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RETROSPECTION.

Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee.—Deut. viii. 12.

Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.—Heb. x. 35.

He was better to me than all my hopes,
 He was better than all my fears;
 He made a road of my broken works,
 And a rainbow of my tears.
 The billows that guarded my sea-girt path,
 But carried my Lord on their crest;
 When I dwell on the days of my wilderness march
 I can lean on his love for the rest.

He emptied my hands of my treasured store,
 And his covenant love revealed,
 There was not a wound in my aching heart
 But the balm of His breath hath healed.
 O! tender and true was the chastening sore,
 In wisdom, that taught and tried,
 Till the soul that He sought was trusting in Him
 And nothing on earth beside.

He guided by paths that I could not see,
 By ways that I have not known,
 The crooked was straight and the rough made plain,
 As I followed the Lord alone.
 I praise Him still for the pleasant palms,
 And the water-springs by the way;
 For the glowing pillars of flame by night,
 And the sheltering clouds by day.

There is light for me on the trackless wild,
 As the wonders of old I trace;
 When the God of the whole earth went before
 To search me a resting place.
 Has He changed for me? Nay! He changes not;
 He will bring me by some new way,
 Through fire and flood, and each crafty foe,
 As safely as yesterday.

And if to warfare He calls me forth
 He buckles my armor on;

He greets me with smiles and a word of cheer,
 For battles His sword hath won;
 He wipes my brow as I droop and faint,
 He blesses my hand to toil;
 Faithful is He as He washes my feet
 From the trace of each earthly soil.

Never a watch on the dreariest halt,
 But some promise of love endears;
 I read from the past that my future shall be
 Far better than all my fears.
 Like the golden pot of the wilderness bread,
 Laid up with the blossoming rod,
 All safe in the ark, with the law of the Lord,
 Is the covenant care of my God.

—Anna Shipton.

ABIDE IN CHRIST, IN AFFLICTION AND TRIAL.

'Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.'—John xv. 2.

In the whole plant world there is not a tree to be found so specially suited to the image of man in his relation to God, as the Vine. There is none of which the fruit and its juice are so full of spirit, so quickening and stimulating. But there is also none of which the natural tendency is so entirely evil,—none where the growth is so ready to run into the wood that is utterly worthless except for the fire. Of all plants not one needs the pruning knife so unsparingly and so unceasingly. None is so dependent on cultivation and training, but with this none yields a richer reward to the husbandman. In His wonderful parable, the Saviour, with a single word, refers to this need of pruning in the vine, and the blessing it brings. But from that single word what streams of light pour in upon this dark world, so full of suffering and of sorrow to believers! what treasures of teaching and comfort to the bleeding branch in its hour of trial: 'Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' And so He has prepared His people, who are so ready when trial comes to be shaken in their confidence, and to be moved from their abiding in Christ, to hear in each affliction the voice of a messenger that comes to call them to abide still more closely. Yes, believer, most specially in times of trial, abide in Christ.

Abide in Christ! This is indeed the Father's object in sending the trial. In the storm the tree strikes deeper roots in the soil; in the hurricane the inhabitants of the house abide within, and rejoice in its shelter. So by suffering the Father would lead us to enter more deeply into the love of Christ. Our hearts are continually prone to wander from Him; prosperity and enjoyment all too easily satisfy us, dull our spiritual perception, and unfit us for full communion with Himself. It is an unspeakable mercy that the Father comes with his chastisement, makes the world round us all dark and unattractive, leads us to feel more deeply our sinfulness, and for a time lose our joy in what was becoming so dangerous. He does it in the hope that, when we have found our rest in Christ in time of trouble, we shall learn to choose abiding in Him as our only portion; and when the affliction is removed, have so grown more firmly into Him, that in prosperity He still shall be our only joy. So much has He set His heart on this, that though He has indeed no pleasure in afflicting us, He will not keep back even the most painful chastisement if He can but thereby guide

His beloved child to come home and abide in the beloved Son. Christian! pray for grace to see in every trouble, small or great, the Father's finger pointing to Jesus, and saying, Abide in Him.

Abide in Christ: so wilt thou become partaker of all the rich blessings God designed for thee in the affliction. The purposes of God's wisdom will become clear to thee, thy assurance of the unchangeable love become stronger, and the power of His Spirit fulfil in thee the promise: He chasteneth us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.' Abide in Christ: and thy cross becomes the means of fellowship with His cross, and access into its mysteries,—the mystery of the curse which He bore for thee, of the death to sin in which thou partakest with Him, of the love in which, as sympathizing High Priest, He descended into all thy sorrows. Abide in Christ: growing conformity to thy blessed Lord in His sufferings, deeper experience of the reality and the tenderness of His love shall be thine. Abide in Christ: in the fiery oven, one like the Son of man will be seen as never before; the purging away of the dross and the refining of the gold will be accomplished, and Christ's own likeness reflected in thee. O abide in Christ: the power of the flesh will be mortified, the impatience and self-will of the old nature be humbled, to make place for the meekness and gentleness of Christ. A believer may pass through much affliction, and yet secure but little blessing from it all. Abiding in Christ is the secret of securing all that the Father meant the chastisement to bring us.

Abide in Christ: in Him thou shalt find sure and abundant consolation. With the afflicted, comfort is often first, and the profit of the affliction second. The Father loves us so, that with Him our real and abiding profit is His first object, but He does not forget to comfort too. When He comforts, it is that He may turn the bleeding heart to Himself to receive the blessing in fellowship with Him; when He refuses comfort, His object is still the same. It is in making us partakers of His holiness that true comfort comes, The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, not only because He can suggest comforting thoughts of God's love, but far more because He makes us holy, and brings us into close union with Christ and with God. He teaches us to abide in Christ; and because God is found there, the truest comfort will come there too. In Christ the heart of the Father is revealed, and higher comfort there cannot be than to rest in the Father's bosom. In Him thou seest a thousand times more given thee than thou hast lost; see how God only took from thee that thou mightest have room to take from Him what is so much better. In Him suffering is consecrated, and becomes the foretaste of eternal glory; in suffering it is that the Spirit of God and of glory rests on us. Believer! wouldst thou have comfort in affliction?—Abide in Christ.

Abide in Christ: so wilt thou bear much fruit. Not a vine is planted but the owner thinks of the fruit, and the fruit only. Other trees may be planted for ornament, for the shade, for the wood,—the vine only for the fruit. And of each vine the husbandman is continually asking how it can bring forth more fruit, much fruit. Believer! abide in Christ in times of affliction, and thou wilt bring forth more fruit. The deeper experience of Christ's tenderness and the Father's love will urge thee to live to His glory. The surrender of self and self-