

## The Best Use of Adversity.

BY REV. JAMES STALKER, D.D.

The 23rd psalm directs special attention to one of the uses of adversity in the words, "He leadeth me in the path of righteousness."

Here the poet is holding fast by his metaphor; because it is a fact that in times of peril and fear the sheep of a flock follow close to the shepherd, and keep in a straight path wherever he may lead them. At other times they can expatiate over the fields and may easily wander; but terror makes them keep their eye on the shepherd, and follow him without turning to the right hand or the left.

But how true to human experience also is the statement. Adversity has a great deal to do with sanctification.

For one thing, it makes prayer real. Some of us would, I dare say, confess that we never knew what prayer actually was till we were driven to the throne of grace by a calamity that was breaking our heart. I remember being in Germany immediately after the Franco-German war; and I was told how, during the anxious months of the war time, the churches, which usually are so empty in that country, were crowded every time the doors were opened, with fathers and mothers whose sons were at the front. Prayer in days which are without suffering or change is apt to be only a pious form, of which we are weary; but, when the heart is dreading some impending calamity or the iron of loss has entered into the soul, the old forms are filled with fresh meaning, and the tides of emotion overflow the forms; we do not measure the time which we spend on our knees, and the words of prayer pour, new and living, from the heart.

The same might be said of the Bible: we read it with opened eyes when we have suffered. Passages which we have read scores of times without seeing their beauty lay hold of our sympathy. Deep calls us unto deep—the experience of the writer finds its echo in our breasts. What Goethe said of poetry is true of Scripture:

"Who never ate his bread in sorrow,  
Who never spent the midnight hours  
Weeping and watching for the morrow,  
He knows you not, ye heavenly powers."

Thus by the avenue of prayer and by the avenue of the Word we are brought nigh to God through adversity; but adversity affects character in many other ways. I have known a Christian who after years of careful living and useful testimony, fell into a state of carelessness and backsliding. Just at this stage a younger brother of his own came from the country to the city, and took up his abode in the same lodging. The younger had expected to receive from the elder a good example; but, not receiving it, he fell into evil courses, and the issue was disastrous in the extreme. But it terrified the backsliding brother back to his Lord. Thus are we sometimes taught, by the consequences of backsliding in our selves or others, how evil and how bitter a thing it is to depart from the living God; and the immovable firmness with which a man stands in the right path, avoiding the very appearance of evil, may be due to the recollection of a fall and its calamitous consequences.

But, in whatever way adversity may lead us in the paths of righteousness and away from the paths of unrighteousness, this is by far the most blessed effect it can produce; for to a Christian nothing is so good as holiness and nothing so formidable as sin. We all naturally desire prosperity and seek to avoid adversity; but well may we say, Welcome adversity, welcome suffering, welcome the chastisements of God, if by these we are led in the paths of righteousness.

## The Sun's Distance.

We compare it with railway journeys, and find that the Empire State Express on its schedule of sixty miles an hour, would occupy 174 years upon the trip, running, day and night, without a single stop or slackening of speed: and the fare, at even the lowest excursion rate of only one cent a mile, would be nearly a million of dollars. If sound could travel through the celestial spaces at the same velocity as in our air, it would require fourteen years for the

boom of one of the great explosions, which sometimes occur upon the sun, to reach us. If some electric cable could be stretched between the earth and sun, capable of transmitting its telegraphic signals at the rate of thirty thousand miles a second—a speed never yet attained in terrestrial telegraphy—it would be nearly an hour before the touch of the key at one end of the line would report itself at the other. Swift light itself, darting 186,330 miles each second, is eight minutes and a third upon the way.

It is a tremendous distance; and yet across the abyss the sun exerts its power upon the earth, and controls the motion of her huge mass as she whirls along her orbit nearly twenty miles a second (more than forty times as swiftly as a cannon-ball), holding her to her course by bonds of attraction, invisible and impalpable indeed, but in strength equivalent to the breaking strain of ropes of steel attached to every square inch of her surface. Stated in cold figures the mutual attraction between the sun and earth is an unceasing pull of 360,000 millions of millions of tons.

And across the yawning gulf the sun pours the streams of radiance which we call light and heat, supplying all the energy which operates upon the surface of our globe. By sun-power the winds blow, and the waters run, engines drive their wheels—nay, even plants and animals grow, and move, and perform their varied functions only by means of the energy brought them in the solar rays. We cannot undertake at this time to follow out its protean transformations, and justify such statements; but they are strictly true, and only a part of the truth; for to all the planets of our system the sun, from the material point of view, is the symbol and vicegerent of the Deity himself—the most magnificently glorious of all created objects,—the single one whose removal would be a death-chill to every form of activity.

## The World Without Sunday.

Think how the abstraction of Sunday would hopelessly enslave the working classes, with whom we are identified. Think of the labour thus going on in one monotonous and eternal cycle, limbs forever on the rack, fingers forever staining, the brow forever sweating, the feet forever plodding, the brain forever throbbing, the shoulders forever drooping and limbs forever aching, the restless mind forever scheming.

Think of the beauty it would efface, the merry heartedness it would extinguish, of the giant strength it would tame, of the resources of nature it would crush, of the sickness it would bring, of the project it would wreck, of the groans it would extort, of the lives it would immolate and of the cheerless graves it would prematurely dig. See them toiling and moiling, sweating and fretting, grinding and hewing, weaving and spinning, sewing and gathering, moving and repairing, raising and building, digging and planting, striving and struggling—in the garden and in the field, in the granary and the barn, in the factory and in the mill, in the warehouse and in the shop, on the mountain and in the ditch, on the roadside and in the wood, in the city and in the country, out at sea and on the shore, in the day of brightness and of gloom. What a picture would this world present if we had no Sunday.

## The Citizens of Christ's Kingdom.\*

BY REV. ADDISON P. FOSTER, D.D.

Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount is describing the Kingdom of God, and accordingly he speaks first of the citizens of the kingdom. Their distinguishing mark is blessedness. This is an exalted and spiritual phase of happiness, based on religion.

THESE CITIZENS ARE BLESSED IN DISPOSITION.

They are marked by humility. They are "poor in spirit," i. e., sensible of their own unworthiness and dependance on God. Humility is allied to faith. One cannot well see his own weakness

\*A Meditation based on (Matt. v. 1-16) in the Bible Study Union Course on "The Teachings of Christ."