

From Heart to Heart.

BY PASTOR J. WEBB.

Dear Afflicted Sisters and Brothers: I have come to you with a message of hope; David said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Is not this exactly your experience? Have you not very often found yourselves down in this deep, dark valley?

"Why art thou cast down?" Apparently there is no real cause, at least, you cannot find it, but there is a reason; there are physical and mental as well as spiritual causes. Gloominess, loneliness, irritableness, and fero-bodings are often the effects of a weak body, overstrained nerves, insomnia, and ceaseless, gnawing pain; what a miracle it is that the soul does not give up in despair under such severe trials!

"Hope thou in God." The soul is exhorted to look up away from these disturbing elements to one who can lift it out of this dark valley of earthly sorrow up to the mountain-peaks of heavenly joy.

God is the hope of the quickened soul; the ungodly have no hope; they want to hide from God; you are looking and waiting and longing for him who is your life and joy. Is it not strange that you are not afraid of God? The reason why you do not flee from him is because you have been brought in touch with him through his son Jesus Christ. God is to you a loving and merciful Father. You came to him as a poor lost sinner; you received your pardon; you felt the quickening power of the Holy Spirit and you became a child of God by adoption.

You are sick and cast down now. It may be that there is no hope for you in this world, but do not despair, hope thou in God: by-and-bye you will have your health restored. A dear saint who had suffered much and long, when he was dying said in answer to a question that was asked him: "I am getting better now—soon I shall be quite well." Look up, desponding one, help is at hand for, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Will earthly parents neglect and slight their sickly or crippled children who cannot skip around like others? Will they not rather imprint kisses on their cheeks, and give them a hundred little love-tokens every day? The children's hope and life and joy are all depending, hanging upon the faithfulness and love of their parents. Our Heavenly Father has many dear children who are shut in away from the privileges of the house of God, and who cannot walk out, like others, in the beautiful sunshine, and breathe the balmy spring air—Do you think that he neglects any of them? Do you imagine that it is possible for him to forget any of them for one single moment? The sickly or crippled child finds much pleasure in thinking about its father, and in waiting and listening for his return. How welcome is the sound of his steps and the sound of his cheery voice! In like manner God's afflicted children find much comfort and joy in thinking about the goodness of their Heavenly Father; their hope is not in man, or in themselves, but in God. Hope grows weak when they look to their gloomy surroundings, or within their own sinful heart, but when they look away to Christ and behold him as the Sinner's Friend, and as the Covenant Head of the Church, and when they can gaze upon the perfection of his work, and the completeness of his salvation, and the unchangeableness of his love, hope grows strong; then they can sing:

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name."

You are shut in away from a good many friendly associations and Christian privileges, but you are not shut in away from God; you know what it is to enjoy fellowship with Christ; you have felt the comforting influence of the Holy Spirit; and then you have your Bible. You do not hear the gospel preached from the pulpit but you can read about Jesus. Our Lord said in the 40th Psalm, "In the volume of the book it is written of me." Sometimes while reading the Bible you get glimpses of the beauty and preciousness of Christ, such glimpses of the Son of God that you are constrained to cry out with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God!" All this is with a veil between; all this is at a distance; what then shall it be when we come face to face, when heaven's gates shall be flung wide open, when Christ is manifested in all his resplendent glory! Yes, the Bible is full of Christ. The prophecies, the sacrifices, the law, the priesthood and the promises all pointed to him for fulfillment and satisfaction. Then, how beautiful is that story of the Father's love! What a change comes over you when you read of the agony in the garden, and the bloody sweat, and the cup which could not pass from him, and the mock-trial, and the scourging, and the crown of thorns. Then, what glories open up before your eyes as you look through those bleeding wounds! You behold God as a loving Father; you hear his voice, not as the loud thunder of Sinai, but as a gentle stream of loving words and loving thoughts,

What a beautiful river of life is this! All these manifestations are present joys, foretastes of heaven's bliss. Yes, God gives his afflicted ones love-tokens, and songs to sing in the night season. You can depend upon God; you have his word for it; you have the experience of prophets, psalmists, apostles, and your fathers who have passed through great tribulations; and then you have your own experience; like Paul you can say, "I know in whom I have believed."

Heaven's sun is shining, "But," you say, "There are dark clouds, I cannot see the bright rays." Yes, but the clouds will soon pass away. In God's garden there are beautiful flowers, "But," you say, "It is night, I cannot see them." True, but the night too will soon pass away. There are green pastures and still waters, "But," you say, "I am imprisoned in this lonely chamber, and in this poor feeble suffering body." Yes, but your spirit can follow the Good Shepherd, and presently, in a little while, your soul will flee as a bird from its cage, and then it will spread forth its snowy wings and soar upward to the city of God. Hope on sisters and brothers.

"These checkered wilds, with thorns o'erspread,
Through which our way so oft is led—
This march of time, with truth so strong
Will end in bliss, 'twill not be long."

The Joys of a Pastor's Life.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

It is a lamentable and portentous fact that the number of candidates for the gospel ministry is steadily decreasing. In one of the leading Protestant denominations they have decreased from 1,508 to 917 within the last five years! At a quite recent graduation of a class of over 200 from one of our greatest universities, about fifty declared their purpose to enter upon commercial business; about the same number were looking to the legal profession, others to the medical and scientific pursuits; but out of all the Christian students in that class only eleven announced their intention to become ministers!

Various reasons may be assigned for this falling off of candidates for the pulpit. These I will not discuss; nor would I minimize the difficulties which a faithful, earnest, evangelical minister has to encounter. Some of these difficulties are arguments for multiplying rather than diminishing the number of the right kind of gospel preachers. My purpose is to present the golden side of the shield and to tell young men of brains and culture and heart-piercing what solid and substantial joys they forego when they turn away from a calling that an angel might covet. I do not underrate the need or the usefulness of godly laymen; but there are peculiar satisfactions and honors and spiritual rewards to be won by the preacher who preaches God's glorious messages to men, and the pastor who gathers and feeds and leads the Master's flock.

In the first place, he is in a close and covetable partnership with the Lord Jesus Christ. His work is on the same lines with him who came to reveal the mind of God to sinning and suffering humanity and to "seek and to save the lost." Christ's great commission to the band of men who were in the most intimate relations to himself was, "As ye go, preach!" They were to be his witnesses, his representatives, his heralds and his ambassadors; and that is the very same commission given to-day to every man whom he calls into his ministry. If you ask me, "What is a call to the ministry?" I would answer that it is both the ability and the intense desire, with God's help, to preach the Gospel of salvation in such a way that people will listen to you.

Think, too, of the glorious themes and the sublime studies that will occupy your mind as a minister of God's Word. If human science is elevating, how much more is the science of Almighty God and of man's redemption, and of the unseen realities of eternity! Your themes of constant study will be the themes that inspired the mighty Luthers and Wesleys and Pascals and Chalmers; you will be nurturing your soul amid those pages where John Milton fed and amid the scenes that taught Bunyan his matchless allegory and Jeremy Taylor his hearse-like melodies. Every nugget of fresh truth you discover will make you happier than one who has found golden spoils. The study in which a devout pastor prays and pours over God's Word becomes an antechamber of the king, for he hears the cheering voice of the infinite love, "I am with you always."

If the high range of his studies and the preparation of his discourses are so stimulating to an earnest, soul-winning pastor, he finds even richer satisfaction in his pulpit and in his labors among his flock and the surrounding community. John Bunyan voiced the feelings of such pastors when he said: "I have counted as if I had goodly buildings in the places where my spiritual children were born. My heart has been so wrapped up in this excellent work that I accounted myself more honored of God than if he had made me emperor of all the world or the lord of all the glory of the earth without it. He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways doth save a soul from death, and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." The young man who enters the ministry with this hunger for souls

has "meat to eat that the world knows not." His purse may be scanty, his parish may be obscure; difficulties and hard work may often bring him to his knees; but while his master owns his toils and blessings, he would not change places with a Rothschild or an Astor. Every attentive auditor is a delight; and when a returning and repentant soul is led by him to the Saviour there is not only joy in heaven, but a joy in his own heart too deep for words. It is full measure, pressed down, running over.

Converted souls are jewels in the caskets of faithful pastors; they will flash in the diadem which the righteous Judge will give them in that great day. Even here in this world it is far better "pay" than any salary for a pastor to be told, "that sermon of yours helped me," or "that one brought me to Christ." During my fifty-five years' ministry, I have had an immense correspondence; but the letters that I embalm in lavender are those which express gratitude for a soul-converting sermon, or for words of uplifting consolation spoken either in the pulpit or elsewhere. Happy the minister who is thus helped while he is helping others! He gets a small installment of heaven in advance.

Far be it from me to pronounce the ministry a bed of roses or a hammock of luxury. A faithful, courageous pastor has trials, and not a few temptations; they often attest his fidelity, they sinew his faith and drive him closer to Christ. A winning minister is a disgrace to his calling and an abomination to the Lord. The man who finds that he has mistaken his calling ought to demit at once. If the ministry were "weeded" tomorrow, it would be the stronger.—Herald and Presbyter.

One Mother in Israel—How Her Prayers Were Answered.

There is no richer solace to the human heart than the assurance that our Heavenly Father hears and answers our prayers. "I love the Lord because he hath heard the voice of my supplication"

Thirty-one years ago, we were living in Illinois. Our two children were stricken with the scourge of that climate, cholera infantum. Having laid our eldest in the grave, the only child was spared, contrary to the opinion of the most skillful medical attendant. This the mother felt sure was in answer to her prayer, and that the child was spared to preach the gospel. This conviction she carried in her breast during all the 24 years up to the time he decided to forsake every other calling and devote himself wholly to the ministry. Then she said when the letter arrived bearing this tidings, "I knew he would come to it, for that was the answer of my prayer."

When this same boy was 18, he was at Acadia, and wrote home to his mother, "I have given my heart to God and am starting out for Christ." The previous day, his mother had been in an agony of prayer for him, and felt the answer so strongly, that she sat down and wrote to him, "I expect your next letter to tell me that you have given your heart to God." These letters from son and mother crossed each other, conveying the intelligence of prayer and its answer.

As the years flew by, two other boys were given to us. Full of life and energy, their fond mother bent her best and most self-denying efforts toward their training and giving them the highest advantages and education. Coming well nigh the end of their college course they were yet unsaved. A growing anxiety for them came upon us. We looked for their homecoming at Xmas time in '96. One afternoon the burdened mother-heart retired to pour out its great trouble before the Lord. Ere long she entered my study and said, "I have been praying for our dear boys and God has answered my prayer." I said, "How do you know?" Said she, "as I was pleading with God I seemed to hear a voice saying so kindly, 'Why are you so troubled, your boys will both be converted and both become ministers.' I heard that same voice three times as I kept on praying. I cannot tell whether any one else could have heard it but it was clear and unmistakable to me. Now all my burden is gone." And the heart was happy in the thought of coming blessing. Three weeks afterward the boys were with us. Special services were then going forward under Hunter and Crossley. The second night the oldest arose for prayers, the third night they both arose. The fourth night they both testified to their trust in Christ. That night that home was full of parental joy as they both offered prayer at the family altar. The next day the older said, "Why should I trouble myself with my law studies any more? I may as well get at my life work at once." "What is that?" said the mother. "O, to preach, of course." It was but a few days till we knew that they both had decided to preach. Thus the prayer was answered.

That devoted mother who was accustomed to magnify the power and blessedness of prayer as God's great means of blessing, and did so illustrate its reality in her life, has been taken up from among us to see the face of her Redeemer and dwell among the pure. But before she left us she heard all her sons preach, with holy, humble gratitude. She saw them settled as ordained pastors and knew that souls were being saved through their labors. To encourage other parents who have great anxiety and long waiting for the souls they love, is the object of this writing.

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