

Wishings of life... While there's a hand to strike... While there's a young heart brave... While there's a task unwrought... While there's a God to save... While there's a work for each... While there's strength in God... While there's a crown reserved... While there's a love and red... While there's a foe that wrongs... While there's a brother need... While there's a tempter near... Both in word and deed!

A WONDER EXPLAINED BY GREATER WONDERS.

A NEW SERIES BY FOSTER C. B. SUTHERSON.

"Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee... How different are our experiences from our fears? This man of God had said, 'When I cry and shout He shutteth out my prayer.' He had said again, 'Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through.' He had added even to that, 'Surely against me is He turned. But now he corrects his misapprehensions. Neither was prayer shut out, nor had God turned against him; for he joyfully confesses, 'Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee: thou saidst, Fear not.' As much as to say, 'Not only didst Thou hear me, but Thou didst come to me; not only didst Thou hear me speak, but Thou didst speak Thyself, and I heard Thee say, Fear not.' Not only wast Thou not turned against me as an enemy, but Thou didst prove Thyself my friend by being my loving and tender Comforter.

Whatever wonder there was in the heart of Jeremiah that God should draw near to him, you and I must have felt ever greater wonder when ever God has drawn near us. We have cried out, like David, 'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him?' It is to us a standing miracle that the great and glorious and thrice holy God should ever come and reveal Himself in a way of love to us, insignificant, dishonored, guilty sons of men.

I let us set forth some sort of an explanation of this wonder. God doth draw near to men. The Eternal converses with the creatures of a day. He who is inaccessible in the majesty of His nature nevertheless permits of who are but dust and ashes, to speak with Him as a man speaketh with his friend. Why is this? I shall not abate the wonder if I somewhat explain it by mentioning other facts equally wonderful—great things, and unsearchable, drawn from the vast depths of the divine working.

The first thought I would suggest to you is, that man have ever been in the thoughts of God. As we are taught by the word of God, God has always had a very singular regard to man. In the formation of man God witnessed His communion with His creatures: He began for the first time to hold intercourse with a being who is only in part spiritual, and as to a part of his nature is linked with materialism. God communed with Adam, and thereby placed him in an honor, in which, alas! he continued not. It was a wonderful thing that creation of man—I shall have to tell you a little more about it before I have done—but in the very fact that man was made in so special a manner there was a drawing nearer of God to man.

But, secondly, remember that God hath drawn nearer to us than we have as yet hinted at, in becoming tenderly near in nature. There was a day, in the fulness of time, in the which the Son of God took our nature upon Himself. Marvel of Marvels! He that made all things became a babe at Bethlehem, bore all the weakness and infirmity of infancy, passed through all the growth of boyhood, arrived at a tollsome manhood, and then finished His life-course. Jesus did not wear a nature like to ours, but He bore our actual nature—our flesh and blood. Sin is not of the essence of manhood, and Jesus had no sin; but all that is really manhood belongs to the Son of man, who is also "over all, God blessed forever." If I were in trouble in a foreign

land, it would be pleasant to hear the voice of an Englishman; it would be even more encouraging to spy out a neighbor, a fellow-citizen of the same town; but most of all would it be cheering to perceive that a dear friend, a brother, a husband was to the front on our behalf. Such a near and dear friend is Jesus to each one of these the Father hath given Him. See, here is your brother, O believer, a brother of such tender sensibilities, and of such quick sympathies, that in every pang that rends the heart, He takes His share! Do you wonder, therefore, that when you call upon Him, He draws near to you?

Nor is this all. The Lord Jesus was specially near to His people in the days of His life on earth. He was no mere observer of men, passing through our midst, as an English traveler might pass through China or Tartary, seeing everything and sharing nothing. It is very beautiful to my mind to reflect upon the nearness of Christ as man to men; for there are certain men who by temper, spirit, and behaviour are a long way off from the rest of mankind. Look at your princes and your aristocrats; they are scarcely to be seen with a telescope; they do not appear to be persons of like feelings with ourselves. Look at your exquisites, your men of pride, your men of pretended culture, who bear their heads above the clouds. But Jesus was the most manlike of all men.

I know several excellent men whom I love and revere, but I despair of imitating them; the color of their virtues has a tint in it peculiar to themselves; I am not made of such stuff as would ever work up into their fashion, admirable though it be. But I never thought this concerning the Lord Jesus; I always feel that by His grace I can become like Him. He is infinitely superior to those admirable friends of whom I have spoken, and yet He is more imitable. The hill is higher, but in His case there are ways and steps which invite; whereas in the other case there are crags which warn us off. I have known good men with whom I shall never be thoroughly at home until we meet in heaven; at least, we shall agree best on earth when they go their way and I go mine. One never feels so with regard to the all-glorious Lord Jesus. There our cry is, "Nearer, my Lord, to Thee. Nearer to Thee." He draws us to Himself, and the nearer we come the more fully we appreciate Him. If Jesus came thus near to men, in His life on earth, do you wonder that He draws near to them now?

Carefully notice that this was a nearness to sinful men. For, being here on earth, He did not select for his companions persons of high religious repute, men who practiced austerities, or severed themselves from common life. He went down among the fishermen of Galilee, He associated with poor people, uneducated and simple-minded. Ay, He dwelt among the sinful people: "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." You and I are sinners too, and our Redeemer's nearness to the sinners of Judaea meant nearness to us. Do you think it wonderful that to-day Jesus should draw near unto His own people when they are in their time of sorrow? I do not.

Further, dear friends, Jesus Christ came still nearer to us in His death. How wonderfully near Jesus came to sinful men when He was delivered up to His enemies to suffer death! Just think of it. Would you have supposed that Christ would come so near to us that He would be found in the felon's dock? Yet there He stood. Do you seek Him? Would you speak with Him? Will you go to the palace of the king, asking for Him? If you do, you must enter the judgment-hall, for there He stands bound, accused, and tried. They charge him with sedition and blasphemy! "He was numbered with the transgressors." In the end of His life He draws so near to us that He dies among the transgressors: "He made His grave with the wicked." When they took down the carcasses of the thieves they removed His body also, and His remains were given up to His friends as the remains of one who had paid the last penalty of the law. This is coming wonderfully near to us.

He is now in heaven; turn your thoughts up to Him there. In heaven He is still perpetually near us. Beloved, He has carried our nature into

heaven. The body of the Lord Jesus in glory is the same as that which was laid in the tomb. And what is He in heaven? He is there as our Representative. He is member of heaven's high Parliament for the sons of men, and He holds His seat as such. What is He doing in heaven? He is not only representing us, but He is preparing a place for us; making a niche in heaven for you, a place in heaven for me; and all the while He is continually offering intercession for His people. Ever bearing our name upon His breastplate, ever beholding us as given upon His hands, He is constantly so near to us that He cannot be nearer.

Jesus may well come near to His people, for there is a mystical union which unites it. A divine doctrine this, of which Paul saith, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church," and this in relation to the marriage union. There is a union between Christ and His church which can only be shadowed out by the union between a husband and his bride; I scarcely dare speak of it in words, it is so holy and divine. Who shall separate what God hath joined together? Now, do you wonder that Jesus draweth nigh unto His people? I should marvel if He did not; for would any of us wish to be away when our dear spouse is suffering? When her heart is heavy is not ours heavy too? In a true, conjugal love, such as I trust many of us feel, there is a degree not merely of similarity, and of communion, but even of identity between the twin that have become one. Now, we that are joined unto the Lord are one spirit, by one eternal union, and He must, therefore, draw near to us in a way of sympathy and fellowship.

II. I have tried to set forth this mystery as best I can; now I ask your attention for the few minutes that remain to the wonder itself. What I have said makes it less surprising, and yet fills us with greater surprise. In one respect it makes it not wonderful, but in others it makes it more wonderful this ever, that God Himself, in Christ, should draw near to us.

What is the manner in which God draws near to His people in their time of trouble? At times He draws near to us by a secret strengthening of us to bear up when we are under pressure. We may have no marked joys, nor special transports; but quiet, calm, subdued joy rules the spirit. To my mind, the best of states is the deep calm which comes of the peace of God which passeth all understanding. I care not so much for your brilliant and gaudy-colored joys; your neutral tints of quiet joy suit my soul's eye far better. I will not ask to see the sun above me, but I will be content to feel that "underneath are the everlasting arms."

Do you not remember that when the burden came, you feared it, but did not feel it? for the shoulder had grown stronger; when the need came which you dreaded so terribly, it turned out to be no need at all; for he who refused the meal also removed the hunger, he who denied the argument took away the cold. The secret sustenance of the soul by God is very precious. It is not observed of men, but therein the saints are made to magnify their God. That unseen casting on of oil upon the fire, behind the wall, is what we need, and it is a very charming way of the Lord's drawing near to us in the time of trouble.

Furthermore, the good Lord often vouchsafes to His people in their time of great pain and weakness and weariness, a doubly vivid sense of his love. It is not merely that they believe in that love as they find it recorded, though that is a very delightful matter, but they feel this love in the delight of it. They know beyond all doubt, and they feel beyond all question—"He loved me, and gave himself for me." The alabaster box which they were accustomed to hold firmly in the hand of faith is now broken by love, and poured out by enjoyment, so that the smell which was sometime latent, now perfumes all the soul.

At such times the Lord grants us a sensible assurance of His sympathy, with us. We feel that every stroke of the rod comes distinctly from a Father's hand, who doeth not afflict willingly. We look up into his face and feel that like as a father pitieth his children, so doeth he pity us. We enter into the sorrow of our Father's

heart while he is causing us grief, with greater grief to himself. We come to feel what it is to be bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord Himself. Extraordinary expression, is it not? where one said, "The soul of my Lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord the God." We are joined unto the Lord and know it by feeling his heart beat with our heart. It is a high degree of grace to be so in sympathy with God in his afflicting us that we would not have him cease for our crying; let him continue to do his will, even though he cross our wills.

The Lord draws near to his people's souls sometimes by a very speedy and remarkable deliverance out of the trouble under which they groan. He can draw near to you when you are plunged in poverty, and he can suddenly lift you to competence. When everything goes against you, when you are in a moment raise up a friend; when it appears that no chance nor change can set you free, he can himself be your deliverer. Did he not bring up Joseph out of the prison-house and set him on the throne of Pharaoh? He can do the like with you if he wills though your sun has gone down. Nothing is impossible with God. The deliverance which he has vouchsafed to his people, not only in ancient times, but in modern times, are such as to make us feel we dare not doubt, much less despair "Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

There seems to me to be a note bene here, a kind of hand in the margin, to point out the promptness of God. "Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee"—the very day he called God came; no sooner the prayer than the answer. Oh, the blessed quickness of God! When David cried to him he says, "He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yes, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." No pace is too swift for God to come to the deliverance of his people. He is slow to anger, but he is swift in mercy. Try it, ye downcast, and broken hearted one, try it to-day, and then come and tell us if it is not so.

One thing more; observe the extreme tenderness of all this. "Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee, and saidst, Fear not." You remember that text, "He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." Here is an illustration of it. Why I should have thought that when God came near to Jeremiah he would have said to him, "Oh thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" It would have been a very gentle rebuke but I should have expected as much as that. And if the Lord had come to Jeremiah and said, "You neglected to call upon me, and therefore fell into this trouble," who would have wondered? But no; the Lord's whole thought was about his dear child, and he said nothing to him to wound him, but everything to comfort him. Tenderly he cried "Fear not!"

You mothers leave your children for a little to play together when you are at work in the house, and presently you hear a crash and a cry. One of the children has met with a heavy fall. He was climbing where he ought not to have gone and he has had a serious tumble. One child cries, "Mother, Johnny is killed!" Well, you know if you inquired into the matter you would find that Johnny deserved blame; but you do not inquire. You rush to pick him up; you notice that bruise on his forehead; you are fearful for his legs and arms, you are ready to faint as you notice that he is bleeding. Do you scold him? Ah, no; you fall to kissing the poor child; his fault is passed by you only think of his pain, your only concern is about himself. And so with our gracious God. He comes to His poor, suffering, downcast people, and what He says to them is not—"You should not have done so and so; this is very wrong of you; I must terribly correct you." No; but he says, "Fear not, I have forgiven thee; and I will deliver thee."

Remember the father in the parable who the prodigal came back. Did he lecture him upon his immorality? Did he say a word about his ingratitude and folly? He did not notice his pimpled face, and point to his blotches as the result of his excess in wine with his riotous companions. He did not point to his legs and tell him that these came of his profligate expenditures. No, he said not a word

of upbraiding; but only, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; put a ring on his hands, and shoes on his feet." That is just what the Heavenly Father will do and say if we call upon Him, therefore let us call upon Him in truth from this moment, ere we leave the pew, and may the Lord cause us ere long to say, "Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee, and Thou saidst unto me, Fear not." God bless you, dear friends, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MISSIONS.

—When Dr. Grant of the Nestorian Mission received discouraging intimation to the effect it might perhaps be best for him to return to America, or plant a mission elsewhere, he answered: "I cannot leave this field till I have reasons which I can give at the judgment-seat, where I expect soon to stand." This high standard should be applied by all in every field and form of duty. If this were so, should we not be more faithful, prayerful, patient and cheerful. —Cor. Watchman.

—A distinguished foreign missionary says "the greatest peril of foreign missions is the want of vital piety at home." —Those who are intended to do any eminent service for God are always emptied of self, and led to see their unfitness for the undertaking; then they trust simply on God's wisdom and power, and he gets all the glory.

—The Presbyterian Church North had, last year, 1458 missionaries employed on the Foreign field. They served 2,000 churches and were the means of gathering 6,216 into them. This denomination expects this year to contribute \$650,000 for Foreign Missions. Their membership is 615,042. They do not have some truth which we possess but their giving may well be an example to us. Did our people in these provinces do as well, we should have about \$40,000 poured into our Foreign Mission treasury alone.

—The Hawaiians, while blessed with all the appliances of civilization, are slowly but surely decaying. The population which in 1832 was 130,313 was in 1878 but 57,985. It seems as though all inferior races must die out, when brought into contact with the superior.

How They Made Out.

"I don't know," said Margaret, "how we shall make out; but we can't let the children starve." Margaret was the house-mother in a German home, where money was scarce, and plain food was not plenty.

A stranger had come along the street, stopped at the door, and asked if he might have something to eat with the family. He was watching the yellow-haired little girl who followed Margaret around, and it was in reply to a question of his, that she had spoken the sentence with which our story begins.

"Then she isn't your child?" asked the stranger.

"No!" Margaret explained that she was the child of a poor neighbor who had died a few weeks before, leaving nothing for the little girl, and no friends for her to go to. So they had taken her in.

"And can't you manage to keep her?" the stranger asked. "You have none of your own, I suppose?"

"Oh dear, yes?" and she laughed over his queer mistake. "None of their own!" "Why, there are ten in all."

When supper was ready, they all trooped in. What an army of them! their hair neatly combed, and their patched and worn clothes looked as though each of them had been as careful of them as possible. At the supper table, each of them looked out for Gretchen; she had the largest potato, carefully peeled by Margaret, the mother's name-child; and Melchor, the father's namesake, put a bit of butter on it, though he seemed to be talking with the father and mother.

would be paid to them each year while they lived! \$3,100 a year because a strange man took supper with them, was pleased with their kindness to him, and their unselfish care for the orphan Gretchen! That sounds like a "made up" story, doesn't it? And yet it is true. The letter was signed, "Joseph, Emperor of Austria." And he was the stranger who had eaten potatoes with them the night before.

Ah! I wonder if you know what this makes me think of. Do you remember who laid aside his crown and royal dress, and left his throne and came to us—not simply to amuse himself and give us pleasure, but to save us from eternal death?

Some day we shall see him, with royal dress blazing with jewels, the crown of gold on his head. Will he remember us then as those who received him here? He is watching our actions, whether they are unselfish and loving, or hard and hateful. Is he getting a reward ready for us? The reward is not \$100 a year; it is home in the palace, a seat on the throne. It is to be introduced to his Father as brothers and sisters; it is to reign with him forever and ever.—The Pansy.

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