in Ephesus or Asia Minor. What that trial was Bible expositors are far from agreed upon. Some regard it as a physical attack of sickness which almost took his life. Others, and the larger number, connect it with his grief on account of the sad condition of the church in Corinth, which had in great measure repudiated his apostolic authority, and even gone into the grossest and most shameless immorality. His heart was quite broken about it, and it would appear as if he had even been hindered from visiting them lest he should bring sorrow to them instead of gladness.

1. What It Was. It is very touching that this great and good man should have been so sensitive to the sins of men and the glory of his Master that it made him ill to hear of their wrongdoing. Certainly it became a physical stroke which nearly took his life, but it is delightful to think of it as having originated in a spiritual cause and having sprung from the noble unselfishness of his

heart.

2. Physical. Whatever its cause, a few things are very certain about it. In the first place, it was "above measure and above strength." It was beyond what seemed possible for him to bear, and, indeed, his strength gave way under it and he was ready to sink in physical prostration and really die. "We despaired," he says, "even of life." Not only so, "we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves." Literally it might be translated, "We had the answer of death in ourselves." His very prayers seemed ineffectual, his faith failed to grasp deliverance, and death was written on every part of the firmament and horizon.

What a trial, dear child of God! What a comfort to you to know that if such a trial should even come to you, a trial in which outward pressure and inward depression combine to plunge you in utmost despair, still you may hope and trust and overcome.

V. A Great Deliverance

He overcame. "Who delivered us from so great a death." It would indeed have been a great death, for had it come to that, Paul would have failed, his enemies would have triumphed, the great adversary would have been pleased and God's cause would have seemed to go down in a dark and humiliating defeat. It was something like that hour in Gethsemane when the Master felt that He could not die, and yet it seemed as if He must. "With strong crying and tears," He pleaded with His Father, "Who was able to save Him from death and was heard in that He feared." He did not die but overcame and lived to offer up His life later without defeat, a voluntary sacrifice of victorious love. And so there are times when we cannot afford to sink and God will give us victory.

Not only so but he adds, "Who does deliver." The deliverance continues, the experience of God's help in the past has established a habit of trusting and triumphing in the present. And still farther it reaches on to the future and faith rises to triumphant hope as he adds, "In whom we trust that He will yet deliver us."

In this conflict, he tells us his confidence was not in himself, for all human light had failed, but "In God who raises the dead." He looked for a deliverance that required nothing less than the Almighty Power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead and set Him in the heavens. This is the divine pattern of the power that we may still claim. Ours is the God of Resurrection and we may still sing,

"Nothing is too hard for Jesus,
No man can work like Him."

Finally, he tells us that in this great conflict, he was upheld and helped by the faith of his friends. "You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf."

And so we come back again to the ministry of mutual help and helpful prayer. This is the

special province of the Holy Spirit: to lay upon our hearts the needs of friends and lead us out in intercession for them sometimes when we do not even know the circumstances of their need. Enough for us to respond to the burden of the Spirit and hold ourselves ready to bear the sufferings of others and share in the priesthood of our blessed Master as He continually makes intercession for us.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, our first duty in trial is to accept it whether we understand it or not as a dispensation of divine wisdom and love. God has two hands, and the first presses us down, the second lifts us up. In a very fine metaphor, the apostle Peter bids us first, "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God," and then adds "that He may exalt you in due time."

1. Submission. In a deaf and dumb school a distinguished visitor was listening to the silent examination of the little ones. Not a word was spoken, but as each question was presented in the language of signs, a little one would write the answer on the blackboard. Finally the visitor was asked if he did not wish to submit some questions himself. Noticing a little shrivelled, pinched face in front of him that seemed a living embodiment of pain, he asked, "How do you explain the fact that a God of infinite power and wisdom has allowed you to be such a sufferer?" The question was translated into the language of signs and the little fellow was called to the platform. For a moment, the pinched face took on a shade of deeper pain and then it lighted up as he stepped to the blackboard and wrote the words, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." The hush of silence that had rested upon that audience was broken by murmurs and sobs of deep response. Surely, that is quite as glorious as the faith that overcomes disease and pain.

2. Deliverance. But having learned the first lesson, let us not forget the second. There is a time for resignation and there is a time for aggressive faith and victorious deliverance. It came to Paul, it came to Jesus, it comes to every trusting soul. "I will be with him in trouble," is only one-half the promise. After we have learned that lesson well, there comes the rest, "I will deliver him." God has made complete provision for our victory over suffering as well as sin. Let us not miss our sorrows or lose our battles, but take the comfort He has so dearly bought and pass it on to a brokenhearted world.

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Chapter 2

THE DEPENDABLENESS OF GOD

"For all the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now He which establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, is God: Who has also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Cor. 1: 20-22.

There is no quality more valuable in people than dependableness. The late Dean Stanley once said, "Show me a young man who is utterly trustworthy, whose word is as good as his affidavit, who keeps his engagements and who can always be found at his post and depended upon to do his best, and I will show you a fragment from the Rock of Ages."

There is nothing more rare in officers of public trust and positions of responsibility and in private business than this quality of dependableness and trustworthiness, and it is counted of greater value than the most brilliant gifts and the most impulsive enthusiasm.

Now this is the aspect of the divine character the apostle brings out in the striking words of our text. His enemies at Corinth had just challenged his own trustworthiness. He had promised to visit them some time before and failed to keep his appointment and they were saying that "his word was yea and nay." What tried him much more was that they were also ascribing the same uncertainty to the message which he had brought them and criticizing the Word of God and the Gospel of Christ as if quite as unreliable as the apostle's own promises.

He earnestly repudiates the reflection and explains that his failure to keep his appointment to visit them was prompted solely by their own interests. He had learned that they were in such a sad spiritual condition that a visit from him would have meant the severest censure and the deepest distress and pain for them and him. "I call God for a record," he says, "that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth," and then he adds in the next chapter, "I determined this with myself that I would not go to you again in heaviness."

So far therefore from a spirit of vacillation he was animated by the highest honor and affection. Then he proceeds to vindicate the Word of God from the more serious criticism which they had made against it. "The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea. For all the promises of God in Him are yea and in Him amen unto the glory of God by us."

Not only so, but the work of His grace in fulfillment of His word is just as sure and steadfast as His promises, and so he goes on to say, "Now He which establishes us with you in Christ and

has anointed us is God who has also sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

God, therefore, is not a changeable and uncertain Being, but One whose word is sure and whose work is enduring even as His everlasting throne. We have a God on whom we can utterly depend. We have a Savior who is truly "the Rock of Ages."

There is One amid all changes who standeth ever fast;
One who covers all the future, the present and the past;
It is Christ, the Rock of Ages, the First and the Last.

God's dependableness is unfolded in this verse in two respects, with reference to His promises and His grace.

I. The Promises of God

"All the promises of God in Him are yes and in Him amen." God never forgets His word. Long ago He promised a Redeemer and although He waited four thousand years, the promise was at last most surely fulfilled. He promised Abraham a son and although a quarter of a century of testing intervened, that promise at last came literally true. He promised Abraham the land of promise as his inheritance and although four hundred years of trial intervened, at last the land was possessed. He promised Jeremiah that after seventy years the captives should return from Babylon and on the very hour the action answered to the word. He promised Daniel that after sixty-nine prophetic weeks, that is 483 years, Messiah should appear, and at the very day the promise was fulfilled, and the most extraordinary evidence which we have to offer to the doubting Hebrew today that Jesus is his Messiah is the literal fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel at the exact date. The Lord Jesus promised the coming of the Holy Spirit, and when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended. Just as true are all His individual promises to the believer. Not one jot or tittle shall fail until all shall be fulfilled. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away."

Some very beautiful and striking things are taught us in this passage about the promises of God.

1. Their Variety. The literal translation of the pronoun "all" here is not only universal but particular, and has been rendered "all the promises of God, how many soever they be." It carries the idea of a great number and variety and yet notwithstanding their number and variety, every one is pure gold. When men talk much, the intrinsic value of their words depreciates. People of brief speech are usually people of surer performance, but God, although He has spoken to us more than forty thousand words of promise, never wearies of making good each one.

How many and varied they are. There are promises of salvation and they are more than can be numbered. There are promises of cleansing and sanctifying and keeping and they cover every possible spiritual condition. There are promises of healing and they meet every physical need.

There are promises of comfort for the sorrowing as tender as the breathing of a mother's love. There are promises of deliverance for the tried and tempted that cover every danger of life's pathway. There are promises for our homes, our friends, our work, our financial and temporal needs and all possible conditions of life. They are repeated in every variety of phrase and fitted to encourage our timidity and inspire our faith and lead us out in confidence and prayer, and every one of them can be depended upon. Some of them take hold of us at one time and some at another. God has a thousand hands, but the touch of a single finger will bring us into the embrace of His everlasting arms.

2. The Surety. "They are all yes and amen in Christ Jesus." He has guaranteed them. The promises of God form a great check book and every one is endorsed by the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His word and honor are pledged to their fulfillment. Indeed, they are all given to Him primarily as our federal Head and Representative. In the everlasting covenant, He undertook to fulfil the conditions of redemption and received in return all the promises of God. He has met those conditions, He has earned those promises, He has fulfilled that covenant; and now, for His sake, we can claim every one of them just as fully as if we had fulfilled the conditions ourselves.

3. The Reassurance. "Yes." Why is this added? "All the promises of God in Him are yes." Does it perhaps mean that God not only assures, but reassures? Not only does He give His promise in the Word, but He sends His Holy Spirit to whisper it personally in our hearts and awaken within us the spirit of confidence and trust.

Passing with a little child through a dark tunnel, the little one kept turning anxiously to the father and asking again and again, "Will we soon be through? Is it all right? Is there any danger?" And the father kept reassuring the anxious child and repeating his comforting "Yes." It is thus that the Father of mercies speaks in our troubled hearts. "Yes," he says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." When the apostle was troubled about his mysterious "thorn in the flesh" he asked the Lord again and again about it and the beautiful record he has given us of the answer is, "He kept saying unto me: My grace is sufficient for you."

It is thus that the Father repeats His loving words and breathes renewed consolations into the anxious and troubled heart until like the soothing of a mother with a sobbing child, we sink to rest in our Father's arms.

Perhaps, also, the "yesa" means the Lord Jesus Christ is God's answer to all other promises. Everything that God has told us is fulfilled in Him. He is the substance of all blessing, and the answer to all our need and therefore "all the promises of God in Him are yes."

4. The Response, "Amen." The "amen" is our answer to God's "yes." It is an act of faith by which we make the promises our own. When you receive a check from the bank, it is of no value until you first write your own name upon the back of it, and thus personally appropriate it to yourself. Then it becomes payable. So every promise of God must be subscribed by you and receive your "amen." It is our privilege to put our name in the promise. The pronouns "my" and

"me" have a high place in the experience of faith and deeper Christian life.

This "amen" is also through Jesus Christ, "in Him amen." It is He who prompts and sustains and inspires our faith. We can never appropriate the promises ourselves but must take Him to work in us the effectual prayer and the faith which takes all that He is waiting to give. Not only does He give us His precious blood and His perfect righteousness, but His own faith too and in Him we are able to claim all the fulness of His grace.

5. The Glory of God. Our appropriating the promises redounds to the glory of God, and we honor Him most, not by showing Him how much we can do, but by showing how much He can do in us and for us. Every time we claim one of His promises, we illustrate to the heavenly powers as well as the world around us the resources and sufficiency of our God, and we shed more glory upon His name and the victorious work of His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God wants us to be living witnesses, proving to the world, not only His almightiness but His dependableness, so that as others see what He has become to us, they will learn to trust Him also.

II. God's Grace

The apostle next proceeds to show the stability of God's grace and gracious work in the hearts of His people.

1. Its Stability. "Now He which establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God." The salvation He offers us is not a state of probation, but an everlasting insurance. "I give unto them eternal life, he says, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "He that has begun a good work in us will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." Therefore He purposes not only to forgive our past transgressions, but to establish us by working out in our inmost being all the fulness of His grace.

The process of establishing includes all the provisions of His Holy Spirit and all the deep experiences of trial, temptation and victory through which He calls us to pass and which He has planned for each one of us according to our special conditions and needs for the purpose of strengthening, establishing and settling us.

2. Spiritual Power. "He has anointed us." This includes the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is the first step in establishing us: to put into us His own Spirit and thus supply us with the resources of His power and grace in spite of all our weaknesses, temptation and failures. Not only does He save us from the curse of sin but He commits all the resources of His infinite grace to see us through to the glorious end.

Some years ago, a millionaire bought a large tract of land in the neighborhood of a village. For some years the land remained unimproved and the value of the real estate in the neighborhood hung in the balance. Was he simply speculating and holding it for the future, or was he going to make great improvements, or would he some day sell it again? Nothing was certain. But one

summer gangs of workmen moved upon the place; engineers, masons, carpenters, painters, landscape gardeners began the process of transformation. A splendid mansion rose from the highest point of land; roads were laid out, trees and flowers crowned every picturesque approach and at last his own family moved into the splendid villa, and it was known that he had made it his home. Then, indeed, was its value assured, and all the property in the vicinity rose in sympathy to the highest point. He had committed his fortunes and family to this transaction.

Something like this happens when God moves into a human heart and the Holy Spirit anoints us and brings the living Christ to dwell within us and make our heart His home. Henceforth we are no longer the victims of every wind that blows nor at the mercy of our own capricious and feeble purposes, but we are established, strengthened and divinely enabled and we know that "He which has begun a good work in us will perform it unto the day of Christ."

3. Security. "Who has also sealed us." The seal is the mark of authenticity and authority. And so when the Holy Spirit seals us, He makes it certain that we belong to God, and He also makes it certain to us that God's grace in all its fulness belongs to us. Not only so, the seal brings the mark of reality. You can feel its sharp imprint; you can see the image which it cuts into the sensitive wax. It is something tangible and real. It speaks to every sense. So the Holy Ghost makes divine things real. He puts an edge on our spiritual consciousness. He makes vivid to us words that had been before but sounds. He wakes up in us spiritual senses that take hold of God just as truly as the ear takes hold of music and the sense of smell of sweet perfume. Divine things become intensely actual, and Christ a living, bright Reality.

Once more, the seal reproduces the image and brings actual resemblance. So the Holy Ghost gives to the heart into which He comes the very likeness of Jesus Christ, conforms us to the image of God and reflects in us the very spirit and qualities of our blessed Savior, reliving His own life in the disciple and gradually forming us to His will and character in everything.

All this is intensely real. The salvation which brings such results is not a dream, a fiction, an uncertainty. The God who does such things is a God on whom we can depend, and the salvation that fulfils such expectations is indeed a blessing that satisfies.

4. Continuance and Permanence. There is one thing more required to complete this picture of security, and that is the future. How long will it last? The answer is, "Who has given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." This word "earnest" means a pledge of the future; no, more, the very germ and embryo of that future already planted in our hearts. The Holy Spirit in the believer is to his future inheritance what the bulb you planted last autumn is to the glorious blossoms of the Easter lily or the little dry seed to the golden harvests of the summer. The "earnest" is the sample, as well as the guarantee, of the full harvest; the handful of soil, telling us that all the broad acres are yet to be ours.

This has both a spiritual and a physical side. Our spiritual life now is the "earnest" and pledge of all that heaven will be to our soul. But there is another touch of grace which the Spirit brings to our body when He heals and quickens our suffering frame. This is the pledge of that physical resurrection which by and by is to come to all our mortal frame and lead us into the glorious life

of the age to come. All this we anticipate here and now, and by the earnest we know that we shall not be disappointed in the larger unfolding.

What has the world to offer in comparison with such a glorious assurance? Robert Burns wrote of earthly pleasures which he had tasted in all their sweetness:

"Our pleasures are like poppies spread;
We snatch the flower, the bloom has fled;
Or like the snowflake on the river
A moment seen, then gone forever;
Or like the Borealis' blaze,
Which mocks our vision as we gaze;
Or like the rainbow's glorious form
Vanishing amid the storm."

In contrast with this, how inspiring the hope expressed in Dean Alford's beautiful hymn:

"My bark is wafted to the strand
By breath divine;
And on the helm there rests a hand
Mightier than mine;
One who has known in storms to sail
I have on board;
Above the raging of the gale
I hear my Lord;
Safe to the land, safe to the land
The end is this,
And then with Him go hand in hand
Far into bliss."

Was it ever better told than when the little child described the story of Enoch? Enoch used to walk with God every day. One day they took a longer walk than usual, and at the end God said to Enoch, "You are far from home; just come in and stay," and Enoch went in and stayed.

Is not such a God dependable? Is not such a salvation worth more than all this world can offer? Is not such a hope like an anchor, sure and steadfast? God help us to receive it, to prove it to the uttermost, and then to commend it to all around us.

Christ in the Bible

2 Corinthians

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 3

VICTORY

"Now thanks be unto God which always causes us to triumph in Christ and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place, for we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death, and unto the other the savor of life unto life." 2 Cor. 2: 14-16.

This is Paul's testimony concerning his victory in the conflicts of life and especially in the severe ordeal through which he was then passing. In the pronoun "us" he takes us into partnership with his victory and reminds us that we may go forth into every battle with the prestige of assured triumph and the victorious battle cry, "Thanks be unto God that always causes us to triumph."

I. Victory Over Sorrow

He had a great sorrow. It was so severe that it unfitted him for his work. "When I came to Troas," he says, "to preach Christ's Gospel and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit." Speaking of the same experience again, in chapter 7: 5, he tells us that even after he left Troas and came into Macedonia, he was still utterly discouraged and distracted, "Our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side, without were fightings and within were fears."

His trouble was caused by others and most of it by the sins of others. How many of our troubles come from the same source. How many fathers, mothers and wives are brokenhearted because of the wrongdoing of loved ones. But there is victory even for this. The apostle could say, "Thanks be unto God which always causes us to triumph." We must not give way to discouragement even when everything and every person may seem to fail us. How often we hear people say, "I am utterly discouraged, I do not care to live, I do not feel like trying any more." Someone has died, or someone has failed you, and all the light and hope have gone from life. This is cowardly and wrong; God still lives and reigns. Take heart and trust in Him, and out of this dark cloud will come, by and by, perhaps the brightest blessings of your life. Let us never give way to circumstances. The most unfavorable conditions often are God's very way of developing some higher quality in us.

It is said that a gentleman stood watching a lot of young athletes at a game of baseball. He himself was crippled and almost helpless, and as he watched their free and agile movements his face mantled with a look of grim and bitter agony. A friend tapped him on the shoulder and

quietly said, "I suppose you were thinking just now that you would like to be as those young fellows, free and strong, and that you were realizing how different it all was." "Yes," said he, "that was just what I was thinking." "Well," said his friend, "my brother, I was just thinking that God had let all this trouble come to you to do you good and make a man out of you." It was a new thought, and as he went away, it clung to him. Was there, then, some higher purpose in this terrible disappointment? And as he thought, he began to cultivate and develop the other qualities of mind and character, until his life began to develop in new directions and new purposes and plans were formed, and soon the man, whose life had seemed to be a failure, became not only successful but wonderfully useful in inventing and developing new methods for the relief of the suffering, and for the restoration of the crippled and infirm, and it did indeed become true that the trouble which seemed at one time to crush him really became in the hands of God the means of lifting him to a new manhood and usefulness.

Christ has redeemed us from sorrow as well as sin and we must not let our trials conquer us, rather let them challenge us to higher manhood and more victorious faith.

II. Victory Over His Own Heart

Before we can have victory over circumstances we must be ourselves subdued. The verb employed here is susceptible of two translations. It means either in a passive sense, "Thanks be unto God who always leads us in triumph," or in an active sense, "Thanks be unto God who always causes us to triumph."

The first sense is supported by very high authority and undoubtedly is included with the other. There seems no good reason why we should not take both. God first leads us in triumph Himself and then "He causes us to triumph." But no man can be victor over others until he has been a self-conqueror. "He that rules his spirit is greater than he that takes a city."

The apostle tells us in this chapter of his glorious victory over himself. He had been wronged and grieved by the conduct of the Corinthians; some of them had grossly sinned and even gloried in it and defied his authority and discipline, and others had supported them in it. But instead of the least resentment we find nothing in the apostle's spirit but the sweetest gentleness, self-restraint and forgiveness. He tells them about his grief and his tears; there is no resentment but only sorrow. There is no weakness in condoning evil; he has dealt with the sin with utmost faithfulness, and now he is ready to deal with the sinner with equal tenderness. It is most touching to see his anxiety lest the erring one should be unduly discouraged and "swallowed up with over much sorrow," and so he begs them to confirm their love unto him and offer him the forgiveness of Paul as well as the Savior's.

It is a great blessing to be able to forgive and forget. Unforgiveness is one of the unpardonable sins, and when the enemy succeeds in causing someone to do you wrong, the sting which he inserts in your heart, in your hate and vindictiveness, is far more poisonous than the outward blow by which he sought to do you wrong.

There is no heart battle harder than a battle with our sensitiveness and our sense of wrong.

Many of us have found it the very turning point of life. Some cruel wrong, some injury that the natural heart could never forgive, has rankled there until we felt we should lose our souls if we did not gain the victory. But mere human effort is unavailing here, and the heart gives up the struggle with a sense of utter helplessness and despair. But this is just where His grace overcomes and where the love of Jesus in us can accomplish what our love and our self-control never could. God has sometimes to let such tests come to us to show us our helplessness and bring us to His feet.

There is no picture more sublime than that of a strong nature breaking down and acknowledging its fault and rising superior to its sensitiveness and pride in the spirit of true forgiveness and love. It is said of Professor Blackie, of Edinburgh, that on one occasion he ordered his students to put up their right hands with their exercise books. One young man put up his left hand; the professor repeated the order in a stern voice, addressing him, but still he held up his left hand. Then, calling him by name, he once more repeated his demand in tones of anger. Then the lad slowly lifted up the stump of an amputated arm and meekly said, "Sir, I have no right hand." A storm of hisses burst from the students which even the authority of the professor could not restrain. But suddenly they all beheld his dignified form swiftly passing down the aisle and bending over the Scotch lad, and then his arm was around his neck and in tender tones said, "Forgive me, lad, I was over rough; forgive me, I did not know," and then there burst from those students a storm of cheers just as emphatic as the former expression of their displeasure. Never was their teacher more noble than in that attitude of humility and self-abnegation.

III. Victory Over His Enemies

"When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." God's providence in external things keeps pace with the provision of His Holy Spirit in our interior life. The apostle, having himself taken the right position toward his enemies, the Lord now undertakes for him and makes all things right respecting his own interests and authority. The offending one is brought to repentance and the church to harmony and loyalty. The best way to reach our adversaries is by way of the throne. Vainly we may struggle to make things right; let us but be right ourselves, and then the hand of God will move upon all others and subdue all things unto Himself.

The writer once knew a brother minister who had been unkindly treated by some members of his flock and had fallen into a spirit of deep resentment. His own heart became clouded and separated from God, and he fell into a spirit of bitterness that almost threatened the salvation of his soul. Much prayer was offered for him. At length the answer came in a most remarkable way. First, there fell upon him a spirit of prayer for his bitter enemies, and he found himself irresistibly pouring out his heart to God for them, and then, prompted by a deep desire to return to his people, whom he had left for a time under a sense of injury. As he finished his morning service, the first persons to greet him were the two brethren that had so grievously wronged him. To his surprise they hastened forward with the most cordial welcome, and the reconciliation that followed was deep and lasting and evident to all concerned as the work of

the Holy Spirit. The moment his own heart had got right, God had made all other things right.

It is ever so. As it is the Lamb in the midst of the throne that is victorious over all His enemies, so it is the Spirit of the Lamb in us that conquers Satan and all his emissaries. Let us be less concerned about people and things, and only seek to be right ourselves, and then we can safely trust our interests, our reputation, our enemies with Him who has said, "I have loved you, therefore will I give men for you and people for your life."

IV. Victory Over the Erring One

The most beautiful thing about the apostle's spirit had been his deep concern for the offender, and now his joy was complete in his repentance and restoration, and he hastened in the most tender spirit to beseech them to restore him and confirm their love to him lest in the reaction his distress of mind might become extreme and Satan take advantage of his depression to drive him to despair.

There is no finer triumph over those that wrong us than to be made a blessing to them. There is no more touching picture in the apostolic story than that suggested by the opening verse of the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians compared with the story of his visit to Corinth, as given in the Acts of the Apostles. A wicked Jewish mob had brought accusations against him and dragged him before the Roman magistrate, Gallio. The leader of this mob was Sosthenes, described as "the ruler of the synagogue." The attack failed because Gallio refused to entertain the charges and dismissed them as a petty case of Jewish spite. Then the crowd waiting outside fell upon Sosthenes and his people and abused and beat them. No doubt, Paul looked on with deep sympathy and sorrow, but the striking part of it is that in the first verse of the first Epistle to the Corinthians Paul associates Sosthenes with him as a fellow worker, speaking of him in somewhat emphatic terms as "the brother." It looks as if Sosthenes had been meanwhile converted and become one of the apostle's fellow laborers. And now Paul had the glorious revenge of blessing and saving the man that had been his bitterest foe and uniting him himself in his first message to this very church in Corinth.

If we could only see over the heads of our enemies and accusers the wicked one urging them on and controlling their actions, our resentment would give place to deep compassion and earnest prayer that God would save them from his power and from the sad and fearful fate awaiting them when they wake to find that they have been led captive by him at his will.

V. Victory Over Satan

"Lest Satan should gain an advantage over us, for we are not ignorant of his devices." The apostle only saw two forces, the power of the devil on the one hand and the person and honor of the Lord Jesus on the other, and, in comparison with these two opposing forces, the injustice of his enemies and his own personal wrongs all sank into insignificance.

It is Satan that inspires every case of spiritual declension, every separation of friends and flocks, every ecclesiastical controversy, every mutual injury and resentment, and when we yield

to vindictiveness or impatience, we are but pleasing him and playing into his hands. His deep design was to destroy the soul that he had led astray, and his most powerful weapon was discouragement and despair. If he could only lead this man to give up hope and to consider himself rejected and lost, then his point would have been gained. The apostle therefore was deeply concerned lest "such an one should be swallowed up of over-much sorrow," and thus Satan gain the advantage over him.

The great adversary loves to hide his hand and work in disguise. He tries to make people prominent in our thoughts and judgments, so that in their misconduct we shall overlook the greater plotter who simply uses them as pawns on the great chessboard. Let us recognize him and we shall always find that he cannot bear the light of exposure, and the moment we see his hand our victory is assured.

VI. Victory for God

This triumph was not a selfish one. He was representing his Lord, and the spirit that he was manifesting to others was just an exhibition and revelation to the world of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Therefore he says, "We are a sweet savor of Christ." His love, his patience, his gentleness, his forgiveness were just making the spirit of his Master more real to men. That is why God has placed us here to represent our Lord. And just as Christ's gentleness and sweetness were revealed by the anguish of the garden and the cross, so God has to bruise us in order to bring forth from our lives the holy fragrance of divine love and patience. It has been forcibly said that all things must be crushed before they can give out their highest qualities. The most exquisite violins are not whole violins but instruments that have been broken and then repaired, and the fracture has left a fine touch of sweetness and sadness in the tone that could not otherwise have been brought out. This has been finely suggested by these exquisite lines:

"They tell us we must bruise
The rose's leaf,
Ere we can keep and use
Its fragrance brief.

"They tell us we must break
The skylark's heart,
Ere her caged song will make
The silence start.

"And it is always so
With precious things;
They must be bruised and go
With broken wings."

This, then, dear Christian reader, is the explanation of the trials of your life. Are you getting out of them the sweetness and fragrance which God meant them to breathe for Him to men?

VII. Victory Even When Men Perish

"We are a sweet savor of Christ unto them that are saved and unto them that perish."

A good deed is not lost even when it fails to benefit the person intended. Its sweet fragrance comes back to God, and its memory will linger with the erring one even though it failed to save. God wants us to leave upon the minds of men the sweet eternal recollection of divine love. Not in fiery anger will He at last condemn them, but doubtless with a look of pity and a word of compassion will He bid them depart and feel, as they do, that the fault was all their own; that God was never anything but love to them, and that their sin and fault were without excuse. Therefore, God would have us represent Him in the spirit of sweetness and tenderness even to those whom we fail to save.

VIII. The Prestige of Victory

The apostle's advantage implies not merely that he has won a triumph in his present trial, but that God is always causing him to triumph, and that he is going into every conflict with the confidence of victory. There is a strange power in prestige. There are armies that never look for defeat; there are trumpeters that never learn to sound a retreat; there are soldiers that always expect to overcome. Such soldiers, Christians should ever be. Our blessed Lord has overcome for us, and He has promised us that we shall be more than conquerors, too. His victory assures ours, and He bids us to go into every trial expecting to come off victorious. Are we doing so? Is our life one of victory or are we letting circumstances, discouragements, people and things bear us down and rob us of our immortal crown? This is very foolish and very sinful.

If any one who reads these lines has been yielding to discouragement, may God bid you rise and put on the garments of praise and take up the shout of victory.

It is said that Norman McLeod when a lad was greatly discouraged one day, and said to his mother that he wished he had never been born. He had the good fortune to have a Scotch mother, who had little sympathy to spare for such people, and she quietly turned to him and said, "Why, Norman, you are born, and it seems to me the thing for you to do is to find out why you were born and get to work as soon as you can to accomplish the purpose for which God brought you into existence." The rebuke went home, and the discouraged boy rose up and went forth to live a life of glorious manhood and world-wide blessing to his fellow men.

Shall we do likewise? Christ has purchased our triumph at great cost. Let us go forth in His strength to meet every adversary as a conquered foe, and to shout our watchword all the way to the gates of glory, "Thanks be to God which always causes us to triumph in Christ Jesus."

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Chapter 4

PAUL'S TESTIMONY ABOUT HIS MINISTRY

"Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost." 2 Cor. 4: 1-3.

There is nothing more delicate and difficult, even for the most sensitive and sanctified Christian, than to speak of his own work. The writer has never forgotten the impression produced upon him when first listening to George Muller as he told the story of the Lord's dealings with him. There was no reserve; there was no false modesty; there was no withholding of any important fact or testimony; but there was absolutely no self-consciousness, no shadow of vain glory, no trace of his own shadow. One would think in listening to him that he was telling of the work of some other servant of the Lord. He had that perfect humility that does not think meanly of itself, but simply does not think of itself at all.

We have a fine example of the apostle's spirit in his testimony in the present chapter about his ministry.

I. His Credentials

"Do we begin again to commend ourselves?" he asks, "or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men. Forasmuch as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ manifested by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." (2 Cor. 3: 1-3.)

His credentials are the lives that have been transformed through his ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit. What better monument can any Christian worker desire? It is said of the famous Sir Christopher Wren that he was rescued as a foundling child on the very site of that glorious cathedral that he afterwards built in the city of London, St. Paul's. At the close of an honored life his dust was buried beneath its foundations, and by his own directions a plain slab covered his tomb with the simple inscription on it, "If you seek my monument, look around you." That splendid building was his sufficient monument. His work was the memorial of his life. Are we transcribing ourselves, or, better, our Master's image on the hearts and lives of men? Paul did not mean that he despised letters of introduction. They possess a certain value, and we all

need to be prudent in guarding against imposters. But he had something better. His work was his highest witness. Can we say it is ours? True character will always discover itself to the world, like a spice ship sailing into the harbor, by the fragrance it diffuses all around it.

It is said that a missionary was sent to an obscure Hindu village to receive a score of new converts into the mission, of whom the report had come that they had all become true Christians. As one by one they were examined the missionary was delighted with their knowledge and experience, and they were all accepted. At last there came a poor, deformed and stammering fellow, who seemed to have little knowledge or character, and the missionary was about to reject him when the natives all exclaimed, "Why that is the man from whom we learned all we know of Jesus. It is he who brought us to Christ, and how can you accept us and reject him?" Truly he needed no letters of commendation after that. They were living epistles witnessing to his work and his worth. It is impossible that we can possess true spiritual qualities without impressing our own influence upon other lives. "By their fruits you shall know them." "Some thirty, some sixty and some an hundred fold." Let us apply the lesson faithfully and searchingly to our influence in our families, in our Sunday school classes, in our social relations, in our work for God.

"There needs not for such the love-written record,
The name and the monument graven on stone;
The things we have lived for—let these be our glory,
And we be remembered by what we have done."

II. The Source of His Power

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, who also has made us able ministers of the New Testament." (2 Cor. 3: 5, 6.) Three strong words express the whole volume of testimony and experience here, -- insufficiency, all sufficiency and efficiency. First he had to realize his own insufficiency. This is where every Christian worker must begin, and this is where he must stay, realizing to the end of the chapter that his strength is all imparted and divine.

But the mere sense of insufficiency will discourage and crush. And so we must move on and learn to say, "Our sufficiency is of God." We must see in the Lord Jesus our infinite divine resources in the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and all the equipment we need in every kind of ministry. Then it is false modesty to say we are no good; we have but one talent, and therefore it is not worth trying to use it. True humility and faith will finish the apostle's climax. "He has made us efficient ministers of the New Testament."

But, even then, we must still remember that our efficiency is not our own, but must be continually drawn from the ever-present Christ by a life of dependence and faith. How exquisitely true are the superb lines:

"My hands were strong in fancied strength,
But not in power divine;

And bold to take up tasks at length,
That were not His but mine.
The Master came and touched my hands;
And might was in His own;
But mine, since then, have powerless been,
Save His are laid thereon.
And it is only thus, said He,
That I can work My works in thee."

III. The Glory of His Ministry

In the remaining verses of this chapter he contrasts the Gospel with the old dispensation and shows its incomparable superiority.

1. The one is the letter; the other is the Spirit. The law is a mere set of tasks and penances which only affect the outward forms of life. The Gospel reaches the inner heart of things and purifies the spirit, the heart and all the fountains of life.
2. The one is a ministry of death; the other of life. The law can only condemn; the Gospel can quicken. The law can tell us what we are not to do; but the Gospel imparts the power to do things.
3. The one is the ministry of condemnation; the other of righteousness. The law shows us where we are wrong, but cannot make us right. It is the mirror that reveals to us the defilement upon our face, but as has been well said, no man would think of trying to wash his face in a mirror.
4. The law was transient; the Gospel is permanent and abiding. It was but a parenthesis in the revelation of God's plan, like the clouds that gathered round the brow of Sinai, and then passed away and left the sunshine of heaven to gather upon its head. When we accept the Gospel we feel by a deep intuition that we have reached our true resting place and we need seek no further for God and truth and heaven.
5. The law is a mere mechanical and external attempt to reform conduct and cultivate character. The Gospel is a vital process by which we are transformed through the vision of Jesus Christ into His own image by the Holy Spirit. This is brought out in a most beautiful figure in the last verse of the chapter. "But we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The figure reminds us of the difference between the old and the new process of engraving. Our cuts used to be slowly carved by hand on blocks of wood, and were tedious and expensive. A few years ago the process of photoengraving was discovered by which, in a moment, the image was transferred to a metal plate, and then in a few minutes a penetrating acid cut away the metal and left only the lines of the picture, thus literally engraving in the solid metal by light and chemical action. It is thus that God paints His pictures; not by a clumsy process of our poor striving, but by the flashlight of the Holy Ghost and a vision of the face of

Jesus Christ, transferring the picture instantly, like the photograph on the film, to our heart, and conforming us to His likeness. No wonder Paul gloried in such a Gospel. He felt that a great secret had been revealed to him for lifting human lives into glorious transformation, "the secret," he said, "which had been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to the saints, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." When that mystery was first revealed to some of us we felt we must go and tell everybody we had ever known, and we expected them at once to bow to its glorious light and accept its message. Dear reader, have you looked upon that Face until its light has shone back into your own, and you have been "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"?

Two very fine figures begin and end this chapter. The first is the figure of the epistle, and the second the figure of the photograph. The Christian is described first as a book, and secondly, as an illustrated book. Each of us is a volume telling forth the story of Jesus, and on every page His face should shine so that the world shall not see us, but Him, and shall so see Him in us that each shall want to make the experience his own.

IV. The Simplicity of His Ministry

"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech." (v. 12.) The law was dim and men saw `through a glass darkly.' The Gospel is so plain that "he that runneth may read." The true minister will always be characterized by great simplicity, and make it his object so to preach that every message shall reach the lowest understanding among his hearers, and be plain enough to make Christ real and Christ possible to every man. How solemn the reproof in the story of the famous painter, who had invited a friend to see the unveiling of one of his canvases containing a painting of the First Communion Service. The eyes of the visitor were fastened on the brilliant colors, and his first exclamation was, "What beautiful cups!" But the countenance of the artist fell. He saw that his work had been a failure. He had failed to make Christ the center of the picture, and he drew his brush across the canvas and covered it up, and then started anew and painted it over again. How much of our preaching is just like these beautiful cups -- everything in it but the Savior.

V. The Faithfulness of His Ministry

"We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." (2 Cor. 4: 2.) What a picture of an earnest, conscientious, heart-searching ministry that deals with human souls, as one who realizes that God is standing at our shoulder and eternity is just before us. All true soul-winners are characterized by this direct and holy earnestness. The writer recalls one fearful night when he had been so pressed by the Holy Spirit to call upon a certain ungodly man, of wide influence and great indifference, and speak to him about his soul. He tried to shake off the impression, but could not, and, late at night, in a howling blizzard, he rang the bell and asked him to see him. The man was surprised at such a call at that hour, and still more surprised when he heard the message that brought him. He quite broke down and yielded to God, and before they parted said, "To think that you should come this wild and stormy night to seek my soul, while I

have lived in this world for nearly seventy years and never thought of it myself." The very directness of the appeal seemed to reach his conscience as no ordinary method perhaps would have done.

The story is told of Mr. Moody that he was requested by a Christian wife to go and talk with her husband, who was a vaunting infidel. Mr. Moody hesitated because the man had glorified in the fact that he had silenced many such messengers before. But he prayed over it and in his own blunt way made up his mind to go. As he passed into the inner office the clerks smiled to think of the humiliation with which he would soon come out. He took the hand of the gentleman, which was offered with a cynical smile, and said, "Mr. Blank, I have been asked to come and talk with you about your soul. Now, there is no use of my talking about the Bible to a man who knows a hundred times as much as I do, but I just want to say this, that when you get converted to God, please let me know it. Good morning." The man was thunderstruck, and Mr. Moody walked out without being greeted with the usual contemptuous smile from the long row of desks. Sure enough, the day came when through the power of prayer that proud heart broke down. Two nights in succession the rich infidel sneaked off to a prayer meeting and slipped back into his home, and went to bed without telling his wife where he had been. But the third night he confessed to her that he had given his heart to God, and the very first thing that he did was to send a telegram to Moody.

Let us bring men face to face with God. Let us remember that we speak with the authority of divine ambassadors. Let us not use our worthless intellects trying to gild the sunshine, but let us bring them into immediate dealing with their Maker, their Judge and their Savior, and leave them there, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

There is implied here the idea of great faithfulness and deep concern for the souls of men. Paul was always seeking for souls. Even before King Agrippa he could not help but plead, "I would that not only you, but all that hear me this day, were not only almost, but altogether such as I am except these bonds." Who can measure the deep significance of that solemn appeal, "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my kinsmen according to the flesh"? Dear reader, do you know any such earnest travailing for the souls of men? Perhaps that is why some very dear to you are yet unsaved. The incident was related recently in New England of a young lady that had somewhat suddenly died, and a Christian friend who was deeply attached to her was unspeakably concerned about her soul. On the day of her funeral he sought out her minister and asked him if he could tell him whether she was saved. The minister confessed with a good deal of pain that just three weeks before he had been very strongly impressed to speak to her about her soul, but he had allowed something to deter his mind from the purpose and now he could not tell. He then sought out her Sunday-school teacher and asked her, and the young lady said with deep emotion, "Just two weeks ago I felt strangely and strongly impressed to talk to her about her personal salvation, and I allowed myself to be diverted from it, and, alas, I cannot tell whether she is saved or not." At last he sought her mother and asked her. The mother quite broke down as she confessed that just one week previous she, too, had felt some strong impression to talk to her daughter about deciding for God, but shame and sensitiveness had kept her silent, "and now, alas," she said, "it is too late, and I know not whether she is lost

or saved."

Such solemn lessons need no applying. Let them speak to each of our hearts and arouse us to holier earnestness and more conscientious faithfulness in dealing with the souls of men.

VI. Hindrances to His Ministry

"But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." A better translation of this remarkable passage is, "it is hid by the things that perish." The word 'lost' means 'perish,' and the preposition 'to' in the Greek has also the force of 'by.' The sentence, therefore, would read, "If our Gospel be hid it is hid by the perishing things of earth." The idea is that Satan weaves a beautiful blindfold and holds it before our eyes to keep us from seeing "the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ."

The writer will never forget the first impression given to him in his boyhood of an execution. He did not witness it, but the description was repeated to him by one who had. He said the unfortunate man was blindfolded and then led along the scaffold, not seeing where he went, until suddenly the fearful drop fell, and, without a moment's warning, the man was hurled into eternity. What a picture of the way the devil is blindfolding men and then taking from beneath their feet the sands of time, and plunging them into ruin and despair. Oh, shall we learn the lesson which our message brings not only for the minister of the Gospel, but for the hearer of the Gospel, too, and come "with open face" to the light of His love and the grace that will so gladly save us if we will only allow it.

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Chapter 5

PAUL'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING SUPERNATURAL LIFE FOR THE BODY

"For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." 2 Cor. 4: 11.

Unlike many false religions, Christianity does not depreciate or degrade the human body. The very paragon of the first creation, God has no less dignified it in the new creation. His own Son did not deem it beneath Him to become incarnate in our mortal frame, and in that body He has been resurrected and glorified as the Head and Pattern of our future life. The provisions of Christ's redemption include the body as well as the soul and spirit.

While it is only the steed that carries the traveler across the desert journey of life, yet the steed is most necessary to the traveler, and the failure of the one may involve the destruction of the other. Christ and His apostles, therefore, recognized most distinctly the place of our physical life in the scheme of redemption, and both by their teaching and example they leave us in no doubt about God's provision for our physical healing and the strength that we need in these earthen vessels to uphold us until our work is done.

Man has always been seeking some Fountain of Youth, some Elixir of Life from which he might draw supernatural supplies of strength for his decaying powers. But all these have failed, and from age to age still

"Our hearts, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave."

But Paul must have discovered some new and divine secret of superior strength or he never could have told that story that we have already read in chapter 1: 8, of the deliverance that came to him in Asia when he was "pressed out of measure above strength, insomuch that he despaired even of life." The story of his life is full of hardship, privation, exposure and suffering sufficient to have worn out a dozen lives.

The man who could give this catalogue, "in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft, five times received I forty stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep," and yet live to a good old age in the full vigor of unwearied work and still have strength enough to have gone on indefinitely had not his noble life been suddenly closed by martyrdom; such a man must have

had unwonted sources of physical strength and endurance and his physical life was as much a miracle as his spiritual victories and missionary achievements.

In this fourth chapter of 2 Corinthians he tells us the secret of his strength. Unlike Samson of old, from whom this secret had to be wrung by treachery, Paul glories in the telling of it, for it is an open secret for every brother of his suffering race.

I. The Principle

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." He means that the strength imparted to him is not in the form of bone and brawn or any material conditions which could appeal to our outward senses. It is not that his body was exceptionally robust, for, indeed, it remained frail to the end; but rather that a principle of vitality was imparted to it, so that the paradox was literally true, "when I am weak, then am I strong."

We know that even in the natural world many elements that are extremely common and simple become the channels of tremendous forces. Radium, the latest of these discovered powers, comes from one of the commonest material elements, pitchblende, which might perhaps be called a kind of tar. The loadstone which lifts the heaviest bodies, does not derive its strength from its material weight or form, but from a hidden force that pulsates within the cold clay and lifts the most massive weights as though by celestial fingers. In the arsenal at Woolwich, you can see these magnets lifting vast projectiles and pieces of ordnance as though they were toys.

The electric current which carries our trains and our cars and moves our factories does not need massive iron girders to convey it, but runs along a little wire which a child might bend. The power is not in the material, but in the invisible current behind it. The human body itself does not derive its strength from mere structural form. A giant seven feet high, weighing three hundred pounds, falls like a mass of stone if life becomes extinct and requires several men to carry him; but animated by the principle of life, he cannot only carry his own weight, but as much more besides.

Now, in the spiritual realm there are forces far stronger than electricity, magnetism or the vital force, and what the apostle means is that such a force has been brought into touch with his weak body; and while he still remains weak in himself, he has found back of him and within him a new source of strength which makes him equal to every pressure. It is the "treasure" in "the earthen vessel," and it proves to the world that the "excellency of the power is of God and not of us."

II. The Secret of His Physical Life

He tells us in plain terms just what this power is. It is not an electric current, it is not the power of mind or will as Christian Science would teach us, but it is the power of a divine Person, the life of another added to his own, "the life also of Jesus in his mortal flesh." Truly, this is a mystery, how one life can be added to another, and doubtless none will comprehend it unless they have in some measure experienced it. But a moment's reflection will show us how

reasonable it is. The Lord Jesus Christ is a Living Being in human form. They saw Him rise from earth to heaven with all the organs and members of a literal body, and yet with such supernal power in that body that He could spurn the fetters of earth and the forces of gravitation and rise without an effort into space. Now, He is still living in that glorified humanity somewhere in the center of this universe, and from that exalted place He is still in touch with His people here. The Holy Spirit is the mighty Medium who conveys to us His power and life, the divine Engineer, if we may use the figure without irreverence, who makes and maintains the contact between the mighty Dynamo yonder and our weak natures here on earth.

It is not thought strange in our modern scientific progress when men convey the power of Niagara Falls hundreds of miles along electric wires to run machines in distant places. It is not thought strange that yonder sun, 95,000,000 miles away, can send down its radiating life to quicken the forces of nature and create the verdure, the bloom and the manifold fruitfulness of earth. Why should it be thought strange that Jesus Christ, from the center of the universe, should be able to impart to souls and bodies that are in vital touch with Him, His own overflowing life and make His promise true both in our bodily and spiritual experience, "Because I live, you shall live also"?

If we look at a single scene in the apostle's life, we shall see the operation of this secret. Yonder at the gates of Lystra a cruel mob has hurled him beneath a heap of stones and left him for dead after they have done their worst on his mutilated body. But we read in the simple narrative of the book of Acts, "Howbeit as the disciples stood around him he rose up and stood upon his feet and came into the city, and the next day departed for Derbe, and there he preached the Gospel." What was the strange power that raised him up from seeming martyrdom? The answer is the simple, striking expression of our text: "The life also of Jesus." Paul's life had been beaten out but there was just enough left, a single spark, to form the point of contact with that other life that could not be beaten out, the life of his indwelling Lord; and as that life thrilled through his paralyzed powers, he rose up in new divine strength and quietly went forward in his work.

George Whitfield has left us a similar testimony of a day when he was supposed to be dying some miles from Newburyport while the congregation there was praying in tearful intercession that God would restore his life. Suddenly, he tells us, a new strange life began to breathe through him and passed through his frame, gradually rising from his extremities until it reached his heart and lungs and brain, imparting a quiet, peaceful glow of conscious strength and rest, dispelling all pain and weakness and prompting him to rise and dress, to call his carriage and drive many miles to Newburyport where the church was waiting to hear each moment of his end.

His coming seemed at first almost like an apparition, but when they saw that God had really raised him up and listened to his testimony, the power of God came down once more and multitudes were saved, and for many years the good evangelist continued in the strength of God to preach the Gospel and to finish his work.

III. The Pressure and the Test That Followed

There is a prevalent idea that the power of God in a human life should lift us above all trials, conflicts and struggles. The fact is the power of God always brings a conflict and a struggle. One would have thought that on his great missionary journey to Rome Paul would have been carried by some mighty providence above the power of storms and tempests and enemies. But, on the contrary, it was one long, hard fight with persecuting Jews, with wild tempests, with venomous vipers and all the powers of earth and hell, and at last he was saved, as it seemed, by the narrowest margin and had to swim ashore at Malta on a piece of wreckage and barely escape a watery grave.

Was that like a God of infinite power? Yes, just like Him. And so Paul tells us that when he took the Lord Jesus Christ, as the life of his body, a severe conflict immediately came; indeed, a conflict that never ended, a pressure that was persistent, but out of which he always emerged victorious through the strength of Jesus Christ.

The language in which he describes this is most graphic. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; 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 might be manifested in our body."

What a ceaseless, strenuous struggle? It is impossible to express in English the forcible language of the original. There are five pictures in succession. In the first, the idea is crowding enemies pressing in from every side, and yet not crushing him because the police of heaven cleared the way just wide enough for him to get through. The literal translation would be, "We are crowded on every side, but not crushed."

The second picture is that of one whose way seems utterly closed and yet he has pressed through; there is light enough to show him the next step. The revised version translates it, "perplexed but not unto despair." Rotherham still more literally renders it, "without a way but not without a byway."

The third figure is that of an enemy in hot pursuit while the divine Defender still stands by, and he is not left alone. Again we adopt the fine rendering of Rotherham, "Pursued but not abandoned."

The fourth figure is still more vivid and dramatic. The enemy has overtaken him, has struck him, has knocked him down. But it is not a fatal blow; he is able to rise again. It might be translated, "over-thrown but not overcome."

Once more the figure advances, and now it seems to be even death itself, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." But he does not die, for "The life also of Jesus" now comes to his aid and he lives in the life of another until his work is done.

The reason so many fail in the experience of divine healing is because they expect to have it all without a struggle, and when the conflict comes and the battle wages long, they become

discouraged and surrender. God has nothing worth having that is easy. There are no cheap goods in the heavenly market. Our redemption cost all that God had to give and everything worth having is expensive. Hard places are the very school of faith and character, and if we are to rise over mere human strength and prove the power of life divine in these mortal bodies, it must be through a process of conflict that may well be called the birth travail of a new life. It is the old figure of the bush that burned but was not consumed, or of the Vision in the house of the Interpreter of the flame that would not expire, notwithstanding the fact that the demon ceaselessly poured water on it because in the background stood an angel ever pouring oil and keeping the flame aglow.

No, dear suffering child of God, you cannot fail if only you dare to believe, to stand fast and refuse to be overcome.

IV. The Process of Receiving This Supernatural Life

1. It is by faith. "I believe, and therefore have I spoken; we therefore believe and likewise speak." We can only retain the life of Christ while we trust Him.

2. It must be moment by moment and day by day. "For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." It must be a habit of receiving, a constant dependence. It is not one or two remarkable experiences of healing, but a lifelong drinking in of strength from Christ even as the plant continually draws its nourishment from the soil by ten thousand rootlets. It is here that we must learn to maintain the habit of physical union with Christ and vital dependence upon His strength, breath by breath and step by step.

V. The Pledge of Future Glory

All this is but the earnest of something better by-and-by. Therefore the apostle adds, "We know that if the earthly house of this tent were taken down, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And then he adds a little later, "Now He that has wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." The apostle means that the life of Jesus in our bodies now is but the beginning and the pledge of that glorious life which is to come to us at the resurrection and the kingdom above. Just as the bulb you plant in autumn has in it the promise of the Easter lily and the acorn is but an oak in miniature, and the seed carries in its bosom the embryo of the golden harvest, so the touch of Christ upon our bodies now carries with it the pledge and the very substance of all the glorious immortality which is to be ours in the age to come.

What a sad morning that was when our first parents went forth weeping and ashamed from the gates of Eden and knew that the Tree of Life was henceforth closed to them as the source of physical immortality. What a glad moment that would be if a glorious angel should come down from heaven and plant it in our gardens once more.

Something better we are permitted to bring in this glorious message of the supernatural life of

Christ. Not only are we permitted to transplant from the soil of heaven the Tree of Life, but He, who is the source of life itself, has come down not only to walk among us for a little while as an example of the life divine, but to dwell within us as the perennial foundation in our entire being of that life which, although exposed to conflict and testing and suffering now, is pressing on through storm and wind and tide to that glorious hour when:

"His gracious hand shall wipe the tears
From every weeping eye;
And pains and groans and griefs and fears
And Death itself shall die."

Christ in the Bible

2 Corinthians

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 6

PAUL'S TESTIMONY ABOUT SALVATION

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God." 2 Cor. 5: 20.

The apostle has given us his testimony about trial and victory, about his ministry and his own physical life. He now comes to the theme he loves best of all, the Gospel of our reconciliation, the great salvation for which God had made him an ambassador to men.

I. A New Creation

"If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creation, old things have passed away, behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God." Paul's remedy for the world's need was no mere scheme of social reform, educational progress, ethical culture or fine arts. He had seen the failure of mere culture in Greece and Rome, and had turned away from the world's noblest monuments of art with disgust and horror as he saw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry. The Augustine age of Roman literature was only just closing, but it had failed to lift man higher than the earthly plane of cultivated selfishness and moral degradation. No higher school of ethics was ever known than the teaching of Moses and the Jewish law. But Paul had found the utter worthlessness of the righteousness of the law and the powerlessness of the highest ideals to lift man above his fallen nature. And so he came to his fellow men to tell them that our fallen race must have, not an evolution, but a revolution. Humanity is too far gone for self-improvement or any principle of recuperation. There must be a new creation. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

This was the first principle of his great message of salvation. Dear friend, have you seen its utter and imperative necessity? You are trying to be good with a bad heart. You are trying to serve God with a nature utterly depraved and fallen. You are trying to bring a clean thing out of an unclean. As well might you try to develop a dove out of a hawk, or a fawn out of the groveling swine. The best gift that Christ has brought to fallen man is a new heart and an automatic salvation that works spontaneously from a living principle that loves the good and hates the evil because of the law of the fitness of things as strong as the law of gravitation and the will of God. We all know how in our modern industrial life the old clumsy methods of doing things have been superseded by automatic machinery that simply needs to be started and then it works out all the complicated processes of our manifold manufacturing enterprises by a law inherent in itself. This is God's great secret of the new life. He puts in us a vital principle and sets in operation an automatic process that makes it as easy to be humble and holy as once it

was easy to be wicked and vile. Have you come to Christ for this great gift, a heaven born heart, a new nature, a spirit born from above? You cannot develop it by education. You cannot create it by will power. It is the gift of God. It is eternal life begun on earth and made perfect in the skies. And it comes to every yielded soul that recognizes its absolute necessity and accepts it from Jesus Christ as the gift of His grace. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

II. A Divine Reconciliation

"All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God. For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

The new creation which we have just described cannot begin until a previous process of reconciliation has been effected. There were barriers in the way which had to be removed before the life and love of God could become operative upon the hearts of men. It was like the week of creation. The sun was made in the beginning, but it was the fourth day before his radiance reached the earth and established the beautiful order of day and night, light and heat, vegetable and animal life. Vast obstacles in the earth's atmosphere intervened and made the surface of our globe and made the earth a seething chaos. All this had to be cleared away and a firmament and atmosphere created before the sun could pour its beams upon the earth and create a world of beauty and of bloom. So, before God could reach the human heart with the renewing influence of His holy Spirit, it was necessary that the great work of preparation should be accomplished. This is described by the apostle as "reconciliation." It includes three stages.

1. Revelation. God had to be revealed to man in His true character and beneficence. Our sinful hearts and the lies of our adversary, the devil, had so distorted our conception of the Father that it was impossible for us to love and trust Him. To the natural man, God is an object of terror and not of love. This is because they do not know Him, for to know Him is to love Him. It was necessary, therefore, for God to reveal Himself as a Father, a Friend and a Restorer. He did this through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." That life of gentleness, unselfishness, sacrifice and ceaseless service was just an object lesson of God. "He that has seen Me, has seen the Father." And when at last He hung upon that cross "bearing in His own body" the sins and the curse of men, a spectacle was presented of the Father's heart toward the sinner, which, when rightly understood and accepted by simple faith, is fitted to put to shame our unworthy thoughts of our loving Father and inspire our hearts with confidence and love. Instead of an avenging fury, waiting to destroy us, we see Him taking our sins upon Himself, and by a plan of mercy as marvelous in its wisdom as in its grace, satisfying every claim against the righteousness of the law and opening the way for our forgiveness and salvation. This was the first object of Christ's coming, to bring God to us. The second is to bring us to God. But He must first come down and

show us the Father and then go back and take us with Him to the Father.

So sublimely beautiful is this conception of Christ's work that in many minds it has crowded out altogether the other and equally important aspect of His work as a sacrifice for sin. Many can only see the benevolence and heroic aspect of His life and death as a sublime example of love, and they leave out the deeper meaning of the precious blood. Both are true, and let us not in our zeal for the doctrine of the atonement forget the other aspect of Christ's work as a revelation of a Father's heart toward His rebellious children.

The apostle's conception reminds us of the familiar story of the Scottish maiden who had left her mother and her home and had fallen into the depths of sin partly through severe Scottish discipline, which had shown her the harder side of that mother's justice, rather than the gentler side of her love. When she found her child was gone, her whole nature changed, and her love sought far and wide for the wandering daughter. At last she devised the ingenious idea of hanging up her photographs in many of the dance halls of the great city, with a loving message and her own autograph at the foot of the picture. One night the eyes of the lost one suddenly fell upon the picture and the message inviting her home, and a new vision of her mother came to her heart. She saw her now, not as the severe parent, restraining, disciplining, punishing her rebellious child, but with a heart of love and breaking with sorrow and waiting to forgive. As she recovered from her swoon, she cried, "Take me home," and the rest of the story can better be imagined than told. Jesus Christ came down to this world of sin to hold up before God's rebellious children the picture of the Father's face and the vision of the Father's love. We love to think of all this in connection with Jesus, but let us not forget that other Face behind the Savior, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."

2. Propitiation. More was needed, however, than the revelation of God's love. There were real barriers to overcome. There were tremendous facts of Sin, Righteousness and Law and only infinite wisdom could have devised a way to meet all these contradictions of the problem and enable God to be at once "a just God and a Savior."

This is where propitiation comes in, and the apostle has not left it out of his Gospel. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses." But this was not a whitewashing of humanity; this was not an erasure of the records in God's eternal books; but it was a mighty settlement in which every claim was met and every attribute of God was satisfied. Here is the solution of the problem, "For He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin!" There in the most explicit terms is the doctrine of the atonement, God's great settlement for the sins of men. Jesus Christ, a Man, the Head of our race, and thus fitted to be our Representative, takes our place, assumes our liabilities, meets our penalties, satisfies all the demands of infinite justice and law and then passes this all over to every man who is willing to accept it as the ground of a settlement with God and constituted Jesus Christ his Attorney for this settlement. This last is indispensable. While His atonement is sufficient for the race, it only becomes efficient for every one who personally commits himself to it by an act of appropriating faith.

3. Justification. The result of all this is the justification of the sinner. "He has made Him to be

sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The position in which all this places us is "righteousness." We are not merely forgiven and our guilt overlooked, but we are "justified"; we are put in the same position as if we had never sinned, or, as if having sinned, we had made the full settlement for our sin which Christ has made for us. If you have ever been in the position of a debtor, and know the humiliation of being repeatedly dunned for the claim, you know something of the difference between offering your creditor an apology or a check; asking from him either his forbearance or his receipt. There is nothing that more fully establishes your sense of manhood than to be able to meet your creditor and look in his face without embarrassment as you hand him a settlement of his account and ask him to please write out a receipt in full. This is the happy situation which God has prepared for every saved soul who accepts the atonement of Jesus Christ. Your sin is so completely settled by Christ Jesus and His righteousness so effectually imputed to you that you become "the righteousness of God in Him." Looking in the face of earth and heaven and hell, you can say with humble heart and yet triumphant faith, "Who is He that condemns? It is Christ that died. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies."

III. The Human Agency

In this great salvation, God has provided for the ministry of men. "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead be you reconciled to God."

Later in the first verse of the next chapter, he adds, "As workers together with Him, we also beseech you that you receive not the grace of God in vain."

1. The messenger of the divine mercy must first be himself reconciled. "God has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation." We cannot lead others until we first have found the way ourselves; and the first duty and instinct of the saved soul is to save others. God takes us from the depths of sin that we may be able to reach the people that are in the very same place where we once were. Your salvation is a trust as well as a privilege.

2. The messenger must be specially baptized with the spirit of soul winning. The word "committed" here in verse 18 has been more literally translated, "has put into us." It suggests the idea of a new instinct and passion for soul saving, being given to the Christian worker so that it becomes the very impulse of his nature to seek and save the lost. Just as certain animals have an instinct that fits them for the hunt and with the power of an absorbing passion for pursuing a special game which they are fitted to hunt, so the love of souls becomes the master-passion of those who give themselves wholly up to it, and they can say as the apostles said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Dear reader, has God given to you this intense love of souls, and this divine instinct to seek and to win them for Christ?

3. There is a place in all this for human sympathy and tact. God will use the things that are strongest in your nature to reach men and women. He will especially use you with the class

that you are best fitted to reach and attract. If you are to be made a blessing to the unsaved, He will take from you the stiffness, selfishness and exclusiveness which would naturally indispose you to put yourself to the trouble of reaching others, and He will give you the tact, the wisdom and the personal magnetism which will make it easy for you to attract men to Christ. What a wonderful object lesson we have of this gift in the ministry of our Lord. How marvelously He found His way to the heart and conscience of that woman at Jacob's well; how promptly He brought Zaccheus from the sycamore tree like a skillful hunter by a single shot, and how effectually He won the very policemen that went to arrest Him, but came back confounded, crying, "Never a man spoke like this Man."

4. But above all this, the real power of the ministry of soul-winning must come from God. "We are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead." We must come to men not with our love, but with Christ's. We must attract them not to ourselves, but to the Savior. We must make them realize that our message is one of authority and that they are dealing not with us, but with their God. This is what Paul meant when he spoke of "commending himself" to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

The story is told of a little child that was once brought into contact with a brutal criminal in a railway station, where the man was waiting between two policemen to be taken to a State's prison. He looked so sad that the little child crept up to him and looking into his face, said, "Poor man, I'm so sorry for you." The sudden revelation to him of that little touch of love seemed for a moment to wake up in him all his worst nature and bring back to him the memory of what he himself had lost and for a moment he became so excited that it seemed as if he would strike her. Her father drew her away, but as the train waited for some time, the little thing managed once more to steal unobserved to where he sat, and once more looking up in his face, she said, "Poor man, Jesus is so sorry for you." It was a child's Gospel, but it broke his heart. He burst into tears, and just then the train came up and he was hurried away. But years afterwards, as a reclaimed convict and a Christian evangelist, he told the story himself, how that revelation of the Savior and His love had brought him to repentance and salvation. Let us give to men the vision of the message of the Savior and ever hide behind our Master and His cross.

IV. The Sinner's Response and Responsibility

There is something for the sinner to do.

1. It is possible for him "to receive the grace of God in vain." All the kind provision of God's reconciling love, all the precious blood of Christ's atonement may be lost. God will force salvation on no one. He has left the human will free to choose or to refuse, and the blood of every lost sinner shall be upon his own head.

2. God commands the sinner to be reconciled. It is in the imperative mood, "Be you reconciled to God." God is reconciled and offers His mercy through Jesus Christ to every man and commands him to accept it. There is a moment in every life when that great decision must be definitely made, and nobody can make it but you. It is the crisis hour and a solemn

responsibility. Oh, that someone who is reading these lines might this moment accept that responsibility and meet that simple, everlasting responsibility which settles the question for his immortal soul, and say: "God helping me, I will, I do, I now believe."

3. And it must be done now. The first two verses of the next chapter belong to this paragraph. "For He says, 'I have heard you in a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I comforted you. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.'" "When God has entered the human heart, convicted it of sin and brought it face to face with the Savior, then it is Now or Never. Perhaps it is Now or Never with some one to whom this message has just come.

How easy it is to be saved, but, Oh, how easy it is to be lost. The story is told by a distinguished minister, and has been published in tract form, that just after the war of the Union, he was summoned to the front to see his son, who was believed to be dying of a mortal wound. Arriving at the hospital, the doctors told him that his boy could live only about an hour, and that his seeing him might even lessen that little hour. But the father, after earnest prayer, resolved that he must see him. Coming into the ward, the lad looked up into his face with deep earnestness and said, "Papa, they tell me I cannot live and I am not ready to die. Could you tell me in just two minutes how I can be saved, for I haven't time or strength for more," and the father said, "Yes." Taking the clammy hand of his boy, he added, "Do you remember the time when you disobeyed me and for hours I punished you by refusing to speak to you or even let you kiss me or come upon my knee? And how at last you could stand it no longer and came with trembling feet and voice and said, 'Father, I'm sorry; forgive me'? Do you remember how quickly I opened my arms and took you to my heart and sealed that forgiveness by the kiss of love and how happy you felt as you lay there? My dear boy, that is just the way to come back to God, and that is all."

The boy looked up with wonder. "Is that all?" he said, "then I will try," and closing his eyes and covering his face with the sheet, he prayed for a few moments, and the bed shook with his emotions, while the father silently waited and prayed. Then there was a little cry and that face looked up smiling through its tears as he said: "Papa, I have done it and I feel it's all right."

That was all, but that was enough. Enough to save him and enough to heal him, for the uplift of that new joy gave him the strength that carried him through the crisis and he recovered, and was for many years the honored official in one of the department of the United States Government.

Dear Reader, that is all. God help you also to say, "I have done it and it is all settled." "Be you reconciled to God."

Christ in the Bible

2 Corinthians

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 7

PAUL'S TESTIMONY ABOUT HOLINESS

We have had Paul's testimony about salvation, the supernatural life of the body, victory over trial and other important experiences. In the sixth chapter of 2 Corinthians we have his testimony about holy living. There were special reasons why this should be emphasized in Corinth, because some of the members of that church had been guilty of flagrant offenses against purity, and their conduct had been condoned by many in the church. It was, therefore, necessary that a most emphatic protest should be made by him for practical righteousness and holy living. But this is just as important in every other age and place, and the apostle's message is of permanent application. Let us gather out of this paragraph the principal elements that constitute the life of practical holiness.

I. It Is Separation from Evil Association

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he that believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God as God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." (2 Cor. 6: 14-17).

The idea of separation is fundamental to the church of Christ. The very word for 'church' in the Greek language means 'called out.' From the first God has always kept His people separate from the ungodly world. The principle of contagion through association needs no proof. No sensible man or woman would continue to live in the same house with a smallpox patient, and no wise Christian will presume on fellowship and intimacy beyond the absolute necessities of life with those who are necessarily the fountains of moral and spiritual defilement. When Baalam could not curse Israel, he succeeded in destroying them by drawing them into unholy intimacy with their enemies.

The prohibition of this chapter applies to our whole practical life. It takes in our personal friendships and affections which we should not allow to become bound up with the ungodly, for it is in the heart that all the evil first begins. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

It embraces the family and prohibits intermarriage between God's children and the ungodly

world. One reason why the Hebrew race has been preserved distinct among the nations for thousands of years, and is steadily today recovering its place of supremacy, is that the true children of this race refuse to allow intermarriages beyond their own people. No Christian man has a right to marry an ungodly wife; no Christian girl has a right to marry an ungodly man, and no Christian minister has the right to solemnize the marriage ceremony between such parties.

Further, this applies to the business of life and forbids partnerships between children of God and ungodly men. Such combinations are almost sure to involve you in compromises and make you a consenting party to wrongs that you yourself would never think of doing in your private business. God was much displeased with one of His servants of old, who was faultless in every other respect, but it is said of him that "he joined affinity with Ahab and a prophet of Jehovah came to him with the message: 'Should you love them that hate the Lord? Therefore there is wrath against you from the Lord.'"

Little wonder that Jehoshaphat's partnerships failed, that his ships were lost, his investments a failure and his very life narrowly saved.

The church is equally forbidden to allow herself to be compromised with the world either by admitting an ungodly member, by adopting worldly methods of finance, or by allowing secular control, social ambition, worldly amusements or fashionable extravagances to mar her sacred purity and compromise her testimony against this present evil world.

The apostle tells us that such yokes are always unequal. The adversary will get the advantage of you if you allow yourself to be drawn into any sort of partnership with him. He can afford to do things that you cannot, and at the end of the partnership you will find yourself in the situation of the too confiding foreigner who was persuaded by a sharp American speculator to invest his money with him in an enterprise where the American had all the necessary experience and the foreigner's money was considered an equivalent in the partnership. At the end of the year our friend was very glad to get out, and in referring to the affair he said: "When we started he had the experience and I had the money, but when we ended he had the money and I had the experience." The enemy is too keen to fail to get advantage of you at every point. You may think that you can influence your ungodly husband by marrying him, but you will find it all the other way. You can lift people up only by keeping on a higher level. If you sink to theirs, they will surely drag you still further down. God help us to be true to our separation.

II. Cleansing

"Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

Sanctification includes a good deal more than mere outward separation from evil persons. The worst evil is in our own hearts, and that must be removed by the deeper work of the Holy Spirit. But in this we must ourselves cooperate. There is a step for us to take first and then there is the work of God. We must consent to the work of cleansing. We must pass sentence upon our sinful heart and give God the right to cleanse it. Then His grace will come in and accomplish

the work, but not until we first of all have given Him the right of way. God will not take one step until we have handed ourselves over to Him unreservedly and pronounced sentence of death upon our carnal nature and our sinful heart. Therefore we read constantly in the old Testament of God's command to the people, "Sanctify yourselves," and at the same time of God's promise that He will sanctify them. Both are true. We must cleanse ourselves by putting away all known evil, renouncing every sin and yielding ourselves unreservedly to God to cleanse every sin and fill us with the Holy Spirit. All kinds of defilement are mentioned. The first is of filthiness of the flesh. This includes not only the indulgences of the body in disobedience to the divine law, but it also means those passions and desires which have their seat in the soul and find in the body the instrument of their unhallowed indulgences. The word for flesh here is not the usual word for the body, which is "soma," but it is the word "sarx," which always carries with it the idea of the carnal nature and the fleshly heart.

Then the apostle speaks of the filthiness of the spirit as well as the flesh. We may be outwardly free from immorality, but our minds and hearts may be filled with vile imaginations and unholy desires, and this God counts sinful and unholy. True holiness includes the thoughts, the emotions, the sensibilities and tastes and all the faculties and powers of our being. You may not yourself be guilty of immorality, but you may feed your eyes upon it on the stage in some prurient play. You may follow its sensuousness in the modern novel, and grovel in all the unrestrained depths of insinuating vice. You may have your spirit softly fanned by its fetid breath in the insidious poetry of romance. So saturated is much of this with the very spirit of darkness that Lord Byron gave express commands that his most famous poetical romance should never be allowed in the hands of his own daughter. Too well he knew the fatal blight which it would bring to her modesty and purity. Many of the new philosophies are permeated with an unhallowed spirit. Theosophy, Christian Science and most of occult teachings current with a certain class, who have caught the craze for higher culture, are of this nature, and a sensitive, spiritual conscience will find itself barred at the gateway of all this class of literature and be conscious of the very breath of hell the moment it comes under its influence. May God give us a quickened conscience and an obedient will to detect every form of defilement and cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

III. The Perfecting of Holiness

"Perfecting holiness in the fear of God." This has reference to the progressive side of sanctification. There are two experiences in holiness. The first is the act by which God definitely accepts our entire surrender, cleanses us by the blood of Christ from sin, and puts within us His Holy Spirit and the life of Jesus to constitute the very source and principle of our new life. But after this there comes a gradual growth. There is a place for the growth as well as for the more instant transformation. In the first chapter of 2 Peter, the apostle describes both. He tells of a moment when "You escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Then he proceeds to lead them forward to the life of progress. "Besides all this," he says, or more literally, because of this, "giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance," etc., and then a little later he adds, "If these things be in you and abound they shall make you that you shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Christ." Here

we have the addition of many graces to our Christian character and in each of them a still higher degree of progress and grace.

The word "perfecting" here does not at all imply our sinless perfection. The sense of the word is completing, finishing, carrying forward to maturity that work that has already been begun. The idea is that of the garden which has been cleansed from weeds and planted with seeds, and now it is being carried forward to the fulness of the blossom and the fruit. Do not, therefore, let us settle down in self-complacency because we have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and entered upon a deeper life, but let us go deeper and press farther on until we reach "the fulness of the stature of Christ."

IV. The Indwelling of God

"You are the temple of God, for He has said I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be My people." This is the deepest truth in connection with sanctification. This is the climax of all other experiences and preparations. This is variously described in the New Testament as "the baptism of the Holy Ghost," "abiding in Christ and He in us," and such promises as John 14: 23, "My Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." They are not essentially distinct, but phases of the same great fact. It is the Holy Spirit that first comes, and when He comes He brings Jesus and reveals Him, for He never works apart from Him, but Jesus always comes to reveal to us the Father and where He dwells, there the Father dwells in Him, so that the consecrated believer is the home and the temple of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This is the very principle of divine holiness. The apostle expresses it in 1 Corinthians 1: 30, in the clearest terms, "But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." The yielded heart becomes the home of God and all our holiness and righteousness is but the reliving by the Lord of His own life once more in an earthly temple.

But not only does He dwell in us; He walks in us. All the activities of our Christian life are prompted by Him. He goes forth with us not only to our sacred duties, but to our secular calling. And so it is said, "Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called; let him therein abide with God." We ought to be willing to go nowhere where He would not also be willing to go, and when our divine Companion calls a halt, it is always safe for you to tarry and dangerous for you to go. So let us walk with Him, and some day He will lead us so far that we shall never come back to this sinful earth again, but go in like Enoch, "to walk with Him in white."

V. Living as the Children of God

The apostle presents a very high ideal of the holy life in this passage, "I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." The idea is that we are to walk as the children of God with that holy dignity and consistency which will do honor to our royal dignity and our divine Father. A true child will cherish his father's wants and interests and avoid everything that would throw a shadow of reflection upon his name. Our loving Father is always watching over us for our highest good, and seeking to give us His best things, but He does this only as we ourselves meet the conditions and rise to

the essential qualifications. Someone tells of a wealthy businessman who had two of his sons in his business, one in a position of high responsibility, and the other in a much lower position, but the visitor noticed that in the family circle both sons were treated with equal affection. He asked the gentleman if he was really doing as well by the second son as he could, and he replied that he was doing as well as he could, but not as well as he would if he could. "I have longed," he said, "to be able to advance my boy to a much higher place, but I cannot do so until he qualifies, and I am doing all for him at present that I really can, but not all that I would love to do." This is the heart of our Father. Let us make it possible for Him to do for each of us His best.

God has His best things for the few
Who dare to stand the test;
God has His second choice for those
Who will not have His best.

VI. Enlargement

It is possible to be free from sin, utterly sanctified and walking with God and as His children, and yet be living a very narrow, circumscribed life.

There is, therefore, one more message in this passage which may well form the climax of this subject. "You are not straightened in us but you are straightened in your own selves. Now for a recompense (I speak unto you as to my children) be you also enlarged." God wants us not only pure but glorious, not only robed in the spotless garments of the priest, but in the beautiful array of the Bride. The story is told of a Hindu girl, who, walking on the shore, picked up a silver spangle. As she held it in her hand, she saw attached to it a golden thread coming out of the sea. Drawing this to her she found spangle after spangle upon its apparently endless length. She began to wrap it about her neck and form, and as she did so it grew more beautiful and glorious, until at last she was decked in a garment of shining silver and resplendent gold.

The parable is true of our spiritual life. As we put on each new grace of the Holy Spirit, we find that it but leads the way to something still higher, and thus God would have us go on and "add to our faith, courage; and to courage, knowledge; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." And then He would have these things so increase and abound that "an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

May God increase our capacity for growth, and give us the blessing He gave to Solomon, "largeness of heart even as the sands upon the seashore."

Christ in the Bible

2 Corinthians

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 8

TWO KINDS OF SORROW

"Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of, but the sorrow of the world worketh death." 2 Cor. 7: 10.

The world is full of sorrow. It comes both to the sinner and to the saint, but oh, how different it comes to each.

I. The Sorrow of the World

There is no comfort for the sinner's sorrow. There is no profit in his pain. Like the fire which consumes the dross, so the flames of suffering burn his heart to ashes and leave nothing but the bitter dregs and the burning lye.

1. Comfortless Trials. What can we say to comfort the heart that has no God, no Christ, no hope beyond and no faith in an overruling Providence here? Is there any task so trying as to stand by the bier of one who has died without the Savior and speak to a sorrowing household, who are equally destitute of His love and to whom that parting is forever? One can understand the terrible force and meaning of the apostle's words, "That you sorrow not as others who have no hope."

2. Wasted Sorrow. The Christian's trials are a wholesome discipline intended to teach him precious lessons in the school of holy character. Our trials are but "child training," as the apostle beautifully calls it in Hebrews, but the sufferings of the ungodly have no such issue. True, they are intended to arouse the conscience and transform the life, but they are unheeded and unblessed, and God at last gets tired of inflicting pain that does no good, and we hear Him crying in the pathetic language of the prophet, "Why should you be stricken any more; you will revolt more and more, the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint." How sad that so many have to suffer bereavement, disappointment, loss and failure and after all be like the one of whom Jehovah says in Isaiah, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him, but he went on frowardly in the way of his heart."

If our trials only taught us any good, they would not seem so hard, but to suffer in vain and find it has only embittered and hardened the heart, this indeed is the very sharpness of grief.

3. Vain Regrets. One of the sources of the worldling's sorrow is the painful reflection upon his past and the stinging memory of opportunities lost, of loved ones wronged, of sin and suffering

that never can be repaired again. There is no more bitter drop in the cup of retribution than to have God say to a soul, "Son, remember." To go alone with our own heart and retrace our wretched steps through all the chambers of memory, and see in the full light of experience the consequences of our sin and folly and know that it is irremediable, this indeed is the "sorrow of the world that works death."

4. Futile Fears and Grievs. One of the sweetest comforts of the Christian is the thought that he is saved both from his past and future. The promise of the Lord is, "The Lord will go before you and the God of Jacob shall be your rearguard." That is, God will take care of your future and your past. But the ungodly have no such overshadowing Presence. The past remains in all its grim reality and fraught with all its future fruition, and, before, there is foreboding, fear and the thousand anxieties that all the world's philosophy is unable to still.

5. Self Judging. Conscience is the dread accuser of the wrongdoer, and conscience, without the restraint of divine mercy, is a terrible tyrant. There is no punishment more severe than that which we have power to inflict upon ourselves. To see your worthlessness, to know that you are wholly bad and helpless to make yourself better, to condemn yourself in utter disgust and self-despair has no healing virtue in it, no help for you and no balm to alleviate the pain. It is but the beginning of the eternal fire. People sometimes think because they call themselves hard names and inflict severe penances they have somehow made atonement for their evils. There is nothing in this. It is but the scorpion which spends its life in stinging others and then ends its life in stinging itself to death.

6. Chagrin and humiliation because of the deserved punishment of sin is another form of the vain suffering of the world. Many people are quite comfortable about their wrongdoing until it is found out. Then it looms up in lurid colors and the keenest suffering comes from wounded pride and the sense of humiliation before others. But there is no uplifting power in this. It does not reform the criminal to degrade him and expose him. It only destroys the last lingering spark of manhood and drives him into deeper despair. God does not thus try to reform and save, but rather blots out the very remembrance of the evil and lifts us up again into confidence and hope.

7. The Climax of the World's Sorrow is Despair. One of the illustrious statesmen of this land a century ago is said to have ended his life by repeating in tones of deepest anguish over and over again the one word, "remorse," "remorse," "remorse." But that remorse did not bring true repentance or take away one particle of the deep depravity of his soul. It is but the beginning of the worm that never dies and the fire that never shall be quenched.

We have several instances in the Bible of people who said, "I have sinned," and yet it did not save them. Pharaoh cried out, "I have sinned," but it was only because he wanted to escape the judgments of God which his sin had brought upon him. Saul said more than once, "I have sinned," but it did not save him from going back and repeating his sin until at last he perished in his infatuation. Judas brought back the price of the Savior's blood and threw it at the feet of the Pharisees, crying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," but Judas went headlong immediately afterwards to self-destruction.

We have many instances also of people that were sorry, but it did not make them better. Herod was very sorry that he had to behead his much respected friend, John the Baptist, to please an infamous woman and a bold heartless girl, but he did it all the same, and brought upon himself the curse of innocent blood. The young ruler that came to Christ was very sorry that he could not accede to Christ's terms and part with all his earthly treasures and follow the Master. "He went away sorrowful for he had great possessions." But his sorrow did not bring him back or lead him to true decision for God. He is sorry still, no doubt, for his fearful mistake, but his sorrow is that of the lost.

Oh, beloved, sentiment will not save you; tears will not wash away your sin. The question asked of one who was bewailing his evil course may well apply to every one who reads these lines: "Sorry, are you, for what you have done? Well, are you sorry enough to stop?"

True repentance means more than a gush of emotion. It is a change of will, an altered attitude toward sin and God. Is that your attitude?

II. Godly Sorrow

There are many kinds of godly sorrow besides true repentance.

1. There is the sorrow that God comforts, the trials that bring Him closer to us and reveal Him to us as "the God of all comfort." That is a beautiful promise in the 72d Psalm, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass." The grass has just been cut down by the gardener to prevent it going to seed and drying up at the root, but it is bleeding at every pore and the gardener pours water on it or the rain falls in healing showers and the wounds are assuaged and the roots refreshed, and, lo, it springs up again. So God loves to visit the wounded heart, and it is never until we have suffered that we really know Him in all the tenderness of His love and understand such promises as this, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."

2. Trial Sanctified. The gardener mows that grass for its good and the Father chastens us "for our profit." That richly laden vine would have no fruit if it had not been cut back by the pruning knife, and so we shall some time thank God for our hours of deepest trial and the radiant memories of life's retrospect.

3. Suffering with Christ. The highest form of human suffering is fellowship with Jesus Christ in His burdens. "For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for His Sake."

4. Sorrow for the Sins of Others. This is one of the sublimest heights of Christian love, to take on ourselves the load of another's wrongdoing and make intercession like Him who "was made sin for them, who knew no sin," and still bears upon His bleeding hands the names of sinful men in intercession before His Father. This is why God has sometimes to let us know the bitterness of having some loved one go astray that we may know the Father's sorrow over His wandering child and the Shepherd's grief for the poor lost sheep.

5. Sorrow for Our Own Sins. There is a place for repentance in every Christian experience. There must be a definite conviction of sin, a calling of things by their right names and a turning away from all evil and giving God the right to cleanse and destroy it. Then God not only forgives but cleanses and takes away from us its memory and power.

But this is not the terrible and hopeless sorrow of the world. It comes through a different process and from a different source. It is born of faith and love and not of doubt and fear. The truly contrite heart is sorrier for its sins after it knows that they are forever forgiven.

How beautiful the Bible pictures of repentance. Look at that woman weeping at the Savior's feet and bathing them with her tears of love, while the Master says, "Much forgiven, she loves much."

Listen to Zaccheus standing among his acquaintances and declaring, "The half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore it fourfold." What could be more beautiful, more inspiring, more encouraging than that kind of sorrow for sin?

Look at Peter turning his face toward his Master in the moment of his profane denial. He catches, not a withering look of anger, but a pleading glance of sorrow and love, and breaking away from the multitude he hurries out to hide his tears of uncontrollable anguish and sorrow for the wrong he has done his Savior.

Listen to the prodigal hastening home and crying upon his father's bosom, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son."

This is repentance, and it is almost the most beautiful thing in the world. No wonder that God says, "The sacrifices of the Lord are a broken spirit." "With this man will I dwell who is humble and of a contrite heart and who trembles at My word."

6. The sorrow that comes from a deeper sense, not merely of our actual sins, but of our sinfulness and lack of entire conformity to the will of God. As the light of self-revelation comes to the heart and we see ourselves as God sees us, there comes a deep, intense longing for purity and entire conformity to God. How finely this comes out in the 51st Psalm, which was David's cry when he saw his own heart in the light of his terrible fall. It was not that he was afraid of punishment, but it was the sense of having grieved God and lost spiritual purity and blessing.

How keenly Job felt this when the searchlight of God was let in upon his soul and he cried, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You and I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

How beautifully the Lord Jesus describes this in the 5th chapter of Matthew in the opening paragraphs of the Sermon on the Mount, where He pronounces the blessing first on those that

are poor in spirit, that is, the souls that have seen their spiritual shortcomings, and then adds a similar benediction on those that mourn; that is, that mourn because of their spiritual poverty and are deeply affected by their shortcomings and failures. On such, the Lord says, there rests a great blessing, and to such surely comes the divine consolation.

7. The Fruits of Godly Sorrow. In the following verse the apostle describes the fruits of true sorrow for sin. "For behold this selfsame thing that you sorrowed after a goodly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yes, what clearing of yourselves, yes, what indignation, yes, what fear, yes, what vehement desire, yes, what revenge. In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." (2 Cor. 7: 11.)

"What carefulness it wrought in you," that is, what watching against the recurrence of a similar fall. "What clearing of yourselves," that is, what honest, earnest efforts to undo any ill effects of our wrong doing upon others. "What indignation," not against others, but against ourselves. "What fear," that is, what godly fear and vigilance lest we should be again entangled. "What vehement desire, what zeal, yes, what revenge," that is, what earnest resolve, by the grace of God, to retrace our steps over the same ground and recover all that we have lost.

God lets us do this in infinite longsuffering, and like Samson, whose dying joy it was to win the victory even by the sacrifice of his life that he had thrown away through his sinful folly, God permits us to retrieve our failures.

The story is told of a regiment, which by cowardice had lost its colors, and the Colonel had refused to give them a new flag. At length, in a bloody campaign, the opportunity came to recover their lost honors. The enemy was posted upon a hill and the Colonel, pointing to it, said, "Boys, there are your colors. You can win them back." And up that hill they charged, captured the enemy's flags and guns, and got back the colors they had forfeited.

So God brings into each of our lives some hard place, some strong temptation, which is just another name for a new opportunity to recover what we have lost, and it is then that our true sincerity and godly sorrow are fully vindicated. God has deliverance for His tempted children. God has victory for us over every failure and every defeat. Let us take heart and allow Him to make us more than conquerors through His love.

A jeweler was once engaged cutting a beautiful cameo figure. Suddenly he discovered a dark streak in the stone. It was a flaw. At first he thought he should have to throw it away, but after thinking hard over it, there came to him the fine conception of working that stain into the drapery of the figure. This he succeeded in doing, so that it became an actual ornament and appeared like a flowing robe upon the spotless figure of the design and added immeasurably to its beauty and effect.

So God permits us take our hard places and failures and shape them into robes of transfiguration to show to wondering angels through all eternity the marvelous power of that Grace for which nothing is too hard, so that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Christ in the Bible

2 Corinthians

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 9

OUR SPIRITUAL WARFARE

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds);

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

"And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled." 2 Cor. 10: 3-6.

The world is fond of the pomp and circumstance of war, and conflict and victory constitute the largest part of human history. The Bible is full of military metaphors and the Christian's life is one long battlefield, but the forces engaged and the weapons employed are very different from man's campaigns. The greatest victories of the Bible all foreshadow these higher forces and hidden foes. The capture of Jericho by a shout of faith, the defeat of Goliath by a shepherd boy, and the victory of Jehoshaphat over his myriad foes by the music of a sacred choir; these are suggestions of those unseen powers which are waging the battle of eternity and fighting the good fight of faith.

It is of this warfare that our text speaks. "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." There are conflicts in the name of Christianity which are not able to make this claim. When we try to serve God with an unsaved and unsanctified heart; when we endeavor to develop character by culture; when we try to build up the kingdom of God through social influence, intellectual power, skillful organization and financial methods without the Holy Spirit and the supernatural power of God, we are attempting to fight the battles of the Lord by the arm of flesh and we shall find it true, "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts."

The warfare in which we are engaged is the fight against sin, Satan and the world. The battlefield is very often within our own heart; the foe is invisible and the conflict is secret and all unseen by mortal eyes; but none the less is it intense and decisive for the issues of heaven and hell.

Indeed, it requires far higher qualities to stand true in the spiritual conflict than even upon the bloody battlefield, and "he that rules his spirit is greater than he that takes a city."

The weapons of our warfare are spiritual.

The first is the name of Jesus. We cannot fight under our own flag. Satan has little fear of us. The battle is not ours, but God's, and as we go forth making Christ responsible and meeting every temptation in His name, we shall be conquerors.

The Holy Spirit is our strength in this warfare. It was He that led Jesus Christ into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and brought Him forth crowned with victory, and the Christian's most essential weapon is the "sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God."

Archimedes dreamed of a scientific process by which he could, through a burning glass, set fire to the ships of the enemy, and it is a question whether some day our marvelous scientific progress will not evolve, through electricity, a power so subtle and far-reaching that by a flash it can annihilate a battleship and explode a powder magazine, and thus, by its destructiveness, render war practically impossible.

But this we know: That in the Holy Ghost we have a "consuming fire" which we can turn upon every enemy, every temptation, every thought, every lingering trace of evil in ourselves and triumph "not by might nor by power," but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts.

The armor of righteousness is described as the Christian's breastplate, and indeed, it is a very panoply of victory. When Joseph was assailed by the subtle temptress, he was sin proof through one single principle; "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" When the men of Babylon were threatened with the burning, fiery furnace, they had but one answer: "We are not careful to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, but if not, yet be it known unto you that we will not serve your gods nor worship the golden image which you have set up." Such a spirit is invincible. The devil never attacked the power of Jesus, but he did assail His righteousness. If he could only have got Him to turn aside for a moment from the will of God, he knew that human redemption was defeated and God dethroned. The spirit of implicit, uncompromising obedience to God, an everlasting "No" to everything that is contrary to His will, will carry us through every conflict and crown us with eternal victory.

Faith is a great weapon in our spiritual warfare. This is the victory that "overcomes the world: even our faith." "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." Through faith "they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Love is a still more certain weapon. When Satan assails us with wrong and injustice, his chief object is to provoke us to irritation and destroy the sweetness of our spirit. When we meet his fiery darts with a panoply of love, they are quenched and neutralized. Nothing can harm us if our love only remains unconquered. There is no sublimer heroism than to stand in silence amid misrepresentation and wrong, returning good for evil and like Jesus on the cruel cross simply saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The story is told of a poor African who was caught on the premises of a foreigner in South Africa and suspected of stealing some valuable articles that had been missed. He earnestly denied the crime, but the cruel white man bound him,, and forcing him to lay his hand upon the

block, with one blow severed it from the arm, and sent him away bleeding and mutilated into the bush. A few months later, in the fortunes of the Boer war, this white man found himself in the bush, and one night he was compelled to seek refuge in a native hut. He was kindly entertained, and in the morning his host met him, and holding up the stump of his arm asked him if he recognized him. The man was horror stricken; it was the victim of his former cruelty and he was in his power. But the native smiled and said, "Yes, I could kill you, and you perhaps deserve it, but I am a Christian and I have learned that love is sweeter than revenge, and so I forgive you. You can go." These are battles of the heart that cost something and mean everything.

Patience is the twin sister of love and is also one of our effectual weapons in the spiritual conflict. Among the typical characters of the book of Genesis, much place is given to the story of Isaac. This is not without reason, for Isaac represents especially the victories of patience. He was always giving place to others. Truly this is the story of love in the thirteenth chapter of 1 Cor.: "Love suffers long and is kind; bears all things; believes all things; hopes all things; endures all things."

Prayer also is, perhaps, our mightiest weapon. Our best victories are won by its influence.

Praise is a still higher form of prayer and prayer never reaches its victory until it becomes praise. Dr. Miller tells of a party visiting the Lakes of Killarney who were attracted one day by some beautiful singing in a cabin. They asked a girl who had just come out who the singer was. "Oh," she said, "it's Uncle Tim singing away the pain. He's just had a bad spell and it's the only thing that helps him when he is in great pain." Humble sufferer! He was indeed a "hero in the strife," and many of us would find his remedy for pain much better than our groans and grumbings.

Our text speaks of the "strongholds of the enemy," which we may "cast down" in this great warfare.

The figure suggests the story of Canaan and the great strongholds captured by Joshua and his armies from the enemy. There were three especially that seem to be types of our spiritual conflicts. One at the commencement of their campaign, one at its next critical stage, and one at the end. Each of these involved a great advance movement.

The first of these was Jericho, and it had to be captured before they could enter the land at all. And so there is in every Christian life a stronghold at the very gateway of salvation, some besetting sin, some inveterate habit, some insuperable barrier.

The second was Hebron, captured by Caleb after the land had been subdued. This represented the new advance movement to the choice possession of the land and may well stand for the strongholds that face us as we enter upon the deeper life.

There is always some crisis to be passed, some Hebron to be captured, some idol to be slain, some fight of faith to be won before we come into our inheritance of perfect love.

The third was far down in their national history long after Canaan had been won and when David had at length established his throne in Hebron. It was the stronghold of Jebus, afterwards known as Zion, and its heroic capture by Joab won for him the place of commander-in-chief of David's armies.

In like manner, there often remains late in our spiritual history some remaining stronghold which has not been captured from the foe. Perhaps it is a sick body; perhaps it is some victory over our circumstances; perhaps it is the salvation of some soul that has long remained obdurate, and when this is won our kingdom is complete.

Is God calling you, beloved friends, to some of these decisive battles, and waiting to cast down before you these strongholds of the adversary?

Once more our text tells us of the captives of this conflict. "Bringing every thought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ." Here the conflict seems to be confined to the battlefield of our minds and hearts. The foes to be subdued are our wandering, wayward and sinful thoughts. Surely, every one that has known much of the fight of faith has found that there is nothing more necessary or more difficult than the subjection of our thoughts and imaginations. All evil begins in some mental conception or some impulse of the heart. Impure thoughts, vain thoughts, wandering thoughts, anxious thoughts, remorseful memories of the past or corroding cares for the future: how great a part these things play in the tragedy of human life. God has victory for us over our thoughts. He is able to keep our minds stayed on Him. He is able to give "the mind of Christ," and "the peace of God that passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and mind through Christ Jesus."

Finally, there is the aggressive warfare against evil in others. "Having a readiness to revenge all disobedience." But there is a limitation to this, "When your obedience is fulfilled." We cannot attack the sins of others until we have taken the beam out of our own eye. Our own spiritual and mental victory are essential for our influence over others. Therefore God has to keep back many a life from its highest calling until it has slowly achieved self-conquest.

The power that runs our factories and trains today was made millions of years ago in the bowels of the earth, when the sun burnt up the forests of primeval ages and turned them into mountains of coal. That coal is lying there on deposit now, and the miner brings it forth and simply converts it into steam and sets it to work moving our modern industries and even fighting our battles. But it had to be slowly deposited there first as a hidden source of undiscovered power.

So God is burning up things in our lives today and turning them into spiritual forces, and some time He will bring them forth for the battles of His kingdom.

Let us not be impatient while the spiritual processes are going on. What we are is more than what we do. This is true, alas, of evil as well as good. There are lives slowly preparing to be an eternal curse. There are others getting ready to be a world-wide blessing.

May God help us to be willing to stand on the silent battlefield of our own hearts and win our victory, and then go forth "strong in the Lord, and the power of His might," to fight the battles of the Lord and the world.

Christ in the Bible

2 Corinthians

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 10

THE GRACE OF GIVING

"Therefore, as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge, and in all diligence and in your love to us, see that you abound in this grace also. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. 8: 7, 9.

The eighth and ninth chapters of this Epistle unfold the Scriptural principles of Christian giving with a fulness and clearness nowhere else to be found.

I. The Place and Grace of Giving

The subject of giving to God is here placed on the very highest plane, not as a secondary and merely incidental quality and exercise of religious sentiment, but as one of the cardinal graces of the Christian life. He commences his argument by referring to the grace of God bestowed upon the churches of Macedonia as evidenced in their giving to God and their suffering brethren, and he places giving on the very same exalted level as faith, knowledge and love, so that one cannot be deficient in this grace without lacking the very essential qualities of the Christian character and life.

II. The Joy of Giving

But while it is one of the graces of the Spirit it is as free and spontaneous as every true fruit of the Spirit must be. It is not to be a mere matter of duty but of glad and heartfelt choice and even delight. "The abundance of their joy," he says, "and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality, praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." Ordinarily we expect to see a solicitor begging the people to give, but here we see the people begging with much entreaty that the apostle will accept their gifts and help them to distribute them to their needy brethren. Again in the ninth chapter and seventh verse we have a fine passage, "Every man according as he purposes in his heart so let him give, not grudgingly nor of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver." It is a joy so great that it runs over in divine enthusiasm and hallelujahs of praise. Here we are distinctly taught that our giving is to be prompted not by our calculations of how little we can spare but by the impulses of our heart. Hence it is according to the purpose of the heart that our giving is to be gauged. The old proverbial exhortation that we should give until it hurts falls far short of the divine philosophy. Here we are taught that we should give until it doesn't hurt, and if we give enough to really reach and kill the core of our selfishness, it will slay the

thing that hurts and make it a divine and eternal joy. The old farmer who gave five dollars, and after he had left the altar felt so bad and was so strongly tempted to go back and get his five dollars and give one for it, took the right course when he grasped his old selfish nature by the throat and marching boldly back said to the collector, "Here, give me that five dollars," and handed out a ten dollar bill instead, then turned on himself with a look of infinite scorn and triumph and exclaimed, "Now, old nater, squirm." He gave until it hurt and gave until it ceased to hurt. The people who give so grandly in these days for missions do it because of the overflowing joy that fills their hearts. It has ceased to be a sacrifice, for even sacrifice is swallowed up in love.

III. The True Secret of Giving

"They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." Personal consecration must ever be the spring both of beneficence and service. When we cease to own ourselves, then all the selfish bonds that hold us to our belongings are sweetly broken, and we rise into the glorious liberty of a life of unselfish love. It seems to be clearly taught in the Scriptures that God does not want either our gifts or our services until He has us. The Greek word for servant is a slave, and the idea suggested by it is, that God wants to own us wholly before He uses us. Just as in royal palaces and princely mansions every bit of table service and plate bears the monogram of the owner, so God wants His name stamped on every vessel that He employs in the heavenly household. Beloved, have you given yourself away to Jesus so completely that the gift carries with it all you call your own? Then you have entered into the riches of His infinite resources and it is easy to give anything to Him. Therefore, it is that in our Christian convocations we do not begin by asking people for their gifts but by leading them to an entire and joyful consecration of all to God, and then it is that these magnificent offerings follow, because they have first given themselves to the Lord and then their means follow as a matter of course. Oh, that the church of Christ would learn the true secret both of service and of beneficence. Then should it be true, "Your people shall be a freewill offering in the day of Your power." The day of His power would indeed come, and the world be speedily brought to Christ. No power less than love of Christ can lift a selfish church to the heights of sacrifice. Yonder iceberg floating in the Atlantic could not be lifted half an inch by all the hydraulic engines of the world, but yonder sun can lift it among the clouds in a little while by the power of evaporation until it floats amid the blue depths of space in many tinted glory. The only magnet that can lift our hearts to God is the love of Christ, and, therefore:

IV. The Great Motive and Example of Christian Giving

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich." Here the Lord appears among His people as a great and infinite Giver. He gives not a part but the whole. He gives until He has exhausted all His riches and absolutely impoverished Himself, for we are told "That though He was rich, yet He became poor." He emptied Himself, He kept nothing back. He has nothing left but the heritage of His people. "The Lord's portion is His people." All else He has given away. There is no standard by which we can measure His infinite sacrifice and surrender. If a

king should stoop to become a worm it would still be one creature becoming another, a lower gradation of the same class of being. But when Christ became a man and took upon Him the form of a created being He stepped out of His class completely and plunged to a depth of condescension which is absolutely without any standard of comparison. And He did this that we might be made rich and clothed with all the glory and blessing which He gave up that we might have it. With such an example and such an inheritance how shameful and how foolish that we should ever hesitate to let go the tinsel toys of earth for the infinite treasures of our inheritance in Him. It is only when we realize Christ's love to us that we truly learn and love to give. Let us reflect upon that love. What has He done for you? What has He not done? Has He redeemed you by His blood? Has He blotted out your guilt and sin? Has He brought peace to your troubled heart? Has He cleansed your soul from its pollution and its passions? Has He given you His Holy Spirit without measure? Has He surrounded you with the blessings of His providence? Has He blessed your home and filled your life with love and sweetness? Has He given you a thousand gifts of His providence and a thousand tokens of His care? Has He answered your prayers and filled your heart with joy and praise? Then beloved, you can say of the greatest and the most precious sacrifice that He asks from your love, as once a dear, dying woman whispered to us as we asked her if she could give up her husband, if she could give up her children, if she could give up even her life for Jesus. With a face lighted up with the glory of an opening heaven she stretched out her hands and cried over and over again, "It's little to give to Him, it's little to give to Him."

V. The Privilege of the Poor

We are beautifully taught in this passage that giving is not the prerogative of the rich alone but the joyful privilege of God's poor. There is a deep pathos in the second verse of this chapter, "how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." They were not excused from giving because they were in circumstances not only of poverty but of indigence. On the contrary, this only enhanced the love, the sacrifice and the acceptability of their gifts. When God has some great work to do He generally calls for some noble act of sacrifice and for some gift that costs. And so when He would nourish and preserve the great prophet of fire, Elijah, during the days of famine, He sent him not to the court of Ahab, or even the friendly hospitality of Obadiah, his noble friend at court, but He sent him to a poor widow at Zarephath, and He suffered her to give her last morsel of meal and her last drop of oil for his support and then He multiplied the gift and made it sufficient to keep them both through all the days of famine.

So again, a little before His Passion, the blessed Master during His last visit to the temple sat down for a little over against the treasury to watch the gifts of the people as they passed by. He paid no attention while the rich and noble cast in their splendid offerings, but when a poor widow came up and put in all her living, His heart was so deeply stirred that He called His disciples and marked the act as an everlasting memorial and example. It was because it was her all and because she was so poor. Christ did not forbid the gift. He did not bid her to take it back, but He let it go, and He placed upon it a valuation which all the millions of earth could not outweigh.

Once, it is said, a splendid temple was built in Constantinople by the Emperor Theodosius. Millions of money and years of skill and toil were spent upon the cherished enterprise until at last it was ready for dedication. The architect had emblazoned upon its front the inscription, "This church Theodosius built for God," but when the curtain was removed that covered the facade, to the astonishment of the Emperor, the architect and the crowd of attendant princes and generals, the inscription read, "This church the widow Eudoxia built for God." The ceremonies were instantly stopped, and search was made for the presuming widow, but it was days before she could be found, and then it was discovered that she was a poor widow living far out in the suburbs who had done nothing for the splendid sanctuary but simply pull up the long grass from the roadside and spread it over the rough track to keep the beautiful stones as they were drawn to the temple from being scratched and effaced by the rocky road. The Emperor and his advisors when they found out all about her wisely concluded that she had not intruded, but that perhaps some angel unseen had changed that record in the night and put upon the front of the splendid temple a little example of the records that God is writing every day in the books of eternity, when the gifts of the poor will be found to have outranked and outweighed the most splendid endowments of wealth and luxury whose gifts have cost them nothing.

Let us not forget that it is possible for the poorest to try to hide themselves behind their poverty. It was the man with the one talent that missed his crown. Because he had so little he did nothing. And it was the widow with the one farthing that won the Savior's love and the everlasting memorial of His approval.

VI. The Principle of Missionary Pledges

Is it right for Christians to make pledges in advance for their gifts to the cause of Christ, or should they only give of that which they actually have? Have we Scriptural authority for missionary pledges? It seems very clear from this passage that these believers at Corinth had arranged and planned for their giving a year in advance, and that the apostle had taken special pains in preparing their offering beforehand. In the tenth verse we read, "And herein I give my advice, for this is expedient for you who have begun before not only to do but also to be forward (or as the Greek might be translated) to will to do a year ago. Now therefore, perform the doing of it that as there was a readiness to will so there may be a performance also out of which you have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that which a man has and not according to that which he has not." So again in the ninth chapter and the fifth verse he tells us that he "thought it necessary to exhort the brethren that they would go before unto you and make up your bounty whereof you had notice before (or as the margin expresses it), which has been so much spoken of before." It is very manifest from these passages that there had been much consideration, much preparation, much planning for this offering, and some of the most eminent brethren had even gone before to lay the matter fully upon the hearts of these disciples and make full preparation for their offering. For a whole year they had purposed to give these contributions, and now he appeals to them to make good their purpose and fulfill the performance of that which had been so heartily purposed. This surely is the very

method which God has led us to adopt in these great offerings; namely, to lay upon the hearts and consciences of God's children, the claims of Christ, the needs of the world and the obligation of giving liberally to send the Gospel everywhere, and also encourage them to form the largest purposes and plans of giving and even sacrificing in the spirit of a generous love and a lofty faith, and then deliberately to go to work by labor, prayer and sacrifice to gather the means thus pledged day by day until the purpose shall have become an actual performance. There is something in such a principle and system fitted to give an inspiring motive and a glorious incentive to our whole business and life and to put into even our secular pursuits and daily callings a sacredness and sweetness that no language can express. As we go back to our homes and occupations we are carrying on our business for Christ and the world's evangelization, and we are encouraged to ask tenfold blessing on all our investments and enterprises and to throw our hearts into our work with a gladness and an energy inspired by the high purpose for which we are laboring. Our business becomes not a selfish struggle for existence but a noble partnership with God for the advance of His kingdom and the spread of His glorious Gospel.

At the same time we are faithfully reminded in these passages that the obligation of paying these pledges is as sacred as that of making them. "Now, therefore, perform the doing of it, that, as there was a readiness to will so there may be a performance also out of that which you have." But even here there is the utmost tenderness and consideration for those who have failed to fulfill their well meaning pledges. They are not to be discouraged and humiliated if they have really done it in uprightness of spirit, for God does not press us for more than we are able to do. If we have really done our best He will take the will for the deed, "For if there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to that which a man has, and not according to that which he has not."

VII. Proportionate Giving

"For I mean not that other men be eased and you burdened, but by an equality that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want that their abundance also may be a supply for your want, that there may be equality; as it is written, he that had gathered much had nothing over, and he that had gathered little had no lack." (2 Cor. 8: 13-15.) Here we have God's message to the rich just as we had it a little while ago to the poor. How often it happens that when our means are limited our hearts are large, and when our resources increase our desire shrinks. "How is it, madame," said the minister to a lady who had come into the possession of a great fortune, "that you used to give so much when you were poor, and now that you are so rich you give so little?" "Ah," she answered, "when I had the penny purse, I had a guinea heart. Now that I have the guinea purse I find that I have the penny heart."

Beloved, have your gifts to the Lord been increasing with your income? Has He shared proportionately the fruits of His blessing upon your business? "Will a man rob God? But you have robbed Me in tithes and offerings."

The Bible has much to say of God's estimate of the gifts of the wealthy. When Moses received the offerings of the nobles of Israel they brought their wealth munificently, and the longest

chapter in the Bible is devoted to the account of their gifts (Numbers 7) , and at the close of that day of noble giving God was pleased to manifest Himself in a marvelous way in the tabernacle, "And Moses heard the voice of One speaking unto him from off the mercy seat from between the two cherubims." Again in the twenty-ninth chapter of first Chronicles we have an account of the splendid offerings of David and his princes for the building of the temple. David's personal contributions amounted to over eighty millions of dollars on that one day, and the gifts of his nobles were over one hundred and twenty millions, and this was three thousand years ago, in what we are pleased to call the age of semi-barbarism. When Jesus Christ was crucified it was a rich man who gave Him a tomb, and when the infant church was organized the wealth of Barnabas was exchanged for the commission of an evangelist and the glorious work of planting Christianity throughout the world. The rich men of our day think nothing of investing millions in a new railway or a great trust. When will the day come that will show us the spectacle of a consecrated capitalist taking up a whole nation and providing for its evangelization. What a sublime sight it will be for the Christian men whom God has so splendidly enriched to come to the leaders of our great evangelistic movements and say, one by one, "I will give the Gospel to Annam." "I will evangelize Cuba." "I will send a hundred missionaries to the Philippines," until the whole world shall be parceled out for God as the commercial and political ambitions of our age are parceling it out for their own selfish aggrandizement.

VIII. Administration of Gifts

The administration of the gifts of God's people is a matter that should receive the most careful consideration from those entrusted with the executive work of the Church and her missionary plans. The apostle was most careful about this, "avoiding," he says, "that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us providing for things honest, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." Therefore, it is most important that the business of our missionary societies and Christian churches should be carefully and faithfully performed.

1. It stirs up others to give (2 Cor. 9: 2). "Your zeal has provoked very many." There is no doubt that the noble gifts at a great convention stimulate a vast increase of missionary liberality on the part of other churches and religious societies.

2. The blessing of God upon our temporal affairs is the certain fruit of our giving. "He who sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he who sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully, and God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you always having all-sufficiency in all things may abound unto every good work." (2 Cor. 9: 6, 8). There is no doubt that this passage refers directly to temporal blessing and God's promise to prosper us when we give liberally that we may be able to give more.

3. Our giving enables us to have a partnership in the work of others and to sow the seed of the Gospel in fields which we personally could never visit. The men whom we support are simply the bearers of our own precious seed and "multiply our seed sown and increase the fruits of our righteousness." The businessman who never can visit China or Africa may be able to

preach the Gospel around the world through the lips and hands and feet that he sends around the world. Some day groups of souls will meet him in the great harvest and be counted the fruit of his own direct ministry. If men could only realize in life what they will realize so fully after death, the joy of greeting in the heavenly world the souls whom they have brought home through their loving gifts, or on the other hand the anguish of seeing the means they might have left for God wasted by selfish heirs and turned into an eternal curse through their unfaithfulness of the disposition of the means which God had entrusted to them.

4. A great tribute of thanksgiving will be brought to God and a great cloud of prayer will ascend to the throne for you through the love that your generosity inspires and the blessing that your help shall bring. And it may be that in the coming years the blessing will flow back to you and God will lay upon these very hearts a prayer for you in some hour when your heart is sinking and your life is in need and peril, and by and by in the heavenly world Christ will show you how you mutually ministered the one to the other, while the glory redounded to Jesus' name?

Christ in the Bible

2 Corinthians

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 11

THE THINGS PAUL GLORIED IN

"Of such an One will I glory; yet of myself will I not glory, save in my infirmities." 2 Cor. 12: 5.

It is sometimes necessary even for a Christian to assert his manhood and self-respect. Most of the time Solomon's first prescription is best: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him." But there are times when his second prescription is necessary: "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."

The apostle shrank from vindicating himself, but for the sake of the truth and the church in Corinth it became necessary for him to say something in answer to his enemies in that city, who were undermining his influence, ignoring his authority, ridiculing his claims and destroying his work.

In the course of this vindication, which occupies the last part of the epistle, there is a marked change in the general tone of the epistle and a deep sense on his part of being engaged in very uncongenial work. "I am become a fool in glorying," he says, and yet he adds: "Though I should boast somewhat more of our authority which the Lord has given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed." In the course of his vindication he tells us of several things in which he feels he may well glory.

I. The Privilege of Preaching the Gospel in the Regions Beyond

Paul speaks of this in 2 Cor. 10: 14-16: "For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the Gospel of Christ: Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labors; but having hope when your faith is increased that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly. To preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand."

It was his supreme ambition and his great privilege to be permitted to reach beyond the line of other men's labors and be the first to carry the message of salvation to a large portion of the heathen world. This was an honor of which his enemies did not even pretend to boast. Your teacher of error, your higher critic, Christian Scientist and hydra-headed fanatic does not run the risk of carrying his doctrines to the heathen world. He very much prefers to work under the cover and shelter of a respectable pulpit, a professor's chair and a comfortable salary at home, and to propagate his theories among the easily accessible multitudes who have already been

brought, through someone else's labors, into the fold of Christ. False doctrine seldom has much missionary zeal behind it, but as the wolf in sheep's clothing it prowls about the shepherd's tent and preys upon the stragglers from the fold.

What a sublime ambition it is to be the first to tell the story of salvation to some poor benighted soul, and perhaps become the father or the mother of whole generations and new tribes and tongues? All honor to the heroic men and women of our own day who have been the pioneers of the Gospel in Uganda, Congo, the Philippines, Hunan, Kwangsi, Tibet and other unevangelized lands.

God, speak to some who are wasting their lives in the narrow competitions of business or Christian work at home and call them to the regions beyond.

II. The Privilege of Preaching the Gospel Without Charge

Again he boasts thus in 2 Cor. 11:7-10: "Have I committed an offense in abasing myself that you might be exalted, because I have preached to you the Gospel of God freely? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: For that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia."

He almost apologizes to them for having deprived them of the privilege of his support, but he tells them that he is unwilling to relinquish the glory of preaching the Gospel without a touch of heroic sacrifice and holy independence. In the parallel passage, 1 Corinthians 9: 14-18, he explains more fully his attitude on this question: "Even so has the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me: yes, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel. For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the Gospel, I may make the Gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the Gospel."

He explains in these words that the support of the Gospel ministry is one of God's ordinances, and there would be nothing wrong in his receiving a salary from his people if it were given in a scriptural way, but he says: "I have used none of these things, for it were better for me to die than that any man should make my glorying void." The preaching of the Gospel brings him no reward, for this is simply his duty, but the preaching of the Gospel without charge and the encountering of the trials and sacrifices it brings is one of the ways in which he is winning his crown. This act on his part was entirely voluntary and God accepted it, and accepts it still from some of His servants, and makes up to them in other ways Himself.

Paul gloried in this not only because it was an opportunity of sacrificing something for his Master, but also because it added a new force to his ministry, and met the reproaches of his enemies that he was preaching for personal aggrandizement or gain. Every missionary in China knows how hard it is to persuade the people that we are influenced by purely benevolent motives in seeking their salvation. They are themselves so thoroughly selfish that they cannot understand anybody giving something for nothing, and when they really discover that the object of the missionaries is purely disinterested the impression is most profound, and is one of the most powerful assets of the missionaries in winning their confidence. There is nothing more important in our Christian work than that we should be free from all men, and that the spirit of self-sacrifice and independence should inspire every servant of the Lord Jesus. We have no business to be any man's echo or hired preacher. Our authority comes to us directly from the High Court of Heaven, and the gifts of God's people lay us under no human obligations, but are simply their own duty to Him whose representatives and ministers we are.

III. Paul Gloried in a Life of Suffering, Toil and Danger in the Service of His Master

What a catalogue of his labors and privations he has left us in 2 Cor. 11: 23-30: "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep. In journeyings oft, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern my infirmities."

What a life, filled up with such a catalogue of privation and pain! And yet there is no shade of complaint, there is no pleading for sympathy, but on the contrary these are prized by him as a soldier glories in his scars and counts it his highest honor even to die for his country.

Even in human affairs the strength of a nation's spirit is largely dependent upon the heroic sacrifices of its sons. The Greek soul was kindled to higher valor by the remembrances of Leonidas and the Spartan heroes. Rome cherished the early memories of the accomplishments of her people. England and America count these their richest heritages. And probably the secret of the extraordinary success of Japan arises from the fact that every Japanese soldier is trained from his infancy to count it his highest glory to die for his Emperor.

The story of the Bible is strung upon the same crimson thread of heroic sacrifice. Abraham had to give up his Isaac, Moses his earthly ambition, and Hannah her beloved children before God could give His highest blessing.

David could not sit upon his throne until he had won it by heroic courage and suffering. The very life-blood of Christianity is the spirit of sacrifice. The root of decay begins with self-indulgence and ease. The curse of lukewarmness is destroying the vital power of religion. The

greatest need of modern missions is a heroic spirit both in the workers abroad and the supporters at home. Oh, for a revival of the spirit of Moriah and Calvary's cross!

"O Love that gave Thy life for me,
Help me to live and love like Thee
And kindle in this heart of mine
The passion fire of love divine.

"Make duty joy and suffering sweet
As both are laid at Jesus' feet,
And kindle in this heart of mine
The passion fire of love divine."

IV. He Gloried in His Divine Revelations

What a disclosure he gives us of the high honor confided to him by the Lord! "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body I cannot tell or whether out of the body I cannot tell): God knows such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell: God knows) . How that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." And this was no isolated instance, for he lived in the society of heaven. Again and again the Master's presence was vouchsafed for him in the critical moments of his life, and the Lord stood by him with words of encouragement and promise and with His mighty interposing providences.

What an honor men and women count it to be presented to an earthly king, perhaps once in a lifetime, and it is handed down to many generations as a family record! How the ambitious literary aspirants of the day covet the honor of telling of the friendship of a Gladstone, a Tennyson or some distinguished name, but Paul had the privilege of many an audience with the very Court of Heaven and with the Sovereign of the universe. Indeed, he could always claim such an audience, and by the telephone of prayer connect without limitation with the heart of God. This is the highest honor that God can give to mortals, and "such honor have all His saints."

The apostle refers here to some special revelations from the Lord. God has already spoken to us through His word, and we are not to wait for private revelations to know His will. And yet He does speak to the individual heart, making the things of God intensely real, for "eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." Such revelations as God sometimes makes to the waiting hearts of His children are not intended for other ears. The apostle distinctly says that what he heard was not lawful for a man to utter.

Let us not make the mistake of exposing the secrets of the Lord and confusing the hearts of His humble people with things which perhaps God only meant for you.

V. He Gloried in His Temptations and Their Compensations

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might not depart from me. And He said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong."

The revelations which came to Paul were so extraordinary that there was danger of his mind becoming unbalanced, and therefore God gave, as a balance wheel to him, severe temptations. One particular test was permitted which is somewhat obscure in its exact character. It was "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him." It may have been physical, it certainly was partly spiritual, and the effect of it was much humiliation. He asked the Lord for its removal, and he continued to ask again and yet again. But at length the answer came. God would not take away the trial, but would send additional strength through it and would be more to him than if the trial had been removed. Thereupon the apostle accepted it as a blessing in disguise and began to praise God for it, and even to glory in the very infirmities, reproaches and distress which seemed to hinder, but which became the occasion rather "for the power of Christ to rest upon him."

The transformation of trial into blessing is one of the deepest mysteries of God's providence and grace. In the realm of nature we have many illustrations of bringing good out of evil. They say that the song bird will not learn its notes in the sunlight, but its cage has to be darkened, and then, separated from the distracting sights and sounds of the world, it listens to its lesson and it learns its beautiful melody. So God has to put us into the place of silence and gloom to teach us the everlasting song.

It is a well-known secret that electric power is produced by friction. Go to a great powerhouse and there you will see the cylinders revolving against strong pressure, and out of the pressure comes the electric fire. So God develops spiritual power in our lives through the pressure of hard places.

Trial reveals us to ourselves and shows us our weakness and nothingness. Then it reveals Christ to us and shows us His infinite resources until we hear Him saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Trial develops and brings to perfection the fruits of the Spirit, deepening the soil and cultivating the garden of the great Husbandman and bringing forth the sweetness and the strength of His grace. And trial brings to us the power of God and presents to the world the amazing spectacle of a soul elevated above all surrounding circumstances and conditions, in the hardest places, and yet able to say, "Sorrowful but always rejoicing, poor yet making many rich, having nothing and yet possessing all things."

"It is easy enough to be pleasant
When life goes by with a song,
But the man worthwhile is the man who can smile
When everything goes dead wrong.

"For the heart is tested by trouble
And it grows with the passing years;
And the smile that is worth all the treasures of earth
Is the smile that shines through our tears."